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Amazonian Alternatives

Imagining and Negotiating Development in Lowland Bolivia

PhD Thesis

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Cover: The patujú flower (*Heliconia rostrata*). This is the Bolivian National Flower, which has become a symbol of the lowland peoples in their struggle for land and self-determination.

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Summary

Modernising development disembeds social life from the local context, contributing to the separation of man from nature. At a global scale, that dichotomy has proven disastrously counterproductive regarding consequences of natural–social phenomena, and has generated major social and economic disparities. In Bolivia, the government, despite a radical environmentalist discourse, bases its economy on continued and scaled-up extractivism. This thesis explores how indigenous peoples in the Bolivian Amazon imagine and negotiate development that counters the dichotomy. It contributes with insights on how they, through their daily livelihood practices, and social and political activities, suggest an alternative development for Bolivia, while creating places that remain distinctively indigenous.

I argue that the lowland peoples, historically and today, have pursued development directions that would ensure their own control with socio-economic matters, and that their proactive efforts can be understood as practised decoloniality. They propose a development direction diametrically opposite that of the contemporary government. Where the government aims to centralise the state and integrate lowland indigenous territories in their national development plans, the lowland peoples, supported by their allies, follow a vision that include local management of resources and self-governance. Both apply a discourse that involves indigeneity and plurinationality, and both attempt to mobilise anti-colonial sentiments.

Three articles each address a distinctive type of claim of lowland peoples to land and self-determination. The first presents a historical claim to land, the second addresses a political claim to access decision-making and the third explores a claim based on identity, to determine development locally. The claims extend way beyond the local in that they suggest a different organisation of the state, and thus its development.

Empirically, the thesis is based on my work as a researcher and development practitioner in collaboration with people in three indigenous territories in the Beni department. During longer-term and return visits, I applied qualitative methods of data-collection that included a wide range of observational and interactional approaches, exploring the complex relations between people and their environment. Theoretically, the thesis draws upon critical debates within development research, including that of post-development. Placed in the intersection between culture, power, history and nature, it addresses core, theoretical orientations of Political Ecology. The conceptualisation of power and agency inspired by the Latin American decoloniality-school, within this Political Ecology framework, is a distinct contribution of this thesis.

In a larger perspective, the aim with the thesis is to contribute to finding answers on how to promote human practices that do not undermine ecological processes and systems, hoping the findings can inspire

the efforts of researchers to suggest relations to nature that can oppose the nature - society dichotomy in contemporary conservation and development debates.

Resumen

El desarrollo modernizador separa la vida social del contexto local, contribuyendo a la separación al hombre de la naturaleza. A nivel mundial, esa dicotomía ha resultado desastrosamente contraproducente con respecto a las consecuencias de fenómenos socio-naturales, y ha generado importantes disparidades sociales y económicas. En Bolivia, el gobierno, a pesar de un discurso ecologista radical, basa su economía en el extractivismo continuado y ampliado. Esta tesis explora cómo los pueblos indígenas en la Amazonía Boliviana imaginan y negocian el desarrollo para crear lugares que permanecen distintivamente indígenas. Contribuye con ideas sobre cómo sugieren un desarrollo alternativo para Bolivia a través de sus prácticas cotidianas de sustento, y sus actividades sociales y políticas.

Sostengo que los pueblos de las tierras bajas, históricamente y en la actualidad, han seguido direcciones de desarrollo que asegurarían su propio control con asuntos socioeconómicos, y que sus esfuerzos proactivos pueden entenderse como la descolonialidad practicada. Proponen una dirección de desarrollo diametralmente opuesta a la del gobierno contemporáneo. El gobierno pretende centralizar el estado e integrar los territorios indígenas de las tierras bajas en sus planes nacionales de desarrollo, mientras los pueblos de las tierras bajas, apoyados por sus aliados, siguen una visión que incluye la gestión local de los recursos y el autogobierno. Ambos aplican un discurso que implica indigenidad y plurinacionalidad, y ambos intentan movilizar sentimientos anticoloniales.

Tres artículos científicos tratan cada uno un tipo distintivo de reivindicación sobre la tierra y la autodeterminación de los pueblos de las tierras bajas. El primero presenta un reclamo histórico de tierra, el segundo aborda un reclamo político para acceder a la toma de decisiones, y el tercero explora un reclamo basado en la identidad para determinar el desarrollo a nivel local. Los reclamos se extienden más allá de lo local, ya que sugieren una organización diferente del estado y, por lo tanto, su desarrollo.

Empíricamente, la tesis se basa en mi trabajo como investigador y profesional del desarrollo en tres territorios indígenas en el departamento de Beni. Durante visitas de retorno y de largo plazo, apliqué métodos cualitativos de recopilación de datos que incluían una variedad de enfoques observacionales e interaccionales, explorando las complejas relaciones entre las personas y su ambiente. Teóricamente, la tesis se basa en los debates críticos dentro de la investigación del desarrollo, incluido el de posdesarrollo. Situada en la intersección entre cultura, poder, historia y naturaleza, aborda orientaciones teóricas centrales de la ecología política. La conceptualización de poder y agencia, inspirada por la escuela de

descolonialidad latinoamericana, dentro de este marco de ecología política, es una contribución distinta de esta tesis.

En una perspectiva más amplia, el objetivo de la tesis es contribuir a la búsqueda de respuestas sobre cómo promover prácticas humanas que no socaven los procesos y sistemas ecológicos, esperando que los hallazgos puedan animar los esfuerzos de los investigadores para sugerir relaciones con la naturaleza que puede oponerse a la dicotomía naturaleza - sociedad en los debates de conservación y desarrollo contemporáneos.

Resumé

Moderne udvikling fjerner det sociale liv fra den lokale kontekst og bidrager dermed til adskillelsen af mennesket fra naturen. På globalt niveau har denne dikotomi vist sig katastrofalt kontraproduktiv hvad angår natur-sociale forhold, såsom klimaforandringer udtømmning af vitale ressourcer, og har skabt store sociale og økonomiske uligheder. Trods en radikal miljøaktivistisk diskurs, baserer Bolivias regering sin økonomi på fortsat og forøget ekstraktivisme. Denne afhandling undersøger hvordan oprindelige folk i Boliviansk Amazonas forestiller sig og forhandler udvikling. Den bidrager med indsigt i hvordan de gennem deres hverdagspraksis, og sociale og politiske aktiviteter, foreslår en alternativ udvikling for Bolivia, mens de skaber og bevarer steder som forbliver markant 'oprindelige'.

Jeg argumenterer for at lavlandsfolkene, både historisk og i nutiden, har forfulgt en udvikling som ville sikre dem egen kontrol over socioøkonomiske anliggender, samt at deres proaktive virke kan forstås som praktiseret dekolonialitet. De foreslår en udvikling som er i diametral modsætning til den nuværende regering. Hvor regeringen har til hensigt at centralisere staten og integrere oprindelige folks territorier i deres nationale udviklingsplaner, forfølger lavlandsfolkene, med støtte fra deres allierede, en vision der inkluderer lokal ressourceforvaltning og selvstyre. Begge parter anvender en diskurs som indeholder 'indianskhed' (indigeneity) og plurinationalisme, og begge søger at mobilisere antikoloniale følelser.

Tre artikler omhandler hver en bestemt type krav om land og selvbestemmelse, stillet af lavlandsfolk. Den første præsenterer et historisk krav om land, den anden et politisk krav om adgang til beslutningstagning, og den tredje undersøger et identitets krav om at bestemme udvikling lokalt. Kravene rækker langt ud over det lokale, da de foreslår en anden organisation af staten, og dermed dens udvikling.

Empirisk baserer afhandlingen sig på mit arbejde som forsker og udviklingsarbejder i samarbejde med folk i tre forskellige oprindelige folks territorier i Beni-departementet (større end kommune, mindre end region). Gennem længerevarende og gentagne besøg anvendte jeg kvalitative metoder til dataindsamling bestående af en lang række observationelle og interaktive tilgange, for at undersøge de komplekse

relationer der findes mellem folk og deres miljø. Teoretisk trækker afhandlingen på kritiske debatter indenfor udviklingsforskningen, herunder den om post-udvikling (postdevelopment). Placeret i krydsfeltet mellem kultur, magt, historie og natur, adresserer afhandlingen centrale teoretiske retninger indenfor politisk økologi. Konceptualiseringen af magt og agens, inspireret af den latinamerikanske dekolonialitets-skole, inden for rammerne af politiske økologi, er et særskilt bidrag fra denne afhandling.

I et bredere perspektiv er formålet med afhandlingen at bidrage til at finde svar på hvordan man fremmer menneskelig praksis der ikke undergraver økologiske processer og systemer, med håb om at disse svar kan inspirere forskere i deres bestræbelser på at foreslå relationer til naturen, som kan udfordre natur-samfundsdikotomien i de igangværende naturbevarelses- og udviklingsdebatter.

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Prologue

The Amazon always stood out as an alternative to me. During the last decade of the Cold War, when I was very young, I came to this region on a one-way ticket. At home, in Copenhagen, I was part of a movement searching for new ways of living. There were no jobs and education seemed irrelevant, we were angry and creative, always preparing for war, locally or globally, feeling solidarity with those we perceived as somehow likeminded. Someone got in contact with the Shuar in the Ecuadorian Amazon. They were struggling to keep oil-companies off their land; they were organising and reaching out, and I went there. This early indignation about inequalities, combined with the insistence of the local people to resist, inspired me and fired my fascination of the peoples in the Amazon basin. Ten years later, the Cold War had ended, and when I returned to the rainforest it was as a Forest and Landscape Engineer trainee and a mother. This was in 1996. I came to study the swidden-fallow system of the lowland Quichuas, staying with my family in a very remote settlement along with five Quichua families for a year. I came to admire their complex forest management systems, truly an alternative to the scientific forestry taught at home, and their way of organising subsistence despite the gendered task-divisions, which was my only regret. I also came to comprehend the amount of knowledge and skills that derive from practice and spending time in the immediate environment. Four years later I revisited the place for three months with my son, catching up on human and non-human growth and bygones in the intermediate period.

Thirteen years should pass before I visited the actual basin again. In between, in 2003, I had been in Bolivia as a consultant to DANIDA¹ to gather ‘best practices’ on how to include indigenous peoples in sector program support, accomplished through innumerable meetings during three days in La Paz. We carried through with the task, although the then Ministry of Indigenous Affairs had no organisational memory, resources or real function, and undeterred by the revolution going on outside the offices. This was during the ‘gas-war’, where immense protests against neoliberal privatisations of commons and the outsourcing of resource extraction made the small elite of La Paz tremble in fear of the raging masses of El Alto². Two years later Evo Morales would be elected the first indigenous President of the country. In 2013 I came to Bolivia as a master-student, this time to the Amazonian region, more precisely the indigenous territory and national park Isiboro-Sécure (TIPNIS) where lowland indigenous peoples found themselves in opposition to the government they initially supported. I was interested in the political organisation of the collective territories, their governance of land and resources and the tensions it spurred with the surrounding society.

¹ Danish International Development Aid (state agency)

² El Alto is a fast-growing poor suburb and today larger than La Paz itself (INE 2012), literally above the city, at the high plateau-outskirts

When the opportunity arose to apply for an industrial PhD-grant along with the Danish NGO Forests of the World (FoW), we grabbed the chance. I knew that our approaches would be compatible and our interests coinciding, and I have certainly never regretted it. The focus of my interest changed again, as it would do various times underway in the course of the project. Increasingly, I have been concerned with the need to find new ways to handle the problems that modern development has brought us, problems for which there are no modern solutions (Escobar 2004). The aspiration is in the thesis' title – change starts with imagination, and is realised, as I conclude, through practice and collaboration. This PhD-project does not simply add new layers to my appreciation of, and deep respect for, the Amazonian peoples and their environment, for me it is taking it to another level of understanding. The Amazon has the same appeal although conditions have changed, for better and for worse. It still represents alternatives.

1. Introduction

Neither living systems nor processes that sustain them may be commercialised
(*The Plurinational Legislative Assembly: Law of Mother Earth 2010: article 2.5*)

In an initial stage, isn't it possible to use the resources produced by the state-controlled raw materials export activity to generate the surpluses that can be used to satisfy the minimum living conditions of Bolivians? (*Alvaro García Linera, Vice-President of Bolivia, 2012, pp. 34*)

The vision is that when a trunk of wood is taken out, it is at least for the benefit of the community. That's our idea, to guard and defend our territory, but also to benefit from it ourselves (...). We have everything here (*community-member, TIPNIS, 2013*)

Between Mother Earth and Mega-projects, this is where the lowland indigenous territories find themselves in the post-liberal Bolivian state. The first two quotes, both originating from government authorities, are emblematic of that field of tension. The contradictory discourses emanating from the apparently progressive new Plurinational State of Bolivia was also what attracted my attention, knowing in advance the aspirations of the lowland territorial peoples. The third quote is meant to capture that aspiration - the return and maintenance of control with daily livelihoods, institutions and resources to themselves.

The post-neoliberal turn with the election of Evo Morales in 2005 seemed like a ground-breaking paradigm shift in Bolivia away from capitalism and the prevailing modernising development concept. The antiimperialist (Birns and Sanchez 2011), indigenous-inspired and radical-environmentalist discourse (De Angelis 2011) as a prelude to a new societal order was received with concern or applause depending on recipient; the shift appeared genuine. The new government of the Movement towards Socialism (MAS) party was brought to power by a wave of rebellions against privatisations of common resources, in the streets and from the rural areas, accompanied by a profound critique of neoliberalism from academia. The western concept of development had failed and was seen as a dead man walking (Gudynas 2011). In Latin-America, post-development questions were answered with *Vivir Bien* (often translated 'Living Well') as an alternative to development, and several of its proponents among scholars were involved with the structuring of a new state. A different relation with nature (Escobar 2010; Farah and Vasapollo 2011), and the democratisation and devolvement of production to local levels (Bedregal 2011; Medina in Albó 2011; Puente 2011) was considered key to exit the current capitalist model. Yet no radical reforms or substantial transformation of the economic model have been introduced (Webber 2017). The hoped for ontological turn when *Vivir Bien*, presented in more detail in section 2.2, was adopted into the Constitution (CPE 2009)

resulted in a rather reductionist application of the concept as a 'post-fix' to legitimatise interventions. Mega-infrastructures and resource-extraction thus became necessary means 'para vivir bien' (Arkonada 2012; Olivera 2015), with adverse effects, however, on environment and communities in the lowland (Hindery 2013). The rhetoric of radical change has been in obvious contradiction to the continued and growing dependency on natural resource extraction (Svampa 2015) and the repression of social forces that opposed it (Bebbington and Bebbington 2011; Webber 2017). Soon, post-neoliberalism quite unilaterally became associated with the return of the state (Yates and Bakker 2014), with the Vice-President as a prominent force and advocate for a specific 'Andean-Amazonian capitalism' (Webber 2011). While maybe having ended the neoliberal hegemony, the state-centric turnaround does not engage with ending the hegemonic economic system with its commodifying relation to nature and non-local production patterns.

In the lowland, an insisting and different development is going on with an impact far beyond the local. This thesis offer an analysis of locally based claims to redirect a development that seriously challenges the established, albeit fragile, order, gained through decades of lowland peoples' struggle for land and political rights. Through their daily livelihood practices, and social and political activities, indigenous peoples in the lowland suggest an alternative development for the Bolivian state. The vision of equivalent self-governing entities is produced and lived at community and territorial levels with the assistance of external allies. Two contemporary cases in the Bolivian Amazon Department Beni constitute examples: The contested consultation of indigenous communities in the TIPNIS, and the making of a Lifeplan 'para Vivir Bien' of the extremely marginalised Movima people. Both illustrate a firm conviction in the territories that maintaining them provide the best possibilities to sustain and reproduce practices considered distinctively indigenous, and the will to invest considerably in doing that.

1.1 Purpose and approach

The main purpose of the thesis is:

To investigate historical and contemporary claims to land and self-determination in order to provide an understanding of how lowland indigenous peoples imagine and negotiate development.

The following research questions guided the research:

- a) What shifting development paradigms in the Bolivian Amazon can be traced?
- b) How have local ideas and possibilities transformed Amazonian socio-economic and environmental outcomes of different development paradigms?

c) What have been the efforts and strategies in the lowland indigenous peoples' access to and defence of land and self-determination?

d) How does the contemporary national government attempt to integrate the Amazonian region into the state?

e) How do the lowland peoples' articulations and practices provide alternatives to development?

The theoretical framework used to address the research questions draws on different conceptualisations within the broad field of political ecology. Materialist and post-development approaches are suitable to understand the appropriation of both resources and development agenda by those 'developing others'. Throughout the recount of the lowland history and its contemporary tensions, we will meet both original (primitive) accumulation as theorised by Karl Marx, and the expansion of capitalism through imperialism. We also meet the perception of nature and some humans as valuable only to the extent they can generate surplus capital (Moore 2017; West 2016). Such perceptions can be traced in the often degrading representational rhetoric that forms part of the offset of new structures of dispossession. We will see the material and conceptual transformation of production and property systems that take place (Sluyter 2003) when new resource frontiers open (West 2016, Rasmussen and Lund 2018), or in other words the connection of discursive and material dispossession (Neil Smith in West 2016).

All over the world, definitely most evident in the southern hemisphere, dispossession-processes due to the opening of new resource frontiers take place. Accumulation by dispossession can take place over and over again in already colonised and/or exploited places (Harvey 2005; West 2016) by creating value and new sinks for capital in order to make new opportunities for accumulation. In the Amazon, since the arrival of the Europeans to the region, world demand for changing extractive commodities has led to ecologically and socially destructive modes of extraction (Bunker 1985), most often to the detriment of local indigenous peoples. Acts of frontier-making can be understood as attempts to rupture an existing territorial order (Rasmussen and Lund 2018). Territorialisation is an expression for the dynamics that create and maintain social orders, including systems of property and political jurisdictions. It is an active strategy to control land and resources through the building of governing institutions (ibid), a capability that is not necessarily limited to the state. While this thesis is not specifically about territorialisation, the concept serves well to provide a comparative perspective through which the dynamics in lowland Bolivia can be understood.

A natural add-on to these lenses is that of decoloniality (Mignolo 2010; Maldonado-Torres 2007; Rojas 2016; Quijano 2000), a political, programmatic and academic project in contemporary Latin America. The above mentioned subordination of nature and some humans as valuable only in the context of surplus

generation is core in the ongoing colonial logic. A pronounced project of the Bolivian government (Linares 2012), as well as of the lowland peoples and their allies among civil society organisations, is to dissolve and put an end to colonial structures. Decoloniality thus provides a curious comparative frame within which notions of development can be explored. The next chapter unfolds the conceptual frame in a greater complexity.

As for phenomena, the thesis engages with concepts of property, democracy and representations as already briefly touched upon. It will, however, also touch upon the opposite parties' - the MAS government and their supporters on the one side, and the territorial peoples and decolonialist authors on the other - activation of different ontologies (Escobar 2011) as the basis for the development that is imagined and negotiated, implemented or lived. This is decisive for the way decoloniality is performed by the state and the indigenous collectives respectively.

The articles are based on my work as a researcher and to a lesser degree development practitioner in collaboration with people of three different indigenous territories in the Beni department and colleagues in the Bolivian NGO, Centro de Estudios Jurídicos e Investigación Social (CEJIS).

1.2 Contribution and argument

In a larger perspective, this thesis aims to contribute to the search for answers on how to promote human practices and material flows that do not undermine ecological processes and systems. For that it draws upon critical debates within development research. Modernity, with the hyper-technification and hyper-marketisation of social life (Escobar 2004), is an inherent part of the development concept that includes the idea of a continuum from the backward, undeveloped to the modern, developed. This built-in assumption permeates neoliberal as well as developmentalist states and intergovernmental development institutions alike; it can even be traced in progressive NGOs, and it crystallises in dominant discourses, practices, structures and institutions (Escobar 2010). Modernising development assumes expert knowledge over local knowledge; philosophically and sociologically, it disembeds social life from the local context and separates man from nature, the conceptual nature– society divide. At a global scale, that dichotomy has proven disastrously counterproductive regarding global consequences of natural–social phenomena such as climate change or industrial agriculture, reliant on disappearing fossil fuel and water, and it has generated major social disparity. Boaventura de Sousa Santos (in Escobar 2004:212) puts it like this: 'the conditions that brought about the crisis of modernity have not yet become the conditions to overcome the crisis beyond modernity (...) we are facing modern problems for which there are no modern solutions'. The Latin American coloniality perspective suggests that transformative practices are already taking place, although they need to be socially amplified. In the search for a different logic, an alternative development, we can

look to – not cultures untouched by modernity – but practices of difference that remain within the modern world system, albeit at the margins (Escobar 2004:221).

The thesis contributes with necessary, practical responses to the legitimate aspects of neoliberal critique, such as those concerning production and income. With this, it offers critical counterpoints to those development critics within the post-structural tradition, whose profound critique of mainstream notions of development somehow has muted empirical studies that could tell whether practice actually have the anticipated effects (Bebbington 2000). I argue for a greater emphasis on local agency, and situate and explore development in actual encounters between local people, government representatives and NGOs, respectively. In line with Escobar (2004) I question modernity as a universal and inescapable force.

With an ethnographic, field based study, the thesis contributes with insights on how practices of Bolivian lowland peoples in three different territories, through their daily livelihood practices and social and political activities, produce places that suggest an alternative development for the Bolivian state. The acts of defence against the offensive globalised capital, extractivist forms of development and modernist discourses of progress and growth, and the simultaneous facilitation of modernising processes to sustain livelihoods and construct new institutions, promoted by their allies among NGOs, provide a solid ground for rethinking the development concept.

Combining political economy with ecology, Political Ecology aims to rectify the deficiencies in both: the disregard for structures of power and inequality in ecology studies, and of nature and environment in the economic theories (Biersack 2006). In Biersack's definition, political ecology is located in the intersection between culture, power, history and nature. This thesis, placed in exactly that intersection and empirically examining the complex relations between people and their environment, addresses some of the core, theoretical orientations of political ecology (ibid: 4-5). These include attention to how reality is produced discursively, critique of the nature-culture dichotomy and the dynamics of local-global articulations. It considers the constraints of structure, but also the important and unpredictable agency of local people in response to that structure, and finally, when analysing inequalities, differences of ethnicity and proximity to state power is observed. Within this political ecology framework, as a distinct contribution of this thesis, is the conceptualisation of power and agency inspired by the Latin American decoloniality-school that is applied when exploring how lowland peoples are able to create places that remain characteristically indigenous. Places, in this case, are not merely locations, but sites of relations and interactions with an array of 'outside' actors and networks.

I argue that the social and political practices of the lowland peoples, as described in this thesis, are continuations of past struggles that all aimed to (re-)claim societal and resource governance to the decentralised level. Today that is the collective territory. Their proactive efforts, historically as contemporary, range from the mobilisation of mythical visions, over the challenging of understandings of legislations and constitutional concepts, to strategic cooperation with external allies to proactively proposing development alternatives, and can all be understood as practised decoloniality. The result of this practice - which includes the everyday common land and resource management, consensus-based democracy, political networks at regional, national and international levels, and the use of contentious methods to pose claims – is reflected in a social, ecological and political landscape that remains distinctively indigenous and alternative despite centuries of ‘modernising’, and incorporated, development interventions. The government, since 2006, aims to integrate lowland indigenous territories in their national development plans, i.e. extract resources, expand infrastructure, expand the agricultural area and encourage migration from the highland to the lowland. By applying a discourse of resource nationalism and a homogenised concept of indigeneity, different from that of the neoliberal, the government seek to distance its strategy from that of the former neoliberal government. Although the government’s return to state control of resource-exploitation and commerce, in its own understanding, is an expression of de-colonial practice, the promoted activities only continue centuries of ‘modernising’ development interventions, that is, a capitalist and developmentalist approach to land and resources. Facing one another are thus two distinct visions of development, and also two very different bids on the purpose and concept of the new Plurinational State. The lowland peoples’ claims and practices (should) contribute to and inspire the quest of various scholars to propose alternatives to development.

1.3 Organisation of thesis

Three single-author articles compose the body of this thesis (see Table 1). They address three distinctive types of claims set forth by the Mojeño and/or the Movima lowland peoples. The first presents a historical claim to land, with a focus on landscape transformations and mythmaking. The second addresses a political claim to access vital decision-making, with a focus on political participation, and the third explores a claim based on identity to determine development locally, with a focus on (co)production of viable livelihoods and institutions. As a whole, the claims extend way beyond the local in that they suggest a different organisation of the state, and thus its development.

Table 1: The three articles

Article number	1	2	3
Article title	Amazonian Erasures: Landscape and Myth-making in Lowland Bolivia	Contextualising Consent	Coproducing Development Alternatives. The making of a Lifeplan in lowland Bolivia
Status	Published in May 2018	In review (second round)	To be submitted (before defence)
Journal	Rural Landscapes: Society, Environment, History	Latin American and Caribbean Ethnic Studies	Forum for Development Studies/Development & Change?

The introductory part of the thesis comprises five chapters, including this introduction. Chapter two presents and explores the central concepts underlying the research: development and various ideas that form alternatives to development, respectively, shape the basis of the chapter. Chapter three provides important and profound contextual material and interpretations that have not been possible to unfold in the articles. The chapter, as well as the methods chapter, four, include quite comprehensive sections on NGOs in development due to the nature of the project, being an industrial-PhD study. The concluding chapter five, presents the three articles, synthesises the findings and discuss the research questions.

2. Conceptualisations

This chapter introduces concepts that are central throughout the thesis, starting with explorations of 'development'. First, the history of different ideas and critiques is introduced, as related to Latin America. This spans from thoughts on the place of the Amazon in the world economy, to important arguments in recent post-development debates. Second, we look into development today and the persistence of the Amazon as 'frontier', and end the section with the development-problematic exposed in this thesis. This leads to an overview of important contemporary debates in Latin-America and Bolivia in the final section, which explores suggestions for alternatives to development altogether. These include the Vivir Bien, the 'pluriverse' and the decoloniality debates.

2.1 Development

In this section I briefly review different development debates in Latin America, starting with development as a modern idea and moving on with a brief introduction to classical development theories, of which modernising development is central too. Dependency and world system theory belong to the classical category as well, and in the case of Bolivia, attempting to move on to a post-liberal development model,

neoliberalism will be treated in this historical review as well. Finally, post-development critique is introduced, with its focus on power and inequalities in development systems and discourse.

Throughout the thesis I refer to 'modernising development' and 'developmentalism'. The 'modern idea' treats each individual as a free, centred subject with rational control over her destiny. Extended to the nation-state level, each state is considered to be sovereign and free to rationally control its progressive development, seen as continuous 'stages of growth'. The idea of progress and the possibility of a conscious rational reform of society, along with the merits of science, we usually see as emanating from the 18-century enlightenment, which laid the ground for the Eurocentric developmentalist ideology, as the ideas were further elaborated in the classical political economy. Developmentalism became the global ideology of the capitalist world economy, appropriated in Latin America by the European elites, adapting the ideas to their own agenda. While embracing the ideas of free trade and national sovereignty, they underplayed other modern ideas about individual freedom, rights of man and equality (Grosfoguel 2008; Van Valen 2013). In Latin America, the modernist and developmentalist concepts are thus inseparable from colonialism (Quijano 2000a). It began with the genocide and the turning of (high) cultures into peasant subcultures, depriving them of their own forms of expression, and then imposing the cultural patterns of the new rulers on the survivors (Quijano 2007). Colonial forms of coerced labour and racial hierarchies were maintained after the independence revolutions in the first half of the 19th century; in fact they became the cornerstone of the Euro-centred capitalist, or modern, world power. This is what Quijano calls the, still prevailing, 'coloniality of power' (2000c; 2007).

'Underdeveloped' as a concept contrasting 'developed' emerged in the 1940s, when the ambitious post-war intent was to transfer features of the 'developed' countries, *technology*, *capital* and *science*, to the undeveloped countries to advance towards the modern society (Rostow 1960). Industrialisation would pave the way for the modernisation of the 'backward' economies. Under the auspices of the UN, as well as the 'great powers' bilaterally, using the need for 'development' to allure countries to side with them during the Cold War (Rist 2007), transfers of the mentioned features began. The fact that, after decades, most people's conditions in the 'developing' countries did not improve, but deteriorated, did not seem to affect development experts. A series of adjectives was added to 'development' like *social* or *human* and eventually *sustainable* to restore its former vigour, albeit without liberating the notion from its former Eurocentric sentiment (Quijano 2000c). As a concept by itself, 'development' had become somewhat dubious after the numerous failed projects (Rist 2007).

Classical development studies established after World War 2, including the dependency-school prevailing in Latin America as a reaction to modernism, but also the theory of modernisation itself, regarded

development as a particular problem of 'poor countries' in the 'Third World'. The Latin American '*dependistas*' in the 1960s and 1970s (e.g. Fernando Henrique Cardoso and Raúl Prebisch) argued that development and underdevelopment are produced by the centre-periphery relationships of the capitalist world-system, as opposed to the autonomous units developing through stages, as alleged by Rostow, but also by the orthodox communist parties. The Amazon region's participation in the world economy was based on extraction of value from nature. This, Bunker (1985) argues, subordinated the economy to productive economies, and created an extreme periphery where economic models of western experience do not apply, tending to focus on value from labour, while treating nature as passive and plastic. Eric Wolf (1982) showed how local communities and environments are subordinated to a global system of power relations, and can be understood only when placed in this wider framework. Rather than as a result of archaic or feudal structures, dependency was thus understood as a relation of subordination in the international capitalist system (Grosfoguel 2008). The dependency-school problematised the idea of development as *a continuum* from 'un(der)developed' to 'developed' inherent in modernist thinking and practice; however, with the main attention on the material hardships of poor people and countries, these perspectives had little interest in complicating the notion of development, or 'underdevelopment' further. The academic focus of classical development studies was on development as long-term structural and societal transformation, and the frame was the national state, the latter often criticised by authors with a global development perspective (Scholte and Söderbaum 2017). By privileging national development and the control of the nation-state, Grosfoguel (2008) asserts, the '*dependistas*' reproduced the modernists' illusion that development occurs through rational organisation at the level of the nation-state, and moreover, they underestimated Quijanos 'coloniality of power' (ibid:331). In the 1980s, postmodernist critiques of the simplifications of modernist theories, with the inherent idea of nature existing outside the human realm, emerged (Biersack 2006). The critique also targeted overarching, rationalised systems and structures, such as world-system theory.

With the neoliberal turn in the 1980s 'development practice' in the hands of non-state actors, sometimes referred to as the 'third sector', took speed. The World Bank's Structural Adjustment Program for Bolivia (World Bank 1991), with conditions of privatisation, deregulation and market-oriented development in return for loans, expressed the dominating modernising development philosophy of the decade, neoliberalism. Globalised, economic liberalism, unregulated by states, would now promote economic growth, welfare and democracy guided by the invisible hand of the unrestricted market. The withdrawn role of the state left responsibilities of health, education and problem-solving, when reforms failed to attend to the local economy, to decentralised institutions, NGOs and international donors (Ávila 2009; Fundación Tierra 2011; McDaniel 2002; Postero 2007). In section 3.3, the opening for foreign investments

in the Andean-Amazonian region in the neoliberal decades, and the response to it by the lowland peoples, is treated. The neoliberal period in Bolivia, because of its failure, fostered both post-neoliberal movements and philosophies; we will return to the latter in the final section of this chapter. The neoliberal project left Bolivia with enormous foreign debt as many other 'developing countries' (Greenberg 1997), but its vision of fostering strong social capital in the non-state sectors succeeded beyond expectation. The uprising of high- and lowland, 'territorial' and 'de-territorialised peoples' (see 2.1) alike eventually overthrew the neoliberal regime and created the situation which is the point of departure of this thesis: the striving for a post-liberal state, which includes different visions.

Post-development perspectives, or development critique or anti-development, question the very concept of development, as well as its practice, that presumes that undeveloped, or premodern, peoples and places exist. Overall, 'development' – like 'growth' – had become one of the indisputable truths that pervade our modern world (Rist 2007) and had grown into a major business. Authors like Escobar (1995), Ferguson (1990), Rist (2008) and Sachs (1992/2010) focus on systems of exploitation and destruction of environments, peoples and cultures. Special attention is given to discourse and the power-systems that regulate development practice, including dominant knowledge paradigms. The way we understand development is rooted in early colonial discourse, they argue, establishing the linear perception of history as going from the primitive to the civilised, the traditional to the modern, from the savage to the rational, and from pre-capitalism to capitalism (Quijano 2007:176). Thinking in terms of discourse allows for a focus on domination, and post-developmentalists show how the colonial vocabulary has been complemented with equally pervasive and effective representations of the 'Third World' through 'development' (Escobar 1995); just consider the concept Third World itself, later the 'developing countries', then 'the global South'. This social, or mental, construct of underdeveloped peoples and places is reflected in the objectivist belief, that the 'developing world' can be theorised and intervened upon from the outside.

Post-developmentalists contextualise development within the overall space of modernity, particularly modern economic practices. Central to all economic development theories is the need to compose the world as a picture so that the whole 'underdeveloped economy' can be grasped in some orderly fashion, matching the economic paradigm of each era, whether this be active intervention in the economy in the 1950s and 1960s, stabilisation and adjustment policies in the 1980s, or anti-interventionist 'market friendly' measures of the 1990s (Escobar 1995). In a similar way, the 'development apparatus' defines problems that can be addressed via the mechanisms of intergovernmental development institutions and NGOs rather than through political solutions (Ferguson 1990), with the result that the solutions offered to local communities are often the result of the 'travelling logic' of development practitioners (Mosse 2007), i.e.

the unpacking of a set of universal tools to target similar problems, but in very different contexts. The logic is driven by constantly emerging buzzwords, such as 'community-based', 'participatory' or 'sustainable'-prefixes to development, the latter only meaning 'less unsustainable' (Escobar 2018), and a strong belief in what the buzz is supposed to bring about (Rist 2007). This is part of what post-developmentalists have criticised as a homogenising and culturally destructive effect of development practice (Mosse 2007).

2.2 The persistent frontier

The long-term, structural perspective is often downplayed by many contemporary scholars preoccupied with paradigm shifts and 'ruptures'. Bull and Bøås (2012) argue that the classical theories, e.g. dependency theory, but also modernising theory, should be refined and put into dialog as they are still vividly alive in development practice and discourse. In policy circles, for instance, short to medium term classical development perspectives can be traced in the focus on evaluations and indicators, e.g. as expressed in the Millennium Development Goals put forth by the UN member states in 2000 (Scholte and Söderbaum 2017), and the subsequent global Sustainable Development Goals adopted in 2015. 'Sustainable development' had emerged as a concept in the 1987 report 'Our Common Future' (WCED 1987) presented by the World Commission on Environment and Development, interlinking environment and development to form one single problem. The high levels of consumption of the industrial world was highlighted as a major challenge, and the original report was much more progressive than the policies that emerged in its wake, where sustainable consumption drowned in production-centrism or 'greener lifestyle' clichés (Aguilar-Støen et al. 2016). Instead, the emphasis on 'development' in the south continued with a focus on overpopulation and environmental degradation caused by poverty, a focus that was problematised by e.g. Fairhead and Leach (1996) and Hellermann (2013).

The Amazon's continued participation in the world economy as a provider of extracted values from nature supports the call to refining the classical theories. The region persists as 'frontier' (Bunker 1985). The initial extraction of goods for commerce and subsequent extraction of goods for industrial development has maintained the Amazon in its 'underdeveloped' condition because no-one invested in permanent institutions or infrastructures. Today, extractivism regards hydrocarbons, energy and export-crops, and the infrastructures planned for these activities will not be for the benefit of the indigenous communities or the environment they live from (see article two); neither are they labour-intensive. The Amazon has no real history, only a series of events related to extractive activities, Bunker argues, and links this to the idea of the basin as returning to some original, primeval state after each 'rush'. This corresponds well with my findings of the re-emergence of myths about the undeveloped people and places (article two), which then legitimise developing and modernising interventions. But the Amazon does not return to any former state

‘in between’. Every intervention marks the region and determines the possible human uses of their environment, whereby the human – nature relation in the Amazon today is the result of the subordination of both to wider political economic systems (ibid:15).

What obviously has remained is the firm conviction throughout changing paradigms and extractive periods, and between right and leftist Latin American governments alike, that ‘development’ is provided by a process of accumulation of capital and technological progress, with growth as the primary measure. This has authorised a de-politisation of development interventions and practice, whether performed by international or bilateral development institutions, or by national governments within their own borders. Development projects, promoted to mitigate the devastating consequences of extractivism on local communities (Anthias and Radcliffe 2015), most often focus on technical solutions; this rarely suffices to resolve problems that are inherently political; political because development involves access to resources of different kinds. Further, among development organisations, assessment and reporting methods tend to reproduce the institutional patterns that operate in donor societies (Ferguson 1990; Cleaver 1999), or in hegemonic national structures. Development critics argue that the approach and methods used by those who develop others continuously reproduce power-structures, and that ideas meant to promote emancipatory development are co-opted by development institutions, neutralising the radical thoughts to policy-intentions of ‘empowerment’ with no real threats to the larger economic project. Ideals are simply reduced to tools, thereby co-opting alternative ways of thinking about development (Cornwall 2006; Kothari 2005). An example from this thesis (article two) is the right to Free, Prior and Informed Consent, claimed by the indigenous peoples for the meaningful recognition of indigenous political institutions, sovereignty and citizenship (Szablowski 2010), but implemented as a set of rules and practice; reduced, in other words, to a narrow system of legal procedures (Cariño and Colchester 2010; Leifsen et al 2017; Nolte and Voget-Kleschin 2014; Rodríguez-Garavito 2010; Schilling-Vacaflor 2013). In addition, such participatory approaches may serve to enhance the governability of the people and communities involved with development programs (Anthias and Radcliffe 2015; Postero 2007; Schilling-Vacaflor and Eichler 2017).

In the thesis, the focus is largely on two opposite visions of a post-liberal Bolivian state, the central state and the territorial, indigenous peoples. The first increasingly pursue a goal-oriented strategy, largely conceived by the Marxist scholar and vice-president Álvaro García Linera, in which extractivism is a necessary means in the stepwise evolution towards socialism (Lewis 2012; Linera 2012), not unlike the stagism, of modernists and ‘mode-of-productionists’ alike, once criticised by the ‘dependistas’ (Grosfoguel 2008). The second propose a development that challenges the dominance of right and leftist governments

alike, in that it invokes communal (territorial) governance of resources, labour and economy. Therefore it is necessary, in development studies, to pay attention to agency at local sites and among the marginalised.

The ability of marginalised groups³ to promote the more transformational visions of (post) development is becoming more visible (Scholte and Söderbaum 2017). Without allies among civil society institutions and NGOs, however, the lowland peoples of my study would not have gained the strength to stake the claims that this thesis explores. Local development projects are often criticised by post-developmentalists, neoliberalists and industrialist states alike. NGOs involved with local development may serve both as extensions of regimes and hegemonic development practice, *and* as sources of alternatives to such regimes, sometimes even simultaneously. Theoretically and practically, however, the profound critique of 'development activities' makes it difficult to engage constructively with this idea; just consider these statements: the dominant development ideology has been infused into the communitarian ways of being, with its individuality, secularism, private property and anthropocentrism (Escobar 2018). Or: even the most well-meaning among modern development participants are entwined with logics that support capitalism and the state at the expense of locals (Wainwright in Robbins 2012:221). Bebbington (2000) suggests that development possibilities are coproduced through joint actions by people and their networks, and through external interventions. Rather than resisting modernisation efforts and development institutions, marginalised groups, including indigenous peoples, transform and turn them to their own purposes in the attempt to build something on their own (ibid; McDaniel 2002). Section 3.3 focuses on these transformations historically, and the third article of the thesis shows how the local actors, the territorial Movima people, respond actively to opportunities provided by development projects and agencies.

In the contemporary post-neoliberal, state-capitalist Bolivia, development turns out still to be seen as a continuum towards the developed, rational society. Post-development perspectives challenge this notion, emphasising it, that the universal project of capitalist modernity has led to global inequality and environmental devastation, but tend to downplay the role of local agency in development outcomes. The place-based perspective, considering how agents respond to the global development engines, is central, however, to understand the shaping of development trajectories.

2.3 Alternatives to development

The defence of the lowland territories expresses the strong interest of the territorial lowland peoples in maintaining control over land, *the* asset to substantiate their development aspirations. Suggestions emanating from the territories, for a development alternative to the ones offered, provide the inspiration

³ Such groups and movements include slum-dwellers, sexual minorities, disabled persons, 'youth', peasants and other marginalised groups beside indigenous peoples (Scholte and Söderbaum 2017:7)

to explore the concept of development empirically. Theoretically, the thesis situates itself within the post-development debate, to which it also aims to contribute with a request of more pragmatism, albeit critical, in order to be able to engage constructively with 'local development'. For this argument, important ideas of practical and political decoloniality are needed, following here. Latin American authors explore and promote alternatives to development that concern processes to radically reconstruct power, knowledge, being, and life itself. This section explores those alternatives.

The implicit equation of development with growth, well-being with consumption, and conservation with market rationality is challenged in Latin America by discourses and practices of *decoloniality* and *Vivir Bien* as well as proponents of *the 'pluriverse'*, perhaps a new paradigm contrasting the 'universe'. Springing from the broad field of post-development, the authors propose new directions for the Latin American states and societies. Even with the 'post'-development, which he has diligently promoted himself (Escobar 2010, 2011b, 2015), Escobar (2018) claims that we do not depart radically from the prevailing paradigm. There is a need to completely abandon the development concept.

Coloniality refers to the patterns of power that emerged as a result of colonialism, longstanding and beyond the actual colonial political and economic administration itself. It is maintained in every structure and belief in the modern Latin American society, in its cultural patterns and in academic criteria (Maldonado-Torres 2007; Quijano 2007). It emerged from a specific historical setting, the one of capitalism tied with forms of subordination and dominium that was central to the Europeans to maintain colonial control in the Americas. More than a neoliberalism critique, the *decoloniality* debate is thus a profound contestation of colonial logics (Rojas 2016), including Eurocentric epistemologies (Grosfoguel 2007; Mignolo 2010; Walsh 2013) and racial hierarchies and labour relations (Quijano 2000c). *Decoloniality* is a shift away from the tendency to 'pretend that Western modes of thinking are in fact universal ones' (ibid: 544). Mignolo (2010) introduces the 'decolonial option,' which in politics includes a pluri-national conception of the state. The Latin American democratically progressive governments of the beginning of the century arose, not just in parallel to *Vivir Bien*, but entwined with post-development and decolonial thoughts. Plurinationality was part of their project. *Decoloniality* thus became a national political project, too.

A way to contemplate the already mentioned *Vivir Bien* is as a concept under construction by both academics and social movements, and as both a reaction to conventional development and a proposal for a

different (Gudynas and Acosta⁴ 2011). A common feature of the large amount of publications addressing the concept is the wondering how the current development model can be found dysfunctional, and yet in the next step be promoted as the only way forward. The dysfunctionality refers to the various adverse consequences of capitalism, the environmental and climatic problems not least, but also the food crisis, the employment crisis that deepens the economic inequality, and the weakening of the welfare state, unstructuring social protection and leading to a crisis of human security (Farah and Vasapollo 2011; Gudynas 2011). In opposition to the western ontological paradigm, understood as linear ascending, anthropocentric, hierarchical and competitive, *Vivir Bien* adopts a communal approach and a non-dual, relational ontology, the co-existence of many worlds in 'multi-polarity' (Solón⁵ 2018), and stresses the principle of complementarity of opposites in contrast to the western 'binary logic' (Medina 2011). In economic terms, where man in the western development paradigm exploits the passive land, converting it into product and wealth, within a *Vivir Bien* optic, work creates life. The principles of reciprocity and relationship are central, implying an interactive understanding of reality. The complex relationship of *Vivir Bien* with natural resources, and mainly with nature and the environment, is considered key to exit the current capitalist model (Farah and Vasapollo 2011), and to conceive new forms of production that includes the transformation and reorganisation of land tenure by means of collective endowments (Hendel 2011). The responsible and sustainable use of natural resources, the privilege of use value over exchange value and the widening of the democracy must be basic 'organisers' of the society (Houtart 2011). Bolivian authors talk about *Vivir Bien* as a 'normative horizon' of the country's democratic revolution (Puente, 2011); there is a broad consensus among them that reaching *Vivir Bien* must happen through devolution of power to local entities (Medina in Albó 2011; Bedregal 2011); by democratic widening by the means of autonomies.

The modernising development concept with the unidirectional, linear temporality (from past to future, undeveloped to developed) and the idea of the autonomous individual separated from community, the belief in positivist epistemology and 'the market' as independent from social relations, represents a dualist ontology that constructs a 'universe' informing globalisation (Escobar 2010). This modern ontology assumes the existence of One World, Escobar (2011) says, undermined exactly by discussions of *Vivir Bien* in

⁴ Eduardo Gudynas, Alberto Acosta and Pablo Solón are leading scholars on *Vivir Bien* (or 'Buen Vivir') and were front figures in the movement leading to the 'leftist shift' in various Latin-American countries. Acosta was directly influential in formulating the new constitution of Ecuador, similar to that of Bolivia, and became a minister in the new government. He left this position in 2008. A similar path was followed by Solón in Bolivia. He parted ways with the Morales government in 2011. The authors have become harsh critics of how the Morales and Correa governments manage their mandate.

⁵ See previous footnote

emphasising the relationality of all life. Ontologies exist for which the world is multiple - a Pluriverse. They are relational ontologies that refrain from divisions between nature and culture, individual and community.

These ideas, mainly *Vivir Bien*, are associated with local, especially agricultural, societies and local production, raising concerns among some authors, including Fabricant (2013), that the 'ethno-territorial focus' will leave out some, namely those living in urban areas, by delegitimising certain indigenous identities. However, when looking to Cochabamba prior to the 'Water War' in 2000 (Fabricant and Hicks 2013), water shortage spurred the auto-organisation of place-based committees, and in the most rapidly growing indigenous migrant urban area, El Alto above La Paz, its more than a million inhabitants have self-organised in well over 500 neighbourhood councils (Carriere 2010), showing how indigenous community-structures are being transplanted and functioning even without territory⁶. In both cases, use-value of resources is prioritised over exchange value, and resources are governed through local institutions built on practices and micro-relations. They have grown in the absence of state institutions, and have proved strong enough to reject market forces; the Water War prevented the privatisation of the Cochabamba water supplies.

Thus, *Vivir Bien* as a political concept is not only theoretical, but embedded in existing community practices in both highland and lowland, among the territorialised as well as the de-territorialised peoples. The relation to indigenous cosmologies were emphasised during upheavals by segments that usually apply class-based reasons for their struggles. It was argued that *Pachamama* (often translated as Mother Earth) cannot be exploited for commercial purposes (Postero 2007). Yet, large parts of the same segments now support nationalised extractivism, hoping that a fairer re-distribution of income will be beneficial for their urban livelihoods. *Vivir Bien* is not a lowland concept, albeit adopted strategically by some peoples, like the Movima (article three). In the TIPNIS, *Vivir Bien* is mostly associated with the Morales government, and thus rejected as empty propaganda, a 'post-fix' without meaning. Instead they refer to *Loma Santa*, at the same time a vision and a movement that has been extremely influential in the Bolivian Amazon. We will return to Loma Santa in section 3.4.

The ideas outlined in this section, alternative to conventional development concepts, are intimately related, and in this thesis considered comparable and complementary expressions of post-development critique, and suggestions of alternative development paths.

⁶ Here, as elsewhere when using the term territory, I refer to the Tierras Comunitarias de Origen (TCOs), Native Community Lands that almost exclusively are established in the lowland. TCOs are held by indigenous peoples through collective titles. Find more on TCOs in section 3.1 and 3.4, and in the methods chapter.

3. Contextualisations

The Amazon has long triggered the sentiment of something authentic, a bio-physically impenetrable place, home to customised, nomadic tribes, leaving almost no sign of their existence on the natural rainforest. The river basin has been connected with diversity and abundance, biologically as well as culturally, constructed as an either anthropological or biological space. Much Amazonian research now focuses on its destruction, with concerns related to loss of diversity, climate change and human rights violations. Something genuine is at risk. While not questioning the severity of consequences of the contemporary situation, there is a need to seek out literature that nuances this picture, and this has become significantly easier during the past decade. Amazonian histories based on recent research are emerging, whether regarding development policies, archaeology, economic development, social movements or indigenous livelihoods, and they contain both surprises and new interpretations of already known material. The histories challenge generalisations and illustrate the transformations that the region has experienced. In order to discuss what viable options there can be for the region in its future development, and for us to understand the nuanced relationships among history, landscapes, its peoples, and the wider world, it is important to investigate history with all its complexity in addition to current events.

This chapter provides the reader with more profound contextual understanding than was possible to unfold in the articles. It takes its point of departure in my study area, the Bolivian Amazon, but seeks to involve broader perspectives on the region, and to establish the link to consumption patterns and commodity demands outside the region. Before turning to historical and perspectival views on the Amazon region and its peoples, I reflect on how to apply the 'indigenous peoples' category in a country where the majority of the population self-identify as one of 36 different peoples. In the quite long section 3.3, I review the region's changing development paradigms and the indigenous peoples' responses to them. Following that, I introduce a phenomenon that has characterised the region, the millenarian movements. Along with the 'bricolage' (Cleaver 2002) of cultures and institutions from different eras, they have shaped the way life is lived, and the future imagined, by the lowland peoples. The final section introduces an important Amazonian character, the NGO, and discusses the limitations that the non-state sector has experienced over the recent years. As significant allies of the lowland peoples in their efforts to produce viable livelihoods, restraints on the functions of NGOs, and also less powerful state agencies, have already had serious consequences.

3.1 The 'indigenoussness' of Bolivian Amazonian peoples

The thesis touches upon important aspects of the constantly negotiated and redefined concept, indigeneity. A central goal of the new plurinational state is the decolonisation of the state and society (CPE

2009: art.9), which include bringing indigenous people into the state apparatus (Postero 2013). The Constitution of 2009 recognises the multi-ethnic and pluricultural condition of Bolivia, where 36 indigenous peoples constitute the majority of the population of an estimated 10 million people. As the plurinational project has evolved, however, a specific 'national indigeneity' evolved with it, Canessa (2014) argues, and stresses the importance of understanding the internal differentiation, especially when indigenous peoples discriminate against each other. The process of drafting the new Constitution already indicated a bias (Postero 2015; Schilling-Vacaflor 2011), and the resultant constitution privileges certain indigenous citizens over others, in particular the kind of citizen – or new political subject - described in the Constitution as 'originary peasant indigenous' (Canessa 2014:157). This composite citizen concept beautifully reflects the heterogeneity and complexity of how indigeneity is mobilised in contemporary Bolivia. While 'originary' establishes highland peoples as having pre-colonial connections to the land they currently occupy, 'indigenous' in the lowland is more of a mobilising concept. Both are however related to land or territory, as opposed to the 'originary-peasant', who recently (since mid-1980s) migrated to the lowlands but maintain a claim to indigeneity. The latter group of 'originarios' include urban dwellers besides the colonists. Whereas for the territorialised indigenous groups, indigeneity is a discourse related to land and self-determination, for the 'de-territorialised', indigeneity now primarily concerns the new national identity and the central position of these large segments as beneficiaries of resource exploitation (Canessa 2014). Another way of understanding this divide is to distinguish between ethnic and more class-oriented movements, whether or not indigeneity is mobilised (Lalander 2017). This calls for a brief historical review of the different developments of indigenous groups in Bolivia, starting in 1952, until when, all indigenous peoples were called Indians (indios) (Lalander 2017; Postero 2007). Of course, 'Indians' before then were included or excluded in the state or state-like institutions through various regimes; article one outlines this history for the lowland peoples of my specific interest in more detail.

The National Revolutionary Movement, MNR, emerged in the post-Chaco war (1931-35, see section 3.3) decades. It succeeded to mobilise miners, peasants and middle-class alike, and overthrow the military regime in an armed struggle in 1952. The brutal war between Bolivia and Paraguay in the 1930s had brought together highland and lowland Indians, as well as mestizos, and had provoked a critical consciousness about continued colonial inequalities. In the following decades new organisations and parties were born, and an increasingly vocal and militant Indian peasantry in the highland and valley regions, especially around Cochabamba, began to claim land on the basis of who worked it. The MNR, through a large agrarian reform in 1953, integrated the Indian peasants into the state as producers, not as Indians, and sponsored peasant (*campesino*) unions, sindicatos, privileged with agricultural credits and government attention (Canedo 2011; Postero 2007). The 'peasantification' of the Indians included the

dissolution of traditional socio-political and organisational structures, resonating with the 'indigenismo' policies of the time throughout Latin America to assimilate the indigenous populations, and provoked an ambiguity between class and ethnicity that remain to the present day (Lalander 2017; Postero 2007). In the lowland, the indigenous groups escaped these assimilation policies for much longer, resulting in a more homogeneous ethnic identification (Postero 2007). This does not mean, as we shall see, that lowland 'indigenes' is more 'original' or less dynamic (article one and three). With the return of the military regimes after 1964, the peasant-unions experienced first co-optation and manipulation, then violent repression, but persisted nevertheless and resumed the role as representatives and mediators between state and peasants when democratic rule returned in the 1980s.

The neoliberal multiculturalism of the 1990s changed strategic representations and practices somewhat again; new terms like *originary*, *native* and *indigenous* emerged, and for the lowland peoples it provided the opening for organisation and mobilisation. Neoliberal reforms included the Law of Popular Participation (LPP), created in the context of international pressures to decentralise, in Bolivia a welcomed opportunity to disrupt the power of the peasant-unions organising large parts of the Bolivian civil society, and through which indigenous-peasants had participated in politics, not least during times of military regimes (Postero 2007). Although the LPP responded to indigenous claims of inclusion, it was not a bottom-up creation. Mostly it was used to redistribute limited, but visible, resources to a population demanding attention, with varied success, primarily depending on the will of the local mayor and the level to which corruption or colonial racial structures dominated. Generally urban areas were favoured with central 'plazas' or other visible constructions (ibid). To participate, indigenous representatives had to join a political party, changing the role of indigenous leaders and excluding those with little time to leave daily livelihood activities (Reyes-García et al. 2010; Postero 2007). The Universalist citizenship, Postero (2007) states, tends to reinforce the values and the power of the dominant group. It did, however, have the effect that the lowland indigenous peoples, further encouraged and 'capacitated' by NGOs with the responsibility to create 'social capital' among the new, neoliberal citizens through 'community-driven development', felt very strongly about being included as equal citizens, and they reacted the way this new citizen should – by demanding recognition, representation, land and political inclusion from their leaders. Postero designate such reforms of the 1990s 'socially palliative' because they came in tandem with economic restructuring that seriously affected lowland communities, mainly in the southern part that experienced the granting of hydro-carbon concessions to transnational companies (Hindery 2013). One 'palliative' reform, a response to a second lowland march, was the Agrarian Land Reform known as the INRA-law, which gave the opportunity to form indigenous territories, TCOs (Canedo 2011; Paz et al. 2012). These territorial units, however, are not compatible with the decentralisation laws as the territories often were established across municipal and

departmental borders (Tockman and Cameron 2014; Postero 2007; Stocks 2005). The reforms, as mentioned, were meant for a population demanding attention, but while they had large symbolic value, they did not alter inequalities substantially. Yet they had enormous mobilising effects. When the neoliberal reforms failed to benefit the new Bolivian citizens, lowland and highland peoples and organisations alike started to rise up. While the lowland groups mainly demanded land and self-determination, a national sentiment crystallised in the urban and peasant segments during the so-called water and gas wars, in 2000 and 2003 respectively (Gustafson 2011; Postero 2007), accompanied by a discourse of resource nationalism in the MAS coalition (Pellegrini 2016).

Today, the Morales government seek to create a national culture based on 'indigeneity' (Canessa 2014), somehow reviving the pre-multiculturalist homogeneous Indian. Although culture is celebrated, customary economies and production systems are downplayed, which echoes the critique of the earlier neoliberal multiculturalism. A peasant political movement, national in scope, including middleclass and urban sectors has emerged (Regalsky 2010), creating a sort of 'indigenous nationalism' where *originarios* are seen as defenders of Bolivia's resources (Fuentes 2007). The majority of the Bolivian citizens targeted by the MAS are segments engaged with market activities seeking economic growth and expecting redistribution of benefits from nationalised resource extraction, rather than being concerned with self-determination or ideas like Vivir Bien. Indigeneity has become a tool of statecraft and governance, and with the claim that the state is already indigenous (Canessa 2014), demands based on indigeneity are more easily rejected. Patronising discourse against lowland indigenous peoples is widespread. The idea that highland indigenous migrants civilise the lowlands, for example, is fairly consistent across the region (ibid; article one). In the political discourse the 'indigenous', as opposed to the 'originario,' is still minoritised and anti-modern (Ávila 2009), evidenced by the statement of Vice-president García Linera considering that positions stated on the basis of indigenous difference romanticise and essentialise indigeneity: '*deep down,*' he says, '*they all want to be modern*' (Svampa and Stefanoni 2007:152). This particular attitude is easily traced in the state-administration; in interviews with officials I was told that the lowland indigenous peoples are poor and backward, although rich in culture, in need of development and political education.

The question of whether origin can be mobilised rightfully is not very interesting for the purpose of this thesis; proximity to power is much more important for the choice of focus. Given the Bolivian context where the majority of the population can rightfully claim to be indigenous/original to the country, it makes sense to look to the International Labour Organisation's Convention 169 on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples (1989) for delimitation. The Convention applies to:

‘Tribal peoples whose social, cultural and economic conditions distinguish them from other sections of the national community, and whose status is regulated wholly or partially by their own customs or traditions or by special laws or regulations’ (Art.1a)

In the Beni department, as in various parts of the Amazonia, indigenous institutions, production and property patterns varies from those of other sectors, including highland indigenous peoples, among other due to fundamentally different colonisation processes and assimilation policies (Article 1; Albó 1990; Postero 2007; Yashar 2005). It is further specified by the Working Group on Indigenous Populations (UN-REDD 2013:37) that indigenous peoples generally form non-dominant sectors of society and often have experience of subjugation, marginalisation, dispossession, exclusion or discrimination. This thesis is concerned with the most vulnerable peoples, the ones furthest from political influence, economic gains, information and education, healthcare, infrastructure and judicial safety. The ones that adjust to hardships because they have no other choice, that like the Movimas live on their roofs during months of flooding. In contemporary Bolivia, they happen to be among the territorialised peoples, especially in the lowland, many of which have gone through significant changes during the recent decades. They have settled in the forests, organised, marched, gained land and rights by linking up to international conventions and national law, they have embraced being indigenous, instead of feeling ashamed and acting submissively, some have performed for the media in paint and feathers, achieved much sympathy nationally and internationally, and yet they are still living at the margin struggling as hard as ever for land and resources against private and state enterprises, large landowners, megaprojects, and other marginalised poor people pursuing the same land. Therefore, the indigenous peoples in this thesis refer to the people of indigenous origin who maintain distinct structures, in mainly lowland collective territories, which is, in fact, the way Bolivians most often use it too, albeit, sometimes, in a derogatory way.

The next section explores some persistent representations of the Amazon and its peoples.

3.2 Representations of the Amazon and its peoples

‘To it [the wild Amazonian region] have come the most venerable bishops, elegant captains, and lucid scientists. From the tilling of a soil to cultivate exotic crops to developing the aborigine to raise him to the highest destiny, the distant metropole outdid itself in efforts to open up this land (...) Efforts all in vain.’ (da Cunha 2006:29)

To Euclides da Cunha, travelling with an expedition to determine the borders between Peru and Brazil in 1905, the Amazon was a lost paradise. Its potential of extraordinary progress to develop high-quality manufacture was lost, not least due to the locals who only ‘transfigured for a moment’, but then as soon as

they were left alone returned to their original 'brutishness' (ibid: 30). His hero was the rubber tapper from the Brazilian north-eastern dry-lands, who, indebted from the very beginning of his quest, throws himself into the wilderness, only to suffer further injustices and physical hardships in search of riches. He thus points to the victims of an unjust economic system, but without establishing that this is a result of a colonisation process, which he actively promotes himself. The solution to the injustices, he wrote, would be a work law that 'ennobles human efforts' (ibid: 33). The humans he wished to ennoble, however, were 'perpetrators' themselves, albeit weaker parts in the colonising project, not the unwilling natives, who are largely absent in his essays although they were equally enrolled with the rubber business, and profoundly suffered from that (e.g. Varese 1973).

Two thesis titles on Jesuit enterprise from different epochs are illustrative of the tropical image, corresponding to that of da Cunha, handed over through generations: 'A Vanished Arcadia', from 1901, and 'The Lost Paradise', from 1976 (in Block 1994), expressing the fascination of life at the edge of western civilization, close to an unspoiled nature. In Bolivia, the first mention of the Movima people derives from an expedition in 1621, describing them as 'naked people, vile and addicted to witch-craft'. A later Jesuit account states they were 'naked barbarians living in misery and without government' (Denevan 1966: 52). The Mojeño people were described in far more moderate terms (Block 1994); nevertheless, the Jesuits described the Indians as children to be enlightened. Much literature, not only from the past century, describe the native Amazonian as either a passive character being harmed, cheated or bypassed (e.g. Reyes-García et al. 2010), or an aggressive character, responding to harmful behaviour. Brown (2014) gives examples of the latter, but emphasise that no mono-causal explanations for (some) Amazonian peoples' pugnacity are trustworthy.

The representation of Amazonian peoples in Bolivia as brute savages persists along with other stigmatising portrayals. Such narratives serve to naturalise and justify the preferred development as envisioned by the narrator. Highland migrants to the lowland generally perceive the lowland peoples as lazy and ignorant of productive ventures; to them the communities seem disorganised, and the community members never work properly. 'They must always be ordered', I was told. Canessa (2014) describes immigrants' attitude, quoting statements such as 'we have brought civilisation' and 'before I came there was nothing here' (2014: 163). The smallholder migrants need land for both subsistence and commerce. Their notion of 'a piece of land to work' inhibits recognition of the landscape management of the lowland peoples and cause conflicts, sometimes violent, which reaffirms the myth of hostile savages. Also the government uses a patronising discourse when talking about the lowland indigenous groups that oppose hydrocarbon exploitation or the infrastructures related to it. Portraying the lowland indigenous peoples as a couple of

backward families (Canessa 2014), tied up in clientelist relationships with foreign organisations (Linares 2012), hindering development, reflects the government's encouragement of a sentiment of national sovereignty and promotion of resource nationalism. Finally, the NGOs are sometimes prone to represent their indigenous partners or beneficiaries in generalising and prejudiced terms. First of all, their aim most often is to change or 'improve' their practices, for instance to meet the requirements of good governance by advocating a certain way to organise, thus helping to keep the indigenous groups governable by producing a specific kind of legal indigenous person (Postero 2007). In order to be able to transfer technical solutions, the indigenous peoples may be referred to as knowledgeable, but having forgotten much of their traditional knowledge or unable to transform their knowledge into income. Moreover, very few donor organisations trust indigenous organisations to administer funds (see article one).

A growing body of authors, publishing literature on the Amazon, defy ready generalisations about Amazonian history and conditions. They also have another important, coinciding argument despite their different methodological approaches and academic backgrounds: that of local agency. The next section will focus on the proactiveness of the Amazonian peoples in the history of the economic development of the region.

3.3 Developing the Amazon

This section investigates how indigenous claims result from, respond to, and have been aligned with, the currents of changing development paradigms. The first article addresses these matters in earlier historical epochs in greater detail, why this section gives more space to recent history.

One of the persistent beliefs, challenged by recent archaeological research, is that of social organisation and production in the Amazon. The nomadic tribe, fully adapted to the harsh environment, and hardly leaving a footprint after their transient presence, was already refuted by Balée (1994), demonstrating how indigenous groups cultivated the forests, leaving clear traces from their activities. More recent findings much more radically force us to rethink the Amazon, as archaeologists have found that large parts of the western Amazon were densely populated until fairly recently, that is, until 500 years ago, at arrival of the Europeans to the continent (Erickson 2006; Erickson and Balée 2006; Mann 2008; Walker 2008). In Bolivia alone, more than 10,000 artificial mounds have been found, connected by canals and causeways (Figure and photo 1). This refutes previously fixed assumptions about the Amazon as inapt for larger settlements and agriculture of a more permanent character (Meggers 2003). The findings of this western Amazonian civilisation show no sign of a state-like hierarchical society; rather it has been a heterarchy of autonomous and highly different societal organisations, connected through complex communication lines. Mounds are permanent valuable features in the local landscape today; their deep, rich soils are prized for farming and

are sought by colonists as well as indigenous peoples. Forest islands with ring ditches can still be used with short fallow without production decrease (Erickson 2006), and contemporary indigenous groups depend on domesticated landscapes. They continue to manage human produced environments that determine the availability of flora, fauna and black soil whether from a distant or not so distant past, yet the indigenous groups in Beni do not seem to associate themselves with their forefathers, who built them.

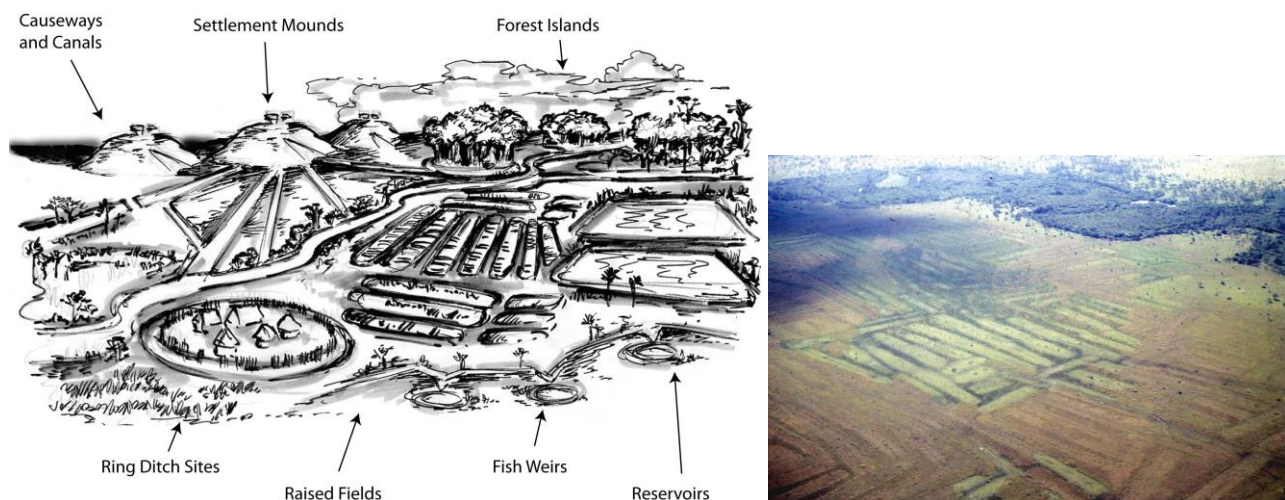


Figure 1 and photo 1: The domesticated landscapes of the Bolivian Amazon. Left: artwork by Daniel Brinkmeier (in Erickson 2006). Right: raised fields near Santa Ana de Yacuma, up to 1 x 20 x 150 meters in size (photo: Clark Erickson, used with his permission).

Part of the explanation must be that diseases brought from Europe and slave raids had decimated, almost finished, the populations so that they were no longer able to uphold their intensive production systems. It was all degraded already when the Jesuits in 1668 arrived to Moxos, largely coinciding with what today is the Bolivian Beni Department (figure 5, right, section 4.2). Most of the major towns in Beni are former Jesuit *Reductions* founded during the hundred years of their presence until when in 1767 they got expelled (Mahoney 2010). David Block (1994) insists on the importance of indigenous agency in the formation of a new amalgam, shaping European tradition to local realities. It was a period of constantly balanced adjustment, a transitional period, bridging precolonial heterarchical society with the, still developing, capitalist epoch. Block (1994) writes that the Jesuits assumed an indigenous acceptance of a European reconstruction of their culture, a condition that did not exist. Throughout his book he substantiates how the Moxos indigenous peoples were very selective to European features. Roller (2014), in a similar way, argues that both the mission and the following ‘aldeia’-system in Brazil offered a possibility beyond forced settlement or flight, namely a negotiated space where the indigenous peoples found advantages compared to ‘outside’. Valued for their skills, knowledges and navigation expertise (fig. 2), indigenous groups were

able to profoundly influence both settlements and expeditions to match their interests, maintaining a measure of autonomy, foretelling later resistance when forced labour and eventually taxation on commerce was promoted.

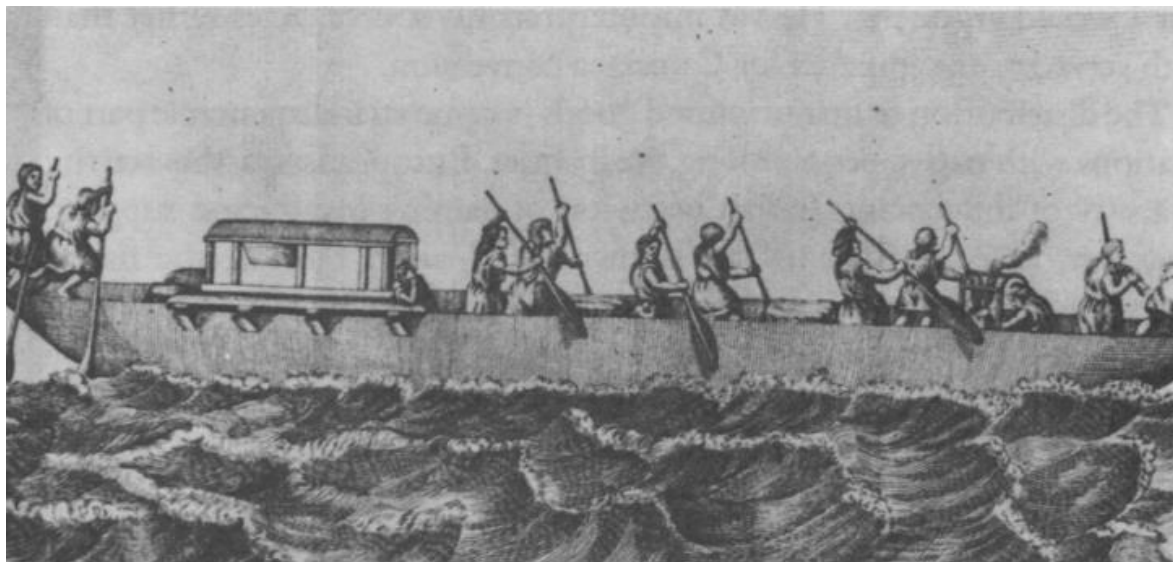


Figure 2: Indian Canoe from Late Mission Period. These canoes regularly travelled Moxos river networks into the twentieth century. Source: Eder, Breve descripción de las reducciones de Mojos (in Block 1994)

In Moxos, Bolivia, the mission-indians proved strong enough to maintain their positions for almost another hundred years after the expulsion of the Jesuits. In 1842, 17 years after independence from Spain, Moxos became the Beni Department. The new administrators saw the indigenous peoples and settlements as hindering development with their corporate approach to property, and individual property rights were set forth to include and tax all holdings in the region (Block 1994; Jones 1990). At the turn of the century, the demand for rubber in the industrialising countries seriously put pressure on the mission-indians (Van Valen 2013). A new form of organisation, rubber estates - the *barraca*, and debt peonage as labour relation, emerged with the rubber-economy, reducing many former mission-indians to servility (Assies 2006; Jones 1997). Many fled from the violence to the forests; others worked as slaves, or under slave-like conditions, and some worked their own land. The commercialisation of cattle and faunal furs, and a large agrarian reform of 1953 pushed this disastrous development for the indigenous peoples; in between was also the 'Chaco War'.

The Chaco War against Paraguay, 1931-1935, over land supposedly holding large oil-deposits, involved indigenous peoples from the region and disrupted society again. The endeavour to form a corporatist and interventionist state was sought by military socialist governments in the following decade, and the

nationalisation of the US-based Standard Oil in 1937 broke diplomatic relations between the US and Bolivia for five years and launched a new national, hydrocarbons policy (Casanovas 1990; Perreault and Valdivia 2010). Revolutionary nationalists took over in 1952 and introduced a period of nationalist reform nationalising the tin-mines and launching the above mentioned agrarian reform. The reform did not immediately affect the lowland, especially not Beni where land was plenty. That did in turn the US Bohan commission, 1941-42 (Jones 1997; Casanovas 1990), drafting the Bohan Plan, an economic development program to diversify and develop Bolivian economy, the manifest result of wartime US, in need of tin, approaching Bolivia again after the 'Standard Oil issue'. The report, exemplifying the emergence of 'development' in the 1940s, pointed to commercial ranching for Beni, where estimated a million heads of cattle roamed freely on the savannah, supplying local livelihoods and regional markets. The World Bank, among other donors, aggressively encouraged cattle ranching in the 1960s and 1970s in the Americas, lending both credit and technical services, including in Beni where the indigenous peoples' use of the land was ignored. The attitude of the World Bank towards ranching was expressed by an officer:

'While it is true that investment in ranching creates relatively few jobs (...) it can employ land for which there is little alternative use (...) and give important impetus to the total development effort' (Pryer in Jones 1997:114)

Support was conditioned on clarification of land ownership, and the cattle-ranchers were now able to benefit from the agrarian reform due to weak peasant organisations in the lowland (Gill 1987). Land-titles were issued to white and mestizo farmers capable of seizing the opportunity until, by the end of the 1970's, there was no more free grazing land. Land was thus 'put to work' with the cattle industry, while in fact it did not live up to its potential to sustain a much larger local population, as it had done earlier (article one).

In Beni, rather than land distribution, the agrarian reform thus eventually led to land concentration in the hands of a few ranching families, while the savanna peoples settled in the forests among peoples like the Tsimane, who never entered the Jesuit-reductions (Albó 1990). Re-categorisation of former agricultural land as 'idle' obscured this landscape transformation while national policies to privatise land and foreign donor loans forced the former town-indians to withdraw and live from bush-meat. To pursue a minimum of the imported goods they were used to, they now hunted and traded furs and skins, seriously depleting the game populations in some areas (Jones 1997).

Not only did they lose land and livelihoods, they lost their cattle. Still today, when interviewing the indigenous families, now living in the forests, the conversation often ends up to be about cattle, on how they access meat through relatives working on the ranches, on the community herd or their own couple of

heads (photo 2), or how cattle-farming is by far the greatest aspiration for their future development. Armando, my partner from the Bolivian NGO, CEJIS, when visiting the Movima people (article three), told me it was due to the fact that ranchers were rich that the Movima wanted to take up that business too. I am not sure it is as simple as that. I visited indigenous ranch-workers who proudly performed their skills, breaking in horses, and handling bull-calves. The older Movima-people ride bulls for transport, and along with skilful ranch-labourers they are highly respected for 'knowing' cattle. Jeffrey Hoelle (2015) has written a book on the cultural factors of ranching in the western Amazon, finding parallels to cattle cultures around the world. Having cattle is generally considered prestigious and equated with wealth; in the Amazon, ranchers are further seen as 'white' and powerful. Beef, in the cattle producing Acre Department in Brazil, is considered stronger than other meats and therefore suitable for the hardworking cowboys. Ranching culture, Hoelle asserts, is the only form of rural identity that is positively valued in Brazil, and even people who do not own land or cattle, including many who left the countryside, often identify with cattle culture. It is reasonable to suggest that similar mechanisms apply on the Bolivian side of the border, where indigenous peoples have managed herds, once their own, for many generations – even when the cattle has displaced the indigenous peoples from the fertile higher grounds and coveted mounds.



Photo 2: Image from Puerto San Lorenzo, TIPNIS.

Where the post-second world war liberal reforms had changed production and commerce nationally, and caused the dispossession of land and cattle from the savannah peoples, the neoliberal era seriously opened for foreign investments in the Andean-Amazonian countries. Privatisation of state sectors, deregulation and free trade policies were implemented, and in Bolivia the economic power shifted to the lowlands, where global economies of soy, oil and gas entered the scene (Hecht in Hindery 2013). The entrance of transnational corporations was facilitated by coordinated efforts of the World Bank, the US government and the Bolivian government, and it significantly affected indigenous peoples and occasioned deforestation among other environmental changes and damages to ecosystems (Hindery 2013), primarily in the south-

eastern lowland. Further to the north, in my study area, activities were fewer, but since launched in 2000, the indigenous peoples have feared the Initiative to Integrate the Regional South-American Infrastructure, IIRSA, of which Brazil is the prime mover. The central purpose is instant growth, fetching natural goods, transporting the products and merchandise of the transnational corporations and supplying them with energy. The initiative includes 507 Mega-projects: Highways, waterways, ports, telecommunications, hydroelectric power plants, gas pipelines, oil pipelines and aqueducts. Roads will cut through indigenous territories in the Beni and Pando departments of Bolivia, where 47 of the projects are planned, mostly concerning highways and energy (CAOI 2008). In the southern lowlands, local agency in response to hydrocarbon activities, through the efforts of the indigenous peoples and their allies to negotiate and challenge neoliberal reforms, shaped the way the reforms were implemented on the ground (Hindery 2013). To the north, indigenous peoples, without success, followed grievance procedures when they in 2007 presented an appeal for precautionary measures to the Inter-American Court of Human Rights against the Brazilian government because of the negative environmental impacts that two major dams downstream, just across the border, would occasion (CEJIS 2015). In both cases, indigenous peoples, with support from NGOs, employed rights gained as a result of their mobilisation in 1990 – an early response to neoliberal reforms.

In the 1980s, lowland indigenous peoples had started to organise in order to claim land, self-determination and a different construction of the state (Yashar 2005). They framed their claims in ways that echoed prevailing neoliberal discourses at the time (Aguilar-Støen 2017), not least the government-promulgated ‘multiculturalism’ project. Privatisation was promoted as part of the larger structural adjustments required by international financial institutions to solve a deep economic crisis. The economic reforms failed to meet the material demands of the Bolivian citizens, comprising the 36 different peoples, many directly affected by the extractive activities, others facing unemployment, rising prices and even starvation (Greenberg 1997). Recognition of indigenous identities in the reformed 1994 Constitution signalled attention to citizens’ demands. This ‘neoliberal multiculturalism’ (Postero 2007) spurred organisation of indigenous groups with the support of ecclesial communities and a growing number of NGOs and foreign donors in the region. In the lowland, the indigenous peoples organised in regional *centrals*⁷ and *subcentrals*, gathering strength and gradually challenging the workings of the neoliberal regime. Paradoxically, the neoliberal intent, that citizens take more responsibility for their own welfare, thus created the political opening that allowed for strong organisations. With support from their allies, these organisations were able to confront the policies of shifting governments, that they considered detrimental.

⁷ In Beni there are two Centrals, each comprising several subcentrals: Central de Pueblos Indígenas del Beni (CPIB) and Central de Pueblos Étnicos Mojeños del Beni (CPEMB)

A series of marches emanating from the lowland, arranged by the regional centrals, resulted in achievements that have all promoted collective rights, and each of them introduced key themes to the national political agenda. Results of the marches included the first four territories in 1990, the ratification of the ILO Convention on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples 169 in 1991, introducing the term 'territory' in relation to indigenous communal land, and the 1996 land reform, known as the 'ley-INRA', wherein the basis for collective titling of indigenous land was set (Fundación Tierra 2011; Paz et al. 2012). As a safeguard to protect vulnerable populations and valuable nature from the destructive effects of the market (Anthias and Radcliffe 2015), and perhaps as a political precaution, demands of collective rights to land were met, some of the largest in protected areas. Letting local communities become responsible for protecting natural resources resonated with the neoliberal ideas about privatising nature conservation (Aguilar-Støen 2017). In the Beni Department, the indigenous peoples proactively appropriated the space of the protected areas (Ávila 2009), as did many other peoples in the Amazon region (Hoelle 2015; Redford and MacLean 1993). With the collective land titles largely overlapping with forested areas, indigenous peoples became obvious allies of conservation organisations. 'Forests of the World', the Danish NGO that hosted me as an industrial PhD-student, is no exception; they most often engage with indigenous peoples with a shared interest in sustaining resources and keeping others from using them illegally. 'Conservation' thus became a vehicle for the indigenous struggle for land in the 1980s and 1990s during the epoch of neoliberal reforms, and it still persists.

Land titles and the sense of citizenship fuelled expectations of participation and inclusion into the state, reflected in the continued claims by the lowland peoples⁸. When marching in 2002, the consideration of indigenous autonomies and the demand for a Constituent Assembly was set forth; the latter became reality when MAS got into power. In 2004, the demand of a modification of the hydro-carbons law resulted in a fixed percentage revenue for indigenous community development, while demands for base-institutions for the realisation of prior consultations and the political recognition of the 34 lowland peoples both were transferred to the agenda of the Constituent Assembly, initiating its work in 2006 (Paz et al. 2012).

We are now approaching present times, where Evo Morales and the MAS party have governed Bolivia for more than a decade – since 2006. An exploration of the government's foreign policy reveals a complex mix of pragmatism and ideology. Its discourse includes references to anti-imperialism, de-colonialism and anti-capitalism, and on the international climate change scene Bolivia has attempted to take leadership promoting a holistic worldview that includes a different relationship with nature, blaming the 'system of

⁸ Postero (2007:15) argues that frustrations with the failures of the neoliberal reforms to make substantial changes in the distributive structures of Bolivian society were central to the, mainly urban, social upheavals in the beginning of the new millennium

boundless accumulation' (De Angelis, 2011) also known as capitalism. Bolivia's foreign policy behaviour differs from its discourse (Gardini and Lambert 2011; Rivarola Puntigliano 2011; Webber 2012). It willingly accepts the role as providers of raw materials (Svampa 2015) despite earlier aspirations of adding value to products to counter dependency, and continues trade-relations with countries towards which a hostile discourse is often used. High growth rates in the past decade, mainly due to increases in the prices of the commodities exported to emerging markets, explain why the new left-oriented governments have not challenged this structural development model, but rather reinforced it, even though they simultaneously challenge conventional means of development. Foreign direct investment inflows in South America have increased (IBD 2014), and most of the region's economies have witnessed sustained growth during the past decade. Chinese and Brazilian firms are major players and place far the most investments in natural resources and large infrastructure projects accompanying these activities (Delgado-Pugley 2013; ECLAC 2014). 'Multi-Latinas' are new players. They come from big countries, in our case mainly Brazil, rapidly growing economies able to support large domestic companies. They have access to low-cost resources such as labour forces or primary products and can access financial markets at the same terms as their OECD-based competitors. From Brazil can be mentioned 'Vale', now the world's fourth largest mining company, and 'Petrobras', Brazil's largest exporter (Santiso 2008). Despite new narratives regarding nature, Bolivian policy aims are connected to the continued extractive economic model (Pellegrini and Ribera 2012; Gudynas 2010), and Brazil is a close partner in projecting and financing the activities.

Neo-extractivism, a concept introduced by Gudynas in 2009 (2010 in English), is central to understanding the rationale of the South American leftish governments. It denotes a claim that progressive extractivism exists in which the state plays a more active role, a model that induce reconsideration of the prevailing curse-narrative of extraction-based paths of development as crisis-prone, poverty-reinforcing and politically unstable (Burchardt and Dietz 2014). It breaks with the neoliberal strategy of privatising export by nationalising companies and raw materials, revising contracts and increasing taxes, and uses surplus revenues to finance social programs and public infrastructure. Poverty-reduction, national development and sovereignty legitimise the 'new' development project, in which the states have resumed the role as key social actor. Discussions revolve around the question whether we witness a post-neoliberal era in Bolivia, gradually transforming the country through small steps of redistribution and the safeguarding of national sovereignty (Fuentes 2011; Riddell 2011) or perhaps even the creation of a more democratic version of liberalism (Postero 2010), or the 'reconstituted neo-liberalism' (Webber 2012), a more stable version of the economic model that the Morales government inherited.

Anyhow, in Latin-America, the commodity consensus (Svampa 2015) and the initiative to integrate South-American infrastructures regionally (IIRSA) both consolidate an extractive development style adopted by leftist and liberal states alike (Bebbington and Bebbington 2011). Extraction and agro-industry are capital, not labour, intensive and require only limited, specialised staff. In the Bolivian lowland, extraction of hydrocarbons, mega-infrastructures and export crops, especially the gene-modified soy production, constitute the contemporary colonising frontiers as a result of this economic strategy. Since 2010, the government has entered alliance with the capital-strong agro-industry and large landowners (Webber 2017), pushing the agricultural frontier northwards from the Santa Cruz department into the Beni. The soy frontier is indirect, in that it pushes two older frontiers onto the forested land where mostly indigenous peoples reside: the grazing land (Jones 1990; article one) and the smallholder migrants, encouraged by new infrastructures and government appeals to develop the 'unused resources' of the country (Canessa 2014). The smallholders are core MAS-voters, and expect reforms that will provide them with more land and support production and commercialisation of their activities in the agricultural market, which was a promise of the government in its election campaign (Webber 2017).

Now, in the post-neoliberal era of Evo Morales and the MAS government, the mega-infrastructures to the north are opposed in contentious ways, through protest-marches and blockades. The territorial peoples are pressured by small-holders and ranchers, indirectly by lowland agri-business elite and the return of the centralistic state, oriented at resource-extraction. None of these actors seem to show understanding of the territorial peoples' need for whole landscapes to form the basis for their diversified livelihood strategies; instead the government put pressure for them to give up the protected status of parks to allow for 'development', as described in the case of TIPNIS in article two. The continued expansion of development projects will deeply affect the future of indigenous communities. In 2012, the number of zones made available for oil operations increased by 50% on the previous year, sustaining an existing trend. In 2010, there were 56 petroleum concessions, growing to 96 in 2011. This expanding industry had then extended to 22 indigenous territories and 10 protected areas (Delgado-Pugley 2013:172). The lowland peoples, whose political organisations supported Evo Morales in his presidential candidature, feel utterly betrayed.

The divergent visions and interests showed already at the Constituent Assembly, gathered to formulate a new Constitution for the Plurinational State. Indigenous and peasant organisations alike were decisive for the electoral victory of Morales. They had demanded, and were represented in, the Constituent Assembly, as discussed more thoroughly in article two, but they advocated fundamentally different interests related to both economic and political themes. The aspirations of the indigenous collectives were not prioritised. A first, deep controversy regarded the distribution of seats in the Assembly; the indigenous collectives argued

for the representation based on the 36 Bolivian peoples and for the avoidance of party-politics, but were overruled. The positions reflect that the main concern for the indigenous collectives is the creation of strong, self-governed entities, while MAS and the indigenous-peasant organisations aim for the construction of a new state-hegemony and national-level strengthening (Postero 2015; Regalsky 2010; Schilling-Vacaflor 2011). The resulting, new Constitution (CPE 2009) establishes a hierarchy among jurisdictions, in which the central state keep exclusive control over natural resource exploitation (CPE:349). Tapia (2010) calls it a constitutional hierarchy, not unlike the neoliberal multiculturalism (Postero 2007) established in the 1994 amendments to the former constitution.

The latest marches emanating from the lowland have been remarkable in that they have been directed against the government that the indigenous peoples initially supported. The 2010 march thus proposed a political agenda regarding indigenous autonomy different from the one presented in the decentralisation and autonomy laws (Stocks 2005; Canessa 2009), and resumed a debate demanding the 34 lowland peoples' representation in the Legislative Plurinational Assembly, instead of a restricted access proposed by the Morales government (Paz et al. 2012). Even more remarkable was the violent intervention of the police in the eighth march in 2011 (e.g. McNeish 2013), protesting the planned construction of a highway through the indigenous territory and national park Isiboro-Sécure, the TIPNIS. That this happened in the supposedly favourable institutional context of the Plurinational State caused the final rupture between the lowland organisations and the Morales government, and the profound distrust of the lowlanders regarding the government's intentions in the Department since then.

My use of 'Plurinational State' is adopted from the use of the peoples I worked with in the territories and the Bolivian NGO I accompanied in the Movima Territory, and this is perhaps the most persistent and radical contemporary claim of the territorial peoples: they insist on being part of the plurinational state, but on their own conditions, and they demand democratic inclusion in regional and national development by invoking the right to be represented as equivalent self-determining entities.

3.4 Alternative directions: From Loma Santa to TIPNIS

This section looks closer at what are often designated millenarian movements in the region, especially in my study area, and explores their link to contemporary indigenous movements. Following and connected to that, we then look at the more manifest expressions of the 'millenarian' vision, the characteristics of societal organisation in lowland communities and territories, to understand how exactly they constitute an alternative to the more conventional local government. Most importantly these characteristics include concepts of property and democracy that deviates from both public and private property, and representative, party-based democracy, respectively.

As a response to colonialism, a phenomenon known as millenarist, sometimes messianic, movements emerged across the Amazon region. The most well-known is perhaps the Peruvian lowland revolt led by Juan Santos Atahualpa, raised by Jesuits in the highland, in the mid-late eighteenth century (Varese 1973; Brown and Fernández 1991). The revolt succeeded in returning land to its 'legitimate owners', the lowland tribal peoples, and creating an informed indigenous consciousness ready to defend freedom and independence at any time (Varese 1973:208). It led to the firm exclusion of Europeans from the land in question, and, importantly, it also included the search and restoration of a primordial order, Varese argues.

In the Bolivian Amazon, movements referred to as millenarist appeared for the first time after liberalism in the nineteenth century had already swept across the region. In the Beni, mission-indians were well equipped to contest the projects of political and economic elites due to their heritage, the mixture of indigenous and colonial Jesuit culture, and they were able to mobilise a range of different strategies to negotiate a place in the new, liberal society. The strategies included migration, and participation in politics and discourses of the dominant society (Van Valen 2013). Millenarianism was another strategy used when the demand for labourers increased with the rubber-boom in the late twentieth century. Led by a Christian shaman, predicting a major flooding, the mission-indians withdrew from the urban centre Trinidad to San Lorenzo, a new settlement at the pampas, already inhabited by people who wanted to escape the karaiyana (white people). They brought their cattle and religious images with them. In San Lorenzo they applied shifting cultivation, raised cattle and built *cabildos* for religious activities and local governance. The shaman was tracked down, tortured and killed, but only after several failing expeditions of the Trinidad karaiyana to regain control over the Indians. The major argument of Van Valen (2013), again, is that the mission-indians used the millenarist movement to negotiate recognition and respect as fellow citizens in their relation with the dominant economic and political classes, being able to manipulate the categories 'savage' and 'civilised' in prevailing discourses. He thus states that the rubber boom in Beni transformed, rather than devastated, the society, and that the mission-indians were actively participating in that transformation. The later rush for cattle and grazing land was a much larger threat to them, and initiated a new millenarist movement, the search for Loma Santa – the sacred mound (article one).

There are many similarities between the Loma Santa and former movements here and elsewhere in the region. The distancing from karaiyana, the symbols of a primordial place of abundance, and the restricted access for people with selfish intentions were among the descriptions I had from informants, which can also be found in literature. The symbolism, the circular and parallel times it suggests, the archetypes and – places, and the layers and strengths this add to the movements should not be underestimated, however, such interpretations belong in the periphery of my capacity as a development researcher. I can, however,

relate to the part that refers to economic freedom and material welfare inherent in the Loma Santa narrative:

‘The Loma Santa means (...) material welfare, but for the Mojeños it is something more, it gathers the elements: material security and economic freedom and independence of the karaiyana (...) [and the striving for] a communal life’ (*Riester 1976: 321*). (...) This includes the Movima, who, like the Mojeños, have lost their community’ (*ibid: 318*) (*own translation*)

The movement differed from the former in Beni by being silent and occurring over a long period, mainly between 1960 and 1980. Families broke up independently or in small groups and started to walk until they found a place to settle, close enough to the Loma Santa (see article one). It was a silent, progressive invasion of land (Canedo 2011; Lehm 1999). The new forest-communities reproduced mission-societies with the cabildo-government, which I will soon return to, churches and schools. With the organisation of lowland indigenous peoples in the 1980s and 1990s, Loma Santa became a mobilising claim, turning the rather isolationist movement into a proactive one (Ávila 2009; Lehm 1999), resembling earlier movements by invoking ‘the vision’ in unifying communities for focused action.

Fausto et al. (2016) pose the question why social movements of the Amazon are referred to as messianic, nativist or other designations that indicate premodern, religious movements in contrast to modern reformism. There are probably several contemporaneous answers to that, one being the close relationship of many Amazonian peoples with missionaries, and later liberation theologians with whom bottom-up organisation of base communities took place, led to redistribution of land (Aires 2012; French 2009), and sparked a political culture of resistance (Pace 1992; see also article three). The lowland peoples tend to frame their movements in religious terms, and their vision of a future society, here among the Mojeño and the Movima, includes prescriptions for life and institutions that reflects the specific indigenous-Catholic amalgam that has long characterised their culture. That does not mean that the de-politisation of indigenous movements that Fausto et al. (2016) refer to is not real and deliberate. They rightfully stress how the millenarist denominations place Amazonian peoples’ resistance beyond rational, political communication. With a decolonial lens, however, it can be argued that the distancing from rationalism - the belief in human reasoning as key to create stable societies - is exactly what shapes an alternative to the liberal, modernising idea. The millenarian ‘utopias’ do not merely exist in a parallel world; they contribute to the shaping of a political project and an Amazonian alternative.

The more palpable examples of alternatives to the modernising idea inherent in the vision, also implemented in the territories, include concepts of property and democracy. First of all, in the territories,

land, as well as resources, is collectively owned and managed, subjected to the control of communal and territorial institutions. Land cannot be sold, and benefits from the use of resources must not lead to individual enrichment. Violators of the latter principle face processes of communal justice, risking exclusion and deprivation of privileges or positions. Distribution of land, and the use of common resources, is directly controlled by the families who constitute the basic organisational units with high levels of autonomy (Reyes-Garcia et al. 2010). In the community-*cabildo*, families meet to make decisions about matters concerning the whole community (Canedo 2011; Díez Astete 2011); the community-*cabildo* thus has the role of ordering of the internal life of the community. *Cabildo* refers to both the actual building where meetings take place, and the system itself (photo 3).



Photo 3: The *cabildo* in Tres de Mayo, TIPNIS

The families appoint a *Corregidor*. He is responsible for coordinating meetings and joint community work, he mediates in conflicts and he represents the community externally. Examples of other positions in the case of my research area are the *Capitan Grande*, 'second in command', the *Secretaria de Acta*, who write down decisions at the meeting, signed by all participants, 1-3 *Commissarios* and 1-2 *Alcaldes*, all with specific obligations to the community or to the *Corregidor*. Some are simply responsible for inviting for the meetings. Apart from this there is a school board, a health commission and most often at least one or two more committees. The adult population of a typical community seldom reaches 100, which means that a large part of the inhabitants are directly involved in local governance, and most community-members will sooner or later occupy at least one position. Decisions, however, are made by consensus; the authorities are merely responsible of presenting issues in the *cabildo* and carrying out decisions made there. Although honourable, it is not exactly a desirable position to be *Corregidor*, but when appointed it is an obligation. His or her power is quite limited, the authorities are appointed with considerations to experience and are in

charge of ensuring good social relations. New authorities can be elected if the families are not satisfied with their performance. The *Corregidor* can be a woman, but not often a young person. At the meetings everybody can participate, bring up issues, present their view on all the matters and get the word as long and as many times needed. Sometimes meetings can go on for days, ending with the decision of assigning required actions to be carried out before the next meeting. While the titles refer to both Jesuit and secular republican government, the responsibilities of those holding the positions are defined by the families.

In the urban provincial capitals, the *Cabildo Indigenales* are found. These are institutions that date back to the Jesuit epoch and form a fundamental part of the normative and organisational part of both Mojeños and Movima. Their persistence can be explained by their function as organisers of the ritual and festive life of the larger indigenous community (Canedo 2011). Mobilisation in the 1980s started here, and the first Subcentrals emerged from these urban Cabildos as a response to the abuse of indigenous people, especially from ranching sector, and the intrusion of loggers in the forests that formed the last stronghold of many former mission-indians. Today, the primary role of the Gran Cabildo is still to organise annual festivals and religious rituals (photo 8, p. 53), but I found that in Trinidad, the Cabildo is being used for an array of other purposes, ranging from adult education, talks and lectures, to political meetings and the planning of protests or other public manifestations (photos 4 and 5).



Photos 4 and 5. Left: Ombudsman (Defensor del Pueblo) visiting the Cabildo Indigenal in Trinidad, informing about indigenous peoples rights. Right: Protest arranged by the same Cabildo in support of a struggle taking place further north in the Amazonian region against the construction of a dam (photo: M. Fabricano 2017).

With the creation of TCOs, a new organisation had to be established. Hitherto, there had been no tradition for supra-communal organisation, except for the Gran Cabildo Indigenales the in the urban centres. The Subcentrals form the territorial leaderships, appointed at the Meeting of Corregidores, or the General

Assembly, both denominations of the highest authority of a territory (photo 6). At these territorial gatherings representatives from each community can vote, while others can participate with the right to speak. NGOs and other external parties must address the territory through the Subcentral, responsible for external relations; however, major decisions can only be made at the territorial gatherings. The Subcentrals are constituted with a president, a vice-president and a number of secretaries each responsible for a specific area, such as: organisation, land and territory, economic development, education and culture, health, press and communication, etc. (Canedo 2011). While such organisations apparently mirror the style of Western institutions, internally, they tend to be more fluid, with authority dispersed across the organisation (McDaniel 2002; see also article two and three). Internally, the Subcentral is also responsible for mediating in conflicts between communities when needed, and sometimes address complaints regarding violence or theft (Canedo 2011). The TCOs, as new institutions, face different challenges. Internally, as evident from article two and three, the TCOs may struggle with difficult logistics and communication, lack of financial resources, or internal disputes and division caused by affiliation with political parties or misuse of positions. Externally, the TCO form a figure that is recognised, but whose conditions is seriously hampered by reluctance, on part of the government, to render legitimate the governance structures that the TCOs wish to apply. Indeed, the success of the few indigenous TCOs or indigenous municipalities in establishing autonomous self-governance draws them more closely into the bureaucracy of the state, arguably eroding rather than enhancing autonomy. Despite the official discourse proclaiming commitment plurinationalist principles, the practice of indigenous autonomy increasingly appear to be restricted by the goals and logic of the state and the governing political party, suggesting Foucauldian governmentality at play (Tockman and Cameron 2014). The policy framework is seldom compatible with other decentralisation frameworks, and the territories are often geographically established across municipal and departmental borders (Postero 2007; Stocks 2005).



Photo 6: Movima Assembly (photo: E. Barrientos 2016)

Adding to the above mentioned difficulties for practicing a vision of an alternative societal order is the increasingly difficult conditions for civil society organisations and foreign NGOs who wish to engage with the territorial indigenous peoples. The next section introduces this challenge.

3.5 The shrinking space for civil society

As ascertained throughout the articles, and also in the above sections of this chapter, supporters and allies of the lowland peoples play a central role in their struggles and their proposals of alternative development directions. In this section, I briefly explore whether we are witnessing a shrinking space for civil society in the beginning of this new century. This regards civil society organisations and NGOs in the world generally and in Bolivia specifically. I address two main limiting factors, similar in their withdrawal from the global to the national arena. The first regards an emphasis on national sovereignty in 'the south'; the second, an increasing demand from northern donors for documentation of results from 'development' in the south.

The Bolivian economic politics, overtly contrasting the pro-nature, anti-capitalist discourse, do not seem contradictory to the government, which defends its strategy as a necessary means to create the resources for a post-extractive economy that will transition towards "communitarian socialism" (Achtenberg 2015). Bolivia will not act as 'park rangers' for the benefit of the industrialised north, Vice-President Garcia Linares expressed (ERBOL 2010), and that the government is ready to put weight behind the words was proved with the TIPNIS controversy in 2011 (McNeish 2013) when indigenous protesters against a proposed highway through their territory and protected area, clashed with brutal police-forces, a seminal event in recent Bolivian history.

The violent episode and prolonged TIPNIS conflict not only caused a rupture with the lowland indigenous peoples, but also with both the environmental and human rights NGOs that historically worked with Bolivia's social movements, and were instrumental in bringing Morales and his MAS party to power (Ellerbeck 2015). Many NGOs weighed in on the side of lowland indigenous resistance to the government's proposed highway, and in 2013 a Danish NGO was expelled from Bolivia for presumed political interference, after 30 years of work with indigenous organisations on land reform, bilingual education, prior consultation rights, and related issues (Gustafson 2013). The same year Law 351 was adapted under which all NGOs operating in Bolivia, foreign as well as domestic, must renew their registration, reveal their funding sources, and conform their statutes to official purposes.

In 2015, the strained relationship took a new turn when four domestic NGOs experienced an attack launched by the Vice-President, accusing them of 'political meddling to advance the interests of foreign governments and corporations' (Achtenberg 2015). The four NGOs are well-respected Bolivian research

organisations, conducting investigations on economic, social, labour, environmental, and agrarian issues in Bolivia for the past two-three decades. The attack caused a heated debate involving an open letter from 42 Latin American and European intellectuals, among which were many current and former supporters of the Morales government. They were concerned with the accusations and denounced the charges as a serious setback for Bolivian democracy⁹. The Vice-President defended his position, referring to geopolitical imperialism as articulated in his *Geopolitics of the Amazon* (Linera 2012) in which he asserts that NGO environmental activism promotes neo-colonialism and threatens Bolivian sovereignty. In this document he answers his own question of 'Who has the power in the Amazon', by listing four groups (see figure): First, the foreign corporations, buying carbon credits to continue destructive production-patterns while gaining extraterritorial access to genetic material in the forests they protect; second, the governments of developed capitalist countries, especially the US, who establish 'cordons of control' through the mentioned 'corporate environmentalism', manifest in military bases near the resource-rich areas; third, the lowland 'bourgeoisie', large land-owners, monopolising the cattle-industry, as well as the harvesting of other Amazon products, while generating surplus value by exploiting indigenous peoples as cheap wage labourers; and finally, the NGOs. In third world countries, he asserts, the NGOs are not really non-government, but organisations of foreign governments replacing the state in sectors such as health and education (Linera, 2012: 9, 10, 19, and 29). He is of course not entirely wrong; the neoliberal era created an indigenous-NGO coalition, initiated through the earlier mentioned 'palliative reforms' (Postero, 2007) and the minimisation of the state



Figure 3: The Amazonian power-holders, according to Vice-president García Linera (2012:29)

⁹ <http://www.rebelion.org/noticia.php?id=202193&titular=%22sr.-alvaro-garc%EDa-linera:-la-cr%EDtica-intelectual-no-se-combate-a-fuerza-de-censura%22->

During fieldwork, I found the negative discourse on NGOs permeating the very local struggle of who has the legitimacy to represent TIPNIS after the breakdown of both the former regional indigenous organisations and the territorial government (see article two). During a contested consultation of TIPNIS communities, a new government friendly and government supported leadership had emerged, and tried to coup the old leadership appointed by the communities in a general assembly. The 'aspiring president' accused the 'old leaders' of having approved of a new Protection Law, a result of the protests, without consulting with 'the base'. They accused the territorial government and the 'old' indigenous organisations at regional and national levels as well, to have sold their souls to NGOs, a rhetoric very much in line with that of the Vice-President, claiming that a landowner domination has been produced by NGOs having managed to create 'a clientelistic network of indigenous leaders' (Linera 2012:29). A way to further weaken critical, domestic NGOs has been the co-optation of key staff from the organisations into government positions (Regalsky 2010; Webber 2017). The Bolivian NGO, CEJIS, had lost almost half of its employees on that account.

Bolivia is not alone in its crackdown on NGOs. Gill (2017) focuses on a tendency of state leaders curtailing the work of NGOs, accusing them of seeking to destabilise democratically elected governments with funding from abroad. The countries he specifically mentions are under Russian or Chinese influence, or belong to the 'pink tide' Latin American countries, among them Bolivia.

Between 2000 and 2013, trade in goods between Latin America (and the Caribbean) and China increased 22-fold, and China's share of exports climbed from 1 to 10 %. By way of comparison, the region's trade with the world grew just three-fold over the same period. China is thus on the way to replacing the European Union as the second largest market for Latin American and Caribbean exports in 2014. By 2010 it had already taken the European Union's place as the second largest source of imports to the region. The trade between Latin America and China is clearly inter-industry: raw materials for manufactures (ECLAC 2015). What will be the consequences of China replacing Europe as the second largest market? When reading the Communication from the European Commission, there are fundamental issues to be observed in the partnership between EU and LAC: climate change adaptation and mitigation, environment, distribution of wealth, crime, social cohesion and human rights (EC 2009), absent in the relation with China.

According to Gill (2017), the limiting of NGO operations springs from the more proactive role of Russia and China worldwide in military and economic terms, where it is seen that their 'homeland restrictions' on NGOs work are spreading to countries they ally with. He uses Venezuela as a case in point to understand the passing of anti-NGO legislation and the discourse used to justify the restriction of rights. Rights that were brought about through an increasing 'transmission of cultural scripts', meaning the shared ideas among the ever more connected state leaders through intergovernmental institutions, prioritising 'human

rights, liberal democracy, individualism and progress' (ibid: 623). It has been shown that NGOs have been instrumental to the transmission of these cultural scripts that also include legislation protecting the environment. World-systems theorists provide a framework to understand global relations and the 'travelling' of laws limiting NGOs between ideologically aligned allies, but this does not explain the timing. Gill (2017) argues that the discourse of how national sovereignty must exceed e.g. human rights and democracy is applied domestically in 'unsettled periods', and that state leaders have proved that they are willing to put action behind the words. His, and ECLACs, analysis fits Bolivia well. Foreign direct investment inflows in South America have increased, and most of the region's economies have witnessed sustained growth during the past decade. Chinese and Brazilian firms are major players and place far the most investments in natural resources and large infrastructure projects accompanying these activities (ECLAC 2014). A dramatic decline in international oil prices have not slowed down the extractive activities, on the contrary, they are the direct reason for expanding gas and oil activities into Bolivia's national parks. Regarding Russia, relations have so far been mainly economic too, but in 2016 Bolivia and Russia signed an agreement on military cooperation.

Reading Vice-President Linera's 'Geopolitics of the Amazon' (2012), however, it does not seem that he needs inspiration from 'ideologically aligned allies' (Gill 2017) when accusing NGOs for promoting 'transnational imperial policy' (Achtenberg 2015). There is no doubt that the NGOs under attack were instrumental in the transmission of, the now less desired, 'cultural scripts' (Gill 2017), but they also helped the Morales government into power. Now, the government states it does not need the NGOs anymore, being itself the 'government of the social movements'. Regarding the timing of the expulsion of the Danish NGO, the adaptation of Law 351 and the attack on the four domestic NGOs, the Morales Government certainly faced an 'unsettled period' as the TIPNIS episode gained much sympathy, and raised awareness nationally and internationally about livelihood conditions in lowland territories. The lowland peoples insisted on democratic inclusion in regional development, referring to the Constitutions alignment with international conventions and declarations on indigenous peoples' rights (ILO 1989; UNDRIP 2007). Facing upcoming elections, a discourse on the overriding importance of national sovereignty took over at that point.

The second limiting factor for civil society and NGOs stems from the donor-countries themselves. An unpredictable environment (Watkins et al. 2012), mainly due to the political shifts that keep changing development aid policies, push organisations from one grants system to another, absorbing working hours and energy spent on outputs that go directly back to the funding agency. Dependent on funding for their activities, NGOs must consider and satisfy requirements from different donors, among them perhaps their

home state. In the past decades, especially since the economic crisis in 2008 and the later refugee-‘crisis’ in Europe, tax-based funding for development in the south has been questioned domestically, which has led to a decrease in state-funding of development abroad, and an increased demand on documentation of its use. The UN-system faces similar constraints, having ascertained a substantial increase in earmarked funding and specific donor requirements (UN 2017). The individual donor reports are produced in multiple, often significantly differing and changing, layouts and demands in applications, budget structure, monitoring and evaluations. The competition for new contracts and uncertainty about renewals has spurred a diversification in donors to diminish dependence, but with each donor having its own expectations and frameworks, the costs in working hours are increasing.

Apart from increasing transaction costs, these requirements put at stake both the legitimacy of the NGO and its inclination to be innovative, not to mention risking politically motivated exclusion from recipient countries. NGOs often invoke moral justification for their activities, based on their experience in ‘the South’, and their relationships with southern partners (Lister 2003). The organisations are accountable to this grass-root level which also includes their domestic membership-group. Donor-funding, however, redirects accountability toward funders and away from the NGOs’ grass-roots support-base and southern partners. The NGOs become contractors, constituencies become customers, and members become clients (Fisher 1997), and moreover, the top-down planning and funding, and upwards accountability, albeit often transcended (McDaniel 2002), burden partners and beneficiaries in recipient countries with the increasing amount of donor-requirements. This influences the level of grass-root participation (Cornwall and Brock 2005) and engagement with project purpose and design, and becomes decisive for the type projects engaged with: outcomes must be measurable, which inevitably shape the project-designs, and the methods used in the field. Thus projects tend to be directed towards activities and results easily measured, rather than emancipatory development projects engaging with e.g. the strengthening of political institutions or advocacy. An implication of this is that quantitative efforts tend to be preferred by the implementing organisation. For example, when the plan states that more women and young people must be included in decision-making, it is quite easy to document that 200 women have attended workshops informing them about their rights. It is far more difficult to document or make plausible, that a smaller group of women or young people, that have gained confidence ‘to speak’ in assemblies through thorough knowledge of the state of territorial affairs, will benefit the target group the most in the longer term.

NGOs and foreign donors are of crucial importance for the lowland peoples’ room for manoeuvre, which is an important point of the thesis. Obviously, the shrinking space for civil society affects them in their struggles, as it has shown e.g. in the TIPNIS case (article two).

4. Methods

We do not 'store' experience as data (...) we 'story' it (*Winter 1988:235 in Bolton 2010*)

How can I know? This chapter describes the process of knowledge production in order for the reader to understand how I have become able to discuss what I set out to investigate, i.e. *indigenous peoples' historical and contemporary claims to land and self-determination*. The second chapter outlined the conceptual frame used to approach the task; this chapter is concerned with the steps towards defining the research agenda, reflexivities, and of course the 'hands-on' methods used along the process. They have been ethnographic and interpretive. The planning, conducting, analysing, cognitive, writing, reading and concluding parts of the process were all intimately connected and iterative, in close relation with the feedback I had in the field and from collaborators in the organisations, my supervisors, colleagues and peer-reviewers. Analysis began already when using the initial information to sort out what I believed to be relevant, and my ongoing reflections and preliminary analyses continuously pushed the fieldwork in new directions. This process is well-known to researchers with a qualitative approach; in this chapter I present an overview of the path I followed. In revealing my choices to the reader, I also aim to remind us that research is designed and carried out by people, not by 'science'.

The chapter also includes a presentation of the NGOs I was involved with, the Danish 'Forests of the World' (FoW), and the Bolivian CEJIS, as well as some more general reflections on development organisations. In my analysis of the role of development practitioners for indigenous communities and organisations, which is an important part of my thesis, reflections on their motivations and positionalities, along with my own, is central for reflexivity. 'Reflexivity' (Hall 1996) includes awareness about 'one's doing of the research, as well as what one brings to it', including experience, values, a priori concepts and knowledge (ibid:30). Reflexivity is the stepping back from 'what do I know' to 'how do I know'. I understand reflexivity as the exercise of becoming aware of the limits of our knowledge and of how our own behaviour is complicit in forming practice, and perhaps even marginalise groups or individuals (Bolton 2010). NGOs may take up a large amount of this chapter, justified, however, by the fact that this has been an industrial PhD-project, in which I have been deeply involved with their practices. The chapter starts with highlighting some reflections and choices in the process of defining the research agenda. Then I move on to the choice of study sites and the actual data-collection and analysis, before I turn to the account of the non-government organisations involved with parts of my fieldwork. This leads to the final section embarking on reflexivities and positionalities.

4.1 Steps towards defining the research agenda

When Forests of the World and I agreed upon the cooperation, the topic of the PhD-project was open, and so was the choice of country. At the time, in 2015, FoW's international department worked in four Latin American countries, three in central-America, and Bolivia in the south. All of them had interesting cases to dig into¹⁰, yet I soon found myself in the north-eastern Bolivian swamp, annoyingly aware that I knew of the unpleasant climate in advance. I was visiting the Movima, with whom FoW wishes to engage closer. They were supporting the elaboration of a 'Lifeplan to Live Well' for the young territory, but had limited knowledge of the daily conditions of the Movima, and the opportunities for engagement that their land and organisation offered. I could help uncover that. The Movima territory became one out of three research areas, all indigenous territories in the Beni Department; in the other territories I did not have the dual role of being both a researcher *and* a practitioner. Therefore the thesis is not an 'NGOlogy', exclusively dealing with development practitioners, but general reflections on the role of NGOs in development form a natural part of the thesis, and the specific engagement of FoW and CEJIS with the Movima is central in the third article.

In the Bolivian Amazon, almost a quarter of the land is titled to indigenous peoples (Fundación Tierra 2011). The thematic options for research that this situation represents are many, but given the affiliation with FoW and the shared assumption that forest conservation and biodiversity is safer with the indigenous peoples, the practical questions that naturally emerged in defining the research agenda revolved around the efforts of the indigenous communities to maintain control over their land in the face of neo-extractivism and the megaprojects connected to it. The case of a contentious highway through TIPNIS was already there, and there was, in FoW, an assumed connection between excessive flooding in the Movima area, climate change and two major hydro-dams built on the border to Brazil. That connection was however difficult to establish, and there was not even a *perceived* connection among the Movima to explore. Instead I embarked my initial impulse. From the beginning I was fascinated about how the Movima grabbed the constitutionalised highland concept, Vivir Bien (Living Well), and used it in a Lifeplan for their territory in order to strengthen both internal cohesion and the position vis-à-vis external actors. The idea then became to explore the mobilisation and framing of the policy tools and concepts, FPIC and Vivir Bien, by different parties in the pursuit of influence on the development of the indigenous territories, as well as the pursuit of self-determination and the constitutional right to autonomy in the indigenous territories. The latter is a major concern of our partner organisation in Bolivia, CEJIS. The direction of the research would change again, but with this purpose I set out.

¹⁰ Actually, our application, written on a short notice, addressed a conflict between indigenous peoples, state and the UN in Panama.

I knew I would look into the history of Beni and its peoples, but I was not fully prepared for what I found. When recognising their past as sophisticated agriculturalists and specialised craftsmen in urban missionary settlements, this influenced my perspective enormously, and later became the topic of my first paper on the erasure of indigenous practices and plights from the landscape. With this in mind, my approach to the TIPNIS case in my second article changed from a mere yardstick evaluation of a consultation process to the assessment of its implications for the indigenous communities and organisations in the longer term. With the comprehension that the livelihoods of the Movima were always produced under influence of, or in interaction with, intervening parties, the Lifeplan project to Live Well also appeared in a different light. Being part of the 'development practice' allowed for the specific study of relations, dynamics and effects in the co-production of the Movima territory, which became the topic of my third paper. For my thesis, as we now know, I ended up deciding to investigate historical and contemporary claims to land and self-determination in order to provide an understanding of how lowland indigenous peoples imagine and negotiate development. We now move on to see how the project was practically approached.

4.2 Study site constructions and characteristics

I started by defining a physical field. As the efforts of the lowland indigenous peoples have already resulted in collectively titled territories, the TCOs, I figured territories would make good entry points. The process of entering the field and making contacts was significantly enabled by my previous autonomous work in the area as a master student, and by my new affiliation with an NGO; so was the process of designing the research. I had already spent considerable time in the TIPNIS and had good relations with both leaders and families in two specific communities there, inhabited with Mojeño and Yuracaré people. I was familiar with their social organisation and daily tasks, and importantly, I knew about their main challenges regarding territorial organisation and perceived threats to their livelihoods. Regarding the Movima, I already had an initial idea about their main difficulties and the nature of their territory due to the engagement of Forests of the World, and their Bolivian partner organisation, CEJIS. The Multiethnic Indigenous Territory, TIM, was included because of its proximity to both TIPNIS and Movima, located in between, and because of the autonomy process in progress here; I did not spend much time in the territory, but visited the leadership, the *Subcentral*, in San Ignacio de Moxos and spend various days talking and interviewing people here on two different occasions. CEJIS is engaged with the TIM and the autonomy process, why it became a natural subject for conversation during the time we spent together in the field. The idea that the territories make up logical and manageable units for me to study was of course oversimplified, but at least they have geographical borders and the communities within them have a given affiliation with a specific Subcentral.

The Subcentrals in respectively San Ignacio (TIM), Trinidad (TIPNIS) and Santa Ana de Yacuma (Movima) constituted study sites in themselves. Their offices as well as the indigenous church societies, the *Cabildo Indigenales*, bridge urban and rural communities and serve as logistic hubs as well as political and social centres for activities. I had increasing contact with the urban indigenous peoples in Santa Ana and especially in Trinidad, and the networks that bound them to the territories and to other groups, organisations and activists. Table 2 provides a quick overview of the territories with a few factual data.

Table 2: Comparative overview of the three territories

	TIPNIS	Movima	TIM
Area	≈ 1,300,000 ha	≈ 67,000 ha	≈ 360,000 ha
Population	6-12,000 (different estimations)	2,700 (in territory, Ciddebeni 2014) 3,140 (in territory, Fundación Tierra 2011) 8,000 (Ávila 2009)	3,265 (Fundación Tierra 2010)
Peoples	Mojeño Trinitario Yuracaré Tsimane (Mosetenes)	Movima Some Mojeño Ignaciano + a few others	Mojeño Ignaciano Tsimane Movima Yuracaré Mojeño Trinitario
Number of communities	63 says Subcentral TIPNIS 69 says Government (significance when consulting)	28 (27 after flooding) equivalent to 80 % of Movimas communities	24
Territorial cohesion, logistics	Vast but coherent territory. River transport. In south, road and highland immigrants. Communication difficult.	Dispersed patches of low-laying land. Access and communication very difficult to many communities.	Coherent. Relatively good logistics
Status	1965: National Park 1988: Subcentral 1990: Indigenous territory, among the first four	8 polygons titled between 2002 and 2010. Subcentral since 1989	1990: Indigenous territory, among the first four
Territorial governance situation	De facto without territorial leadership recognised by all communities. Division regarding approach to national government. 2017: New leadership claimed	2016: New-elected leadership. No (good) relations to public authorities. Cannot pursue autonomy; must rely on incorporation into municipal, regional and national development plans.	Well-functioning leadership. Active women's leadership. 'Sub-alcaldía' (sub-municipality) - they administrate some funds through own appointed 'sub-mayor.' In process to obtain autonomy as TCO

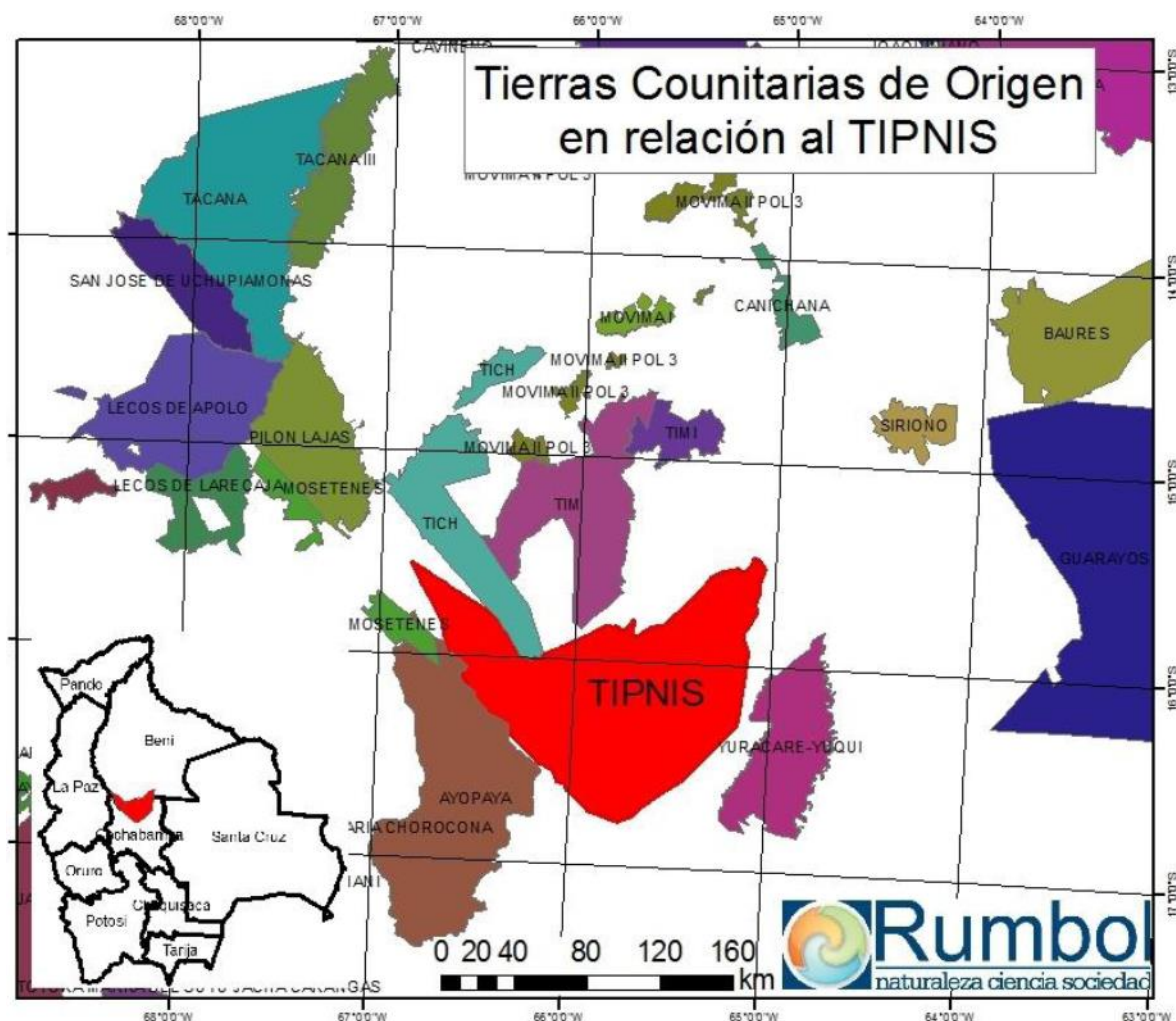


Figure 4: The three territories' location among other TCOs in the northern lowland. Note the fragmented nature of the Movima territory in the upper-middle of the map (SER NAP 2011)

The three territories vary enormously in size, territorial cohesion, recent history, organisational robustness, and stage in the trajectory towards autonomy, yet the peoples in them share much of the same history. They have mobilised and participated in the same contentious events, and the territories are situated in the same department, Beni (TIPNIS only half, the southern part is within Cochabamba), and largely in the same ecological environment. Practical reasons, already mentioned, as well as the topics they offered to engage with, were eventually decisive for the concurrent choice of the three. This (partly) purposive sampling enables me to assess 'variables' with significance for the difference in success that the territories have experienced with regards to self-determination and access to land and resources. The variables include land-status before claims, neighbouring land ownerships, economic interests in the territories and external relations, among other. Some explanations will be apparent from the following descriptions of the territories; others will be discussed more thoroughly in the papers.

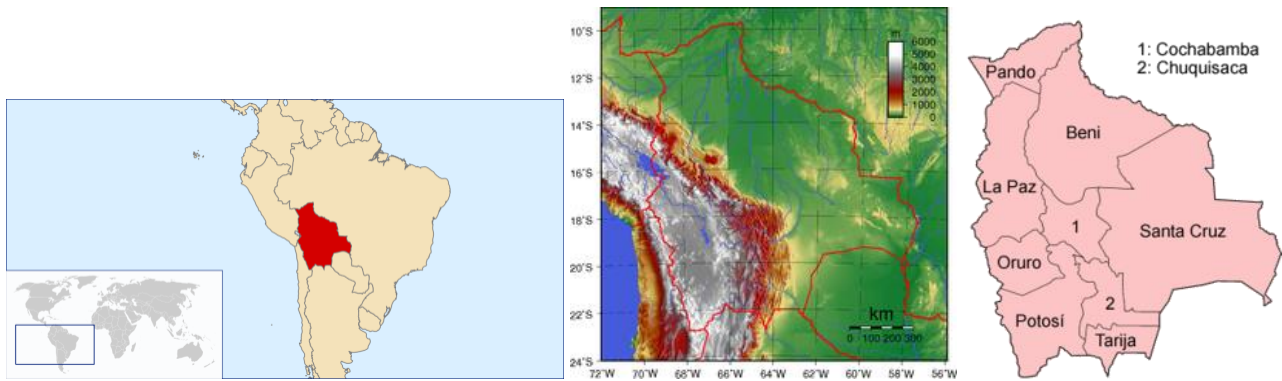


Figure 5: Left: Bolivia, landlocked in South America. Middle: Topography. Right: Bolivia's nine departments.

The common features of the territories include the bio-physical conditions of this part of the Amazon. Bolivia is often portrayed as an Andean state, although only about a quarter is actually *altiplano* (see fig. 5, middle), perhaps because the major part of the population lives here. Beni, where I did research, is the second largest department (see fig. 5, right), but only holds a little more than 400,000 inhabitants out of the more than ten millions in the country, which makes it the least populated area along with Pando, both host less than 2 persons per km². Beni stretches from the Andean foothills north-eastward into the Amazon Basin, the descent forming a biodiversity-hotspot, with large hydrocarbon deposits beneath (Hecht in Hindery 2013). The climate is hot and humid. Some 75 % of its 200,000 km² are seasonally, sometimes disastrously, flooded pampas (natural plains), with constantly changing waterways; the rest are periphery and gallery forests (forests that form corridors along rivers or wetlands and project into otherwise sparsely wooded landscapes) and forest islands. Seasonal flooding and droughts pose serious challenges to travelling and communication; of the three territories, the Movima is most severely affected. The land titled to the Movima is not coherent (see fig. 4) and typically low-lying by the river; only around 5,000 ha is higher ground. Conflictive relations with private landholders, that separate Movima land, further complicate logistics. The territories are recent features on the map, but the land and its peoples share large parts of history with regards to colonisation and development, as accounted for in chapter three and the first article. The territories are also quite similar with regards to communal and territorial organisation as described in section 3.4 and the second article.

There are also particularities. While the three territories aim for similar positions and conditions, they struggle on surprisingly different terms, facing different challenges. The Movima territory is pieced together by 8 so-called polygons, titled separately between 2002 and 2010, and dispersed over an area of about 1,000,000 ha (Ciddebeni 2014). The initial territory claimed before the land-clarification was over 2 mio ha, they ended up with 70,000. The main explanation of this catastrophic outcome for the Movima is the

enormous power of the large cattle farmers who pursue the same land. An explanation by Forest of the World was 'weak and corrupt Movima leaders at that time' adding to that. To me, that is however two sides of the same coin. First hand testimonies from the process recount of an uneven struggle with foul play, i.e. tempting deals from ranchers, abuse of lacking perspective and oversight of the Movima, and violence or the threat of it. The land they now possess is 88 % forested, low and most often located along the rivers:

'From 1990 we struggled with cattle-ranchers. We made claims of pampas, but now we only have access to the low land. The sugar has another taste. Before, the land was free, now it is all private. We know where the sugar grows sweet' (own notes and translation 19/4-16)

Many Mojeños *Trinitarios* and *Ignacianos*, the epithets telling to what Jesuit reduction they once belonged, came to the area that now include both the TIPNIS and the TIM during the rubber boom around 1900 (Van Valen), and a second wave again from the 1950's onward when ranching took off. The Yuracaré and the Tsimane were already here, and while the Tsimane mostly kept, and keep, a distance, the Mojeño and Yuracaré mixed to some degree, especially with the establishment of communities with schools and Cabildos in the beginning of the 1990's. Some communities are older, like Puerto San Lorenzo from 1956, now part of the TIPNIS.

In 1965, the huge Isiboro-Sécure National Park was established, and in 1990, after the first march of the lowland peoples, it also became an indigenous territory, now better known by its acronym, TIPNIS. TIPNIS has experienced internal political division, government co-optation and breakdown of institutions, exceeding their ability of restoration, but also the formation of new, efficient grass-root groups. TIPNIS is large and contains more than 60 communities, which is a challenge regarding coordination and communication. The leadership has difficulties with showing their presence in the communities because travelling is costly and time-consuming.

TIM was established in the same year as TIPNIS, north of it, as a response to unregulated logging putting pressure on the peoples living here in the 'Tsimane forests'. TIM is a compact territory with only 24 communities and relatively good logistics, and experiences effective communication and governance. TIM has worked focused and relatively united for years to obtain the constitutional right to autonomy. According to CEJIS, an influential factor of their 'success' is continuity in the territorial leadership; when new and younger leaders took over, the older remained as advisors.

TIPNIS and the Movima territory form study-sites for an article each, while TIM forms a good case for comparison and example of a less troubled territory. Moreover, narratives from people of the TIM were central to my exploration of the history of the pampas-peoples, presented in the first article. This brings us to the next topic, the nature of the collected data and its analysis.

4.3 Data collection and analysis

I have relied upon different kinds of resources to write the thesis. The sections summarising the early history of the lowland peoples of the pampas draw on Spanish chronicles as interpreted by more recent scholars. The voices of contemporary Mojeño and Movima are difficult to find in these accounts. More recent, twentieth-century history offered more options. Still, however, literature on this specific part of the lowland and its peoples is scarce.

On the Movima I found no academic literature at all, except from a few mentions in archaeological studies (Walker 2008), in writings on the early colonial epoch (Block 1994; Denevan 1966; Roca 2001) or in very generic and factual terms about the Bolivian lowland peoples (Albó 1990; Díez Astete 2011; Vallvé 2010). Thanks, among other, to Victoria Reyes-García and several of her colleagues, there exists a small body of literature on livelihoods, community organisation and effects of market and policies on indigenous communities in the Beni (Reyes-García et al. 2014; 2012; 2010).

On the largest group in the Department, the Mojeño, there are a few, but very thorough studies on their encounter with colonial resource-rushes and republican liberalism (Jones 1990; 1980) and their agency in that regard (Van Valen 2013), notably their millinaristic movement (Canedo Vásques 2011; Lehm 1999; Riester 1976). The role of the Mojeño in the political development of the Department (Àvila 2009; Guiteras Mombiola 2010) is mainly treated by Bolivian authors.

Besides the work of historians and anthropologists, I could make use of government and non- or intergovernmental documents, and even better, I could interview those who either witnessed the events, about which I write, or had the accounts from their parents, uncles or aunts. The past decades offered even richer prospects; studies from the region are increasing in numbers, especially when including the southern lowland departments and the peoples living there, and so are accessible news accounts. Most data, however, derive from interviews and other qualitative methods. Social media help keeping contact with those key-informants with access to smartphones or computers and, of course, internet.



Photo 7: Mapping family-relations in San Pedro del Apere, Movima territory (photo: Bo M Johansson 2016).

The qualitative methods of data-collection are outlined in table 3 for each of the study sites. They include a wide range of observational and interactional approaches, all useful for collecting primary data.

Simultaneously, in a second or third round, triangulation of information and mapping of family-relations, stakeholders and institutions served as a first step of analysis. The sharing of my data with informants allowed for the iterative process of analysis and additional data-collection that provide the opportunity of digging deeper and adjusting direction throughout fieldwork. My first field visits included the most recorded interviews, while later I made much more use of my field diary and note-taking during interviews. Altogether, I spent 9 months in Bolivia, counting in the fieldwork I did for my master's thesis in 2013.

Table 3: Study sites and data-collection methods

Site	Data-collection methods
Indigenous Territory and National Park Isiboro Sécure, TIPNIS: Territory Other , in connection with FPIC-consultation: Ministry of Public Works, Services and Housing, La Paz Supreme Electoral Tribunal (TSE), Trinidad and Cochabamba National Service of Protected Areas (SERNAP), Trinidad and La Paz	Participant observation and informal conversations: Longer term and return stays with families, helping out with daily tasks and attending formal and informal meetings and group discussions. Conversations with people from other communities and ranches when travelling on the rivers Sécure, Isiboro and Mamoré. Mapping of housing and family relations. Review of meeting minutes from consultation. Semi-structured interviews , recorded with consent : No. of interviews, community members: 39 No. of interviews with officials: 7 Other key-informants: 3 (Civil Rights lawyer, Fundación Tierra; School Director, Sécure; Teacher, Tres de Mayo)

<p>TIPNIS: Subcentrals in Trinidad</p> <p>Initially Subcentral TIPNIS and the competitive Subcentral Sécuré.</p> <p>Later, grass-root group having thrown out the self-appointed Subcentral Sécuré and established themselves in the office</p>	<p>Participant observation and informal conversations: Hanging out at office and yard with leaders and families residing here in tents when having errands, awaiting transport or attending meetings in Trinidad. Contact to and conversations with migrated families from TIPNIS, living in Trinidad</p> <p>Attending meetings and accompanying leaders at meetings outside of office.</p> <p>Semi-structured interviews, recorded with consent. No. of interviews, indigenous leaders: 7</p> <p>Life history of Mojeño Trinitario, age 59 in 2016, former and still active leader, obtained during four conversations of several hours each</p>										
<p>Cabildo Indígenal, Trinidad</p>	<p>Formal and informal visits: Attending presentation by 'la defensora del pueblo' (ombudsman) on indigenous peoples rights. Observing bachelor lectures for adults Participating in rituals on all saints day and the night/morning of Johannes Baptist (see photo 8)</p>										
<p>Movima Territory, Subcentral and Cabildo Indígenal in Santa Ana de Yacuma</p>	<p>'Job-shadowing' the CEJIS coordinator and Movima leadership on six workshops in the communities Carnevales, Carmen de Iruyanez, Montes de Oro, Cachuelita, San Joaquin de Maniqui and Maniquisito. Participating as donor-representative, facilitating workshops in three of the above communities.</p> <p>Less formal conversations and group-meetings: travelling the territory with photographer hired by the Danish NGO, Forests of the World. Visiting the communities: La Finca, San Lorenzo de Yacuma, La Rampa and San Mateo on the river Mamoré, San Miguel and Santa Maria del Apere, El Peru and San Pedro del Apere.</p> <p>Participant observation and informal conversations during longer term stays and return visits in El Peru and San Pedro del Apere. Mapping of housing and family relations (photo 7).</p> <p>Semi-structured interviews:</p> <table> <tr> <td>Territorial leaders</td><td>3</td></tr> <tr> <td>Community members and leaders</td><td>5</td></tr> <tr> <td>Members of Cabildo Indígenal</td><td>3</td></tr> <tr> <td>Local radio host</td><td>1</td></tr> <tr> <td>Members of Movima Speaking Council</td><td>4</td></tr> </table> <p>Formal community meeting and meetings with territorial leaderships, visiting as donor-representative to review project: visit to the community Soberanía de Mamoré, the Subcentral of the Movima and the Movima women's organisation. Interviews: Director of the Institute of Movima Speaking People Mayor of Municipality Santa Ana de Yacuma CEJIS coordinator</p> <p>Life history of Movima, age 71 in 2016, former and still active leader, obtained during a 2½ hours conversation</p>	Territorial leaders	3	Community members and leaders	5	Members of Cabildo Indígenal	3	Local radio host	1	Members of Movima Speaking Council	4
Territorial leaders	3										
Community members and leaders	5										
Members of Cabildo Indígenal	3										
Local radio host	1										
Members of Movima Speaking Council	4										

Multiethnic Indigenous Territory, TIM. Territory Subcentral in San Ignacio de Moxos	Semi-structured interview, recorded with consent: Community-leader: 1 Territorial leaders: 5 Sub-mayor: 1 Participant observation and informal conversations , especially with women staying in the office yard, cooking and having informal group meetings on political and commercial issues and activities of their organisation. Life history of Mojeño Ignaciano woman, age 42 in 2016, former and still active leader, obtained during two interviews of approximately 1 hour each
Centro de Estudios Jurídicos e Investigaciones Sociales, CEJIS Santa Cruz Trinidad	Participant observation through sharing office, daily routines, meetings, studies and fieldwork



Photo 8: Early morning ritual after the evening of Johannes Baptist. Emanating from the Cabildo Indigenal in Trinidad, a procession led by 'Johannes' walked from door to door to 'baptise' Mojeños in the neighbourhood while playing drums and flutes, and sharing hot milk with alcohol (own photo 24.06.2016).

Most people I invited for an interview accepted, and were remarkably willing to share information, even on sensitive issues such as community and family divisions over politics, the contested process of consulting TIPNIS communities, or punishments according to customary law related to misuse of positions, even when the informants were, or had been, directly involved. There were only a few exceptions. In Puerto San Lorenzo, TIPNIS, I was staying with a family that had been actively resisting the consultation, which prevented me from having a few, but important, interviews, among those with the community *Corregidor*. In Tres de Mayo, I was not allowed to do any interviews until the community was able to gather in order to understand what the purpose of my study and presence was, but once accepted, all households expected my visit and eagerly received me. Government officials were generally very interested to participate in the study, except for the National Service of Protected Areas, SERNAP, in Cochabamba, who said they were not allowed to talk about the consultation and referred to the headquarters in La Paz, which I visited instead.

The data collection approach I took, allowed me to assemble a multidimensional analysis based on the diverging outputs of my collection: notes, recordings, maps, narratives, workshop and consultant reports and photos. Some data is presented as quotes, translated by myself. Analysing qualitative data is an interpretive task. Of course there are processes of clustering data, triangulating and coding, but most of all it is a process of cognition through the lived experience in the field and the interpretation and re-interpretation of data, which continues throughout the writing process. Analysis is thus not placed at a given stage of the research; interpretations are constructed even before data-collection begins. In order to remain confident that my interpretations are credible and reasonable, I have used different types of data-triangulation, asking the same question to various persons, or asking the same persons a specific question in different ways. I also discussed my interpretations with informants, in one case at a community meeting, and with partners in the NGOs, and actively sought out contrasting discourses on several matters. I have compared my work with that of researchers working on similar topics within my field-area, and finally, I have presented my work at international conferences, at PhD courses, to Forests of the World and its members, and had two of my three articles peer-reviewed. Before concluding the chapter with a few reflexivities, we now turn to the NGOs in development, already touched upon in section 3.5.

4.4 The non-government developers

In this section, I introduce the Danish NGO with which I was affiliated as an industrial PhD-student, and situate the organisation within the NGO universe more generally. I also introduce the Bolivian partner organisation, CEJIS.

'Forests of the World' (FoW) is a Danish NGO working to preserve forests and enhance forest quality with regards to biodiversity. In Latin America, FoW most often work with indigenous peoples, either directly or as 'beneficiaries' of the efforts. The efforts can be rights advocacy, organisational strengthening, or production and value chain activities. Generally, Forests of the World supports indigenous peoples for three main reasons. First of all, indigenous peoples inhabit forests in their Latin American partner countries. The increasing allocation of land to native peoples in Latin America during the recent decades has given them exceptional legal authority (albeit not necessarily the power) to prevent nature degradation caused by internal as well as external parties. This potential makes cooperation interesting to FoW, who also continuously support land-titling processes, believing that clarified ownership and secure access to land and resources form a crucial basis for forest management and conservation, as also asserted by collective action theorists such as Chhatre and Agrawal (2009) and Schlager and Ostrom (1992). Secondly, indigenous peoples in collective territories manage landscapes, not patches of land like smallholders, or timber concessions, like companies or community user-groups. There is evidence that deforestation in indigenous territories is avoided to a much higher degree than outside them (Nolte et al. 2013; Porter-Bolland et al. 2012). Livelihoods of territorialised peoples are most often based on diversified strategies such as hunting, livestock, fishing, swidden-fallow agriculture for subsistence and cash crops, wage labour, collection of non-timber forest products, timber production and perhaps tourism. The diversified strategies maintain diverse landscapes, reflecting the multiple uses of forest resources; a management under collective control that suits FoW's objectives well. A main concern is the often extreme vulnerability of the people and the forests they inhabit. If families give up or lose their livelihoods and leave the territory, the forest risks being cleared by smallholders or cattle ranchers and plundered for valuable timber. The organisation believes that an engagement with indigenous collectives allows for the creation of common ground, based on the conviction that the sustainable use of forest products, including timber, is a prerequisite for both viable livelihoods and forest protection. The third important reason is the simple normative concern that marginalised people(s) should have their equal share of material welfare and political influence. Although FoW's key concern is the sustainable use of forests, their international work is equally devoted to social change, and their transnational network includes juridical, social and environmental organisations as well as local institutions.

'Forests of the world' is a professional-grassroots hybrid organisation with a permanent staff of around 16 hired professionals and hundreds of volunteering, active members. The organisation was founded by a group of dedicated biology students at Aarhus University (Denmark) in 1983. At the time they called themselves Nepenthes Rainforest Group. They were concerned with deforestation, primarily in the tropics, and ran the first campaign against burgers. For ten years they were all volunteers, but a successful 'Save

the Rainforest'-campaign, funding rainforest conservation by selling Rainforest Certificates, confronted the grass-root organisation with the difficulties of protecting concrete tropical forest areas. Local negotiations were challenging and time-consuming, and the organisation accordingly hired professionals to perform the task. Since then, professionals staff the International Department as well as a newer Communication Department and administration. The Board, directing the organisation, is elected among the members, and continues to be composed of volunteers. In 2011 the name was changed to Forests of the World. Today, the organisation implements projects in several Latin American countries and new activities are starting up in Africa.

As a result of the intensified competition experienced among professional NGOs, the Board increasingly stresses efficiency and purposefulness in every activity and decision made in the professional part of the organisation. This has also been reflected in the choice of directors that have moved towards the more business-like managers on the 'idealist-rationalist' continuum. Still, however, the organisation has a vibrant volunteer environment. In Denmark, volunteers advocate forest management that promote biodiversity. Other groups of volunteers are engaged with climate change, timber certifications or biomass; they lobby in Denmark and at the Climate COPs, among other activities. The Communication Department uses campaigns in order to fulfil the three simultaneous goals - advocacy, awareness and fundraising. They juggle with difficult dilemmas within this field of tension, challenged by the need to be credible while delivering clear messages and taking positions on complex issues. The definition of Anheier and Salamon, referred to in Watkins et al. (2012: 290) that an NGO is an institution with five key characteristics: Organised, private, non-profit-distributing, self-governing, and voluntary, at least in part, fits well with Forests of the World. Only, the International Department is exclusively professionalised, and half the funding for distribution is public. Perhaps a sixth characteristic should be added – 'networking'.

As a transnational advocacy organisation, Forests of the World is part of what Meyer and Tarrow (1998) describe as the movement society. Along with partners in Latin America, likeminded organisations in the North, intergovernmental agencies, and sometimes individual state officials or agencies in partner countries, it forms an advocacy network available to, or targeting, mainly indigenous peoples struggling with access to land and natural resources. With regards to rights, environmental or social justice issues, advocacy networks are among the main vehicles for transnational activity (Keck and Sikkink 1998). They are however not 'movements' themselves, although they may stimulate mobilised collective action - as when a partner organisation in Bolivia directly supports lowland indigenous protest marches or indirectly 'empower' local communities to act by informing about political issues, rights and existing networks - but often they provide an alternative to action, especially when making claims domestically is not an option

either due to repression or 'weak voices'. The network is bound together by shared values and a common discourse, exchanging information and services, in what Keck and Sikkink (1998) denote 'communicative structures for political exchange'. It asserts a shared global citizenship (Watkins et al. 2012) and constantly seeks to broaden its scope and density to maximise access to information; it seeks the best arenas for the struggles, constantly framing the issues depending on the context to promote the chances of success. Activists in these networks often work for NGOs, seeking engaged alternatives to traditional professional employment. In the partner countries, NGOs provide an option for a career for the educated middleclass, and for the indigenous, to whom the cooperation is an opportunity for a 'career' related to the territory.

Repressive regimes spur transnationalisation. When the chief violators of rights are state institutions, activists form alliances with their counterparts abroad, approach international institutions and/or seek to mobilise foreign pressure on their government to change their behaviour. The feedback from this kind of venue shifting is what Keck and Sikkink (1998) call the 'boomerang' effect, and producing it is a common strategic activity of advocacy networks: Domestic actors bypass their state and search out international allies directly to provide pressure from outside. Most often it is not either/or, but both domestic and foreign pressure that is being sought mobilised. An example of such advocacy work of the International Department of Forests of the World is the support of the indigenous peoples in Panama in their struggle to have their rights to land and resources recognised and legally formalised through the titling of communal land. The peoples of Panama have formerly reached out in order to have their rights observed and complied with, for instance when a series of disputes regarding indigenous participation in the United Nations Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation programme (UN-REDD) in Panama resulted in the suspension of all programme activities, and led to the overall evaluation of the UN-REDD guidelines in 2013 (UN-REDD 2013b). The advocacy network within the movement society makes changes.

Forests of the world is however not only an advocacy NGO, it cooperates with national partners in Latin America on development projects, and with marginalised groups, mainly indigenous peoples, aiming at having them included in local and regional government development decisions that will affect them. The organisation thus deals with local communities on the ground, has ambitious goals, and operates with uncertain technologies in unpredictable environments, as so accurately described by Watkins, Swidler and Hannan (2012). The engagements on the ground seek to promote sustainable forest management, or at least stop deforestation and degradation. To pursue this goal a variety of approaches are used, ranging from strengthening of local organisations, to implementation of forestry or agro-forestry, monitoring of forest, value-chain establishment and improvement, or tourism in buffer-zones.

Uncertainties related to working at long distances are sought limited by the close inclusion of partners and beneficiaries in the development of the projects, as well as partners' inclusion in the broader discussion of strategies. The 'Centro de Estudios Jurídicos e Investigación Social', CEJIS, is one of FoW's close partners in Bolivia. They primarily operate in the lowland, and have their base in Santa Cruz.

CEJIS' work is reflected in equal parts legal advocacy and identification of political opportunities to push for changes that will benefit indigenous peoples. An important criterion for the success of CEJIS' engagement has always been the degree to which they contribute to the mobilisation and sustained political action of primarily the lowland peoples. The organisation was very influential in the 1980s and 1990s, however, since the MAS came to power, increasing government co-optation of their discourse and goals has caused many CEJIS employees to leave the organisation in favour of government positions. Now, in 2018, CEJIS is engaged only with minor projects, often concerning organisational strengthening of indigenous collectives. CEJIS representatives explained how they earlier successfully had 'formed lowland leaders', who later independently led their struggle for land. Now, CEJIS train indigenous researchers to make actionable plans. As with the Movima Lifeplan (article three), projects are intended to support community development as well as to train individuals to advocate for their communities. CEJIS also engages with elaborations of statutes to guide and regulate internal territorial affairs.



Photo 9: CEJIS visiting a Movima community

4.5 Motivations, positionalities and power in development work and research

Who am 'I', when I need to reflect on my constitutiveness and positionality? A common needed feature of both ethnographic researchers and development practitioners is the ability of swift shifts between the many selves that make up a person. West (2016) differentiates between the notion of being a 'dividual' as opposed to an 'individual', which helped me to think about this paradox that although we appear to be one

true self, we are the sum of multiple constructed identities, that we use differently and strategically as we interact. Adding to that, we respond to other people's perceptions of who we are.

Doing development or ethnographic fieldwork requires the learning of norms, rules, conventions, languages, systems of thoughts and discourses of varying peoples and institutions in different contexts, and the shifts can be swift. Rather than attempting to answer the question of who I am, this section will highlight reflections along the process of my research, steps of empirical and conceptual understandings, and how they changed. This has been a process that included moments of reflexivities, stepping back and taking a critical look at my own role as a researcher. In my perception, positionality is and must be fluid, following personal, professional and academic maturation. This time around, I visited the Amazon as a researcher, but during parts of my fieldwork, I was representing Forests of the World. Therefore the section includes reflections on NGOs in development too. I start with that.

Working as a Danish NGO with a rights-based approach in Bolivia is perhaps most of all a continuation of the Danish International Development Assistance's, DANIDA's, former engagement in the country. DANIDA has always had a 'poverty-criterion' for its aid; later, other concerns have been added such as 'gender equality', which may be an internationalised 'cultural script' (Gill 2017), nevertheless in accordance with a self-perception of 'Danishness,' and always given much weight. Indigenous peoples' rights have also had a high score when choosing projects to engage with or fund, perhaps because of our history as colonists in Greenland, and the long and still ongoing process towards its self-government. 'Environment' has also ranked high on the aid-criterion list. These days, the above mentioned criteria and concerns have become less decisive, and Forests of the World add new buzz-words such as 'climate mitigation and adaptation' to maintain continued funding from the Danish state. Starting up in Africa reflects the same tendency; to follow the money.

Development activities of NGOs and foreign donors have impacts. Gill (2017) argues that the presence of environmental NGOs explains the development of legislation protecting the environment within particular countries. Looking back, the constructions of indigenous territories would not have happened without DANIDA supporting national NGOs to advocate for the indigenous peoples and assist in negotiations. The opportunity to form territories was obtained by the lowland peoples through effective mobilisation, but they would not have succeeded without sustained backing from a wide range of allies. Governments, on their part, sometimes see NGOs as undermining state hegemony. Bolivian Vice-President García Linera (2012), accuse NGOs of being instruments of foreign governments (see 3.5); *are* they simply eco-imperialists and neo-colonialists? Development practice, as already mentioned, can serve as extensions of regimes and as sources of alternatives, maybe sometimes both.

Development criticism regarding top-down imposed agendas and the reproduction of power structures is obviously reasonable. Describing NGOs as part of a voluntary, non-profit, independent or 'third sector', separate from both market and state, contributes to the image of these organisations as a segment of society, separate from politics. Anti-politics refer to the obscuring of these relationships (Fisher 1997). Just as the development 'apparatus' has generally depoliticised the need for development through its practice of treating local conditions as problems that required technical and not structural or political solutions (Ferguson 1990), it has defined problems that can be addressed via the mechanisms of NGOs rather than through political solutions. Policy models are framed by a universal logic, generally applicable as 'travelling rationalities' that assert the technical over the political (Mosse 2007). Such rationalities are closely related to 'buzz-words' (Rist 2007), such as 'transparency', 'good governance' or 'participation'. As an example of the latter, critics of the participatory approach (see Cooke and Kothari 2001) argue that it fails to acknowledge issues of power and politics in its application, where the once transformative idea has been reduced to a technical method.

Acknowledging the veracity of these critiques, how can we ever engage conscientiously with 'local development'? Weiskopf and Laske (1996), acknowledge that emancipatory action methods, like 'participation', often reproduce, rather than reduce, the sphere of power. They argue for a 'corporation pact' rather than a consensus-oriented approach, given that in practice, language is not just a medium of communication. Action research should be seen as an intervention in a political system. In a similar way, and taking it a step further, Williams (2004) argues that development work should always pay attention to participation's wider political impact and ask whether the applied methods improve the political capabilities of the poor. Do they promote political learning, do they shape political networks, and do they affect political representation? Article three assesses these questions in a specific case.

Just as the kind of 'development' offered to marginalised people matters, so does the discourses about NGOs. There is a need to distinguish, and ethnographic detail, as provided in this thesis, help expose the simplicity of universalising models of development practitioners and draw attention to the ideological and functional diversity of NGOs. Being conscious about the political nature of engagement with indigenous collectives is to openly choose side in an ongoing conflict about access to land and control over resources. Forests of the World has done that, and CEJIS' work is also overtly political, supporting a vision of multiple self-governing entities within a plurinational frame. The increasing nationalistic development tendency in Bolivia and other countries helps expose 'development' as social and political acts, and force the practitioners to critically reflect on their role. Critical reflexivity in development work and research is a

responsible social and political activity (Bolton 2010) that can lead to significant improvements and change for the involved.

Working as a professional in an NGO requires an active choice that includes ideological or moral considerations, at least a minimum. There is a sense of global community and solidarity as a driver for working with environmental issues through a rights-based approach abroad. The work is highly normative, it includes the 'ought to' and the 'should be'. That goes for research as well, which we must remember when criticising the subjectivity of practitioners. Research is normative, and we travel with our preferred theories that we unpack in highly different contexts, not unlike Mosse's (2007) 'travelling rationalities'. This brings me to a reflection on the development researcher part of my individual self in the practical engagement with 'the field'. My own journey in understanding and positioning myself vis-à-vis development in relation to the people and places of my study is outlined in the following.

Initially I considered the efforts of the indigenous peoples to maintain control and access resources as practices of territorial defence, in both spatial and physical sense, as well as contestations of the dominant notion of development and political exercise. Intuitively, I believed that 'we' – us as NGOs and me as a researcher – ought to weigh in on the side of the weaker part, that is, the territorial peoples. On the other hand, I recognised the potentially culturally destructive methods in every step we took during our 'Lifeplan' workshops tour in the Movima territory: how we wanted them to change or improve their practices, organisation and governance, and to make management plans. Implicit in this, somehow, lays the assumption that native cultures lack the rationality to use their lands effectively, including organising effectively to manage resources! I struggled with this when I recognised such assumptions of 'pre-modernity' within myself. Luckily, I also observed the indigenous peoples of my study critically. Being individual's too, they also played a specific role in relation to the workshops and the time we spent outside them. As described in the third article, the Movima managed to redirect discussions and decide what should be put in writing.

Regarding 'territorial defence', I began to develop a different understanding, much closer to the notion of e.g. Bebbington (2000), that rather than defending something existing, the territorial peoples actually produce new places. This change in perception reflects steps in the long and winding process towards reaching the conceptions that would finally frame my thematic and theoretical approach. Concretely, the discovering of the history of the Movima and the Mojeño challenged some of my deep seated assumptions about Amazonian 'forest dwellers'. When finding that the territories were actually rather recent retreats (James Jones), or re-colonisations (Zulema Lehm), and understanding that the past was always dynamic and

deeply entwined with world development and its actors, the notion of a stable, pre-intervention, original condition, inherent in the 'territorial defence' supposition, no longer made sense.

This revelation helped me thinking about our engagement with the Movima as development practitioners in a different way, but also the TIPNIS-consultation appeared in a different light. Both seemed to constitute elements in combined strategies of the lowland peoples in the efforts to optimise livelihoods and seek self-determination. My understanding and theoretical approach thus deviated from that of a 'pure' post-structuralist engaging with discourse-analysis in contesting knowledge-constructions, or the temporality exposed in representations, although this is still important in my thesis. The profound critique also makes it difficult to engage constructively with 'local development' (Bebbington 2000). Tracing transformations in places and livelihoods, on the contrary, makes it easier to understand how the driving force of the 'local people' to create good lives becomes underestimated with the focus fixed on structural power relations and reproductions. What happens in a specific time and place will be above and beyond the stated intentions and goals for development planners and NGOs (Fisher 1997). Instead of seeing NGOs as contributors to the creation of uneven conditions or at least the maintenance of status quo, which I have struggled with since reading Ferguson's *Anti-politics Machine* (1990) some 15 years ago, I could begin to theoretically comprehend what I believed from practice - the importance of 'intervention' in the production of indigenous places.

Scheyvens (2014) reviews different concerns over the appropriateness of doing development fieldwork, the first being 'academic tourism', referring to the power disparities inherent in the relation between privileged, western researchers studying people living in poverty. I entered the Amazon many decades ago more as an activist than a tourist and even less as a researcher, and I did it at the invitation of representatives of an indigenous people, the Shuar, who entered my world when reaching out for support, not vice versa. I did not reflect on power inequalities then. Ten years later, when returning as student, I realised my privilege when I met friends from then who had grown old fast. Some of them had made a career in their own organisations, while I had done little work, but travelled the world, widened my horizons, started an education as Forest and Landscape Engineer, and still I had a resource surplus allowing me to return to the Amazon basin with my family to study the swidden-fallow system of the Quichuas. They were as interested as I in my staying and studying, as part of their objective was to seek such cooperation with researchers, national as well as international. At least this was my understanding, and I did not have any concerns over the appropriateness of my fieldwork. We participated in communal work and community meetings, although sometimes these were carried through in Quichua. I remember feeling offended by this; to me, my staying there was of mutual benefit and I considered their behaviour as rude.

The occasional exclusion from full participation disproves the assumption that 'poor' people have no power and that western research most often is exploitative as expressed by several post-colonial scholars (Scheyvens 2014). In fact, the community members, here as elsewhere on later occasions, exercised careful control with the information I could get, and at least to some community-members it seems important to demonstrate that I may be accepted as a guest, but will never know the heart of their community. I have sometimes reacted to such episodes, among other in the TIPNIS, and found that a discussion can lead to greater understanding.

As a last example of the power of those we research I will mention the various gatekeepers one has to get past, who can either facilitate or impede further investigations in 'their direction'. As a woman doing research in a male dominated society this is often also a question of temper, of how much harassment you are prepared to ignore to reach your goal. Gender can also be utilised for one's own advantage of course, but it's a constant balancing of ethics, patience, endurance and power, with opaque consequences when taking place 'on foreign ground'. My advantage at this point is two-fold. First of all I have become familiar with male dominated culture, which makes it easier to navigate, secondly I am now well past 50 which moderates annoying sexual approaches and seem to trigger a more respectful behaviour from both men and women. However, gate-keeping has to do with a whole lot other than a play between genders. An example is when I tried to find my way into TIPNIS in 2013. I did not get much help from the President of the Subcentral, even though he would be the right person to facilitate this. He was patronising and constantly joking about me wanting to find a real man inside the territory, in between explaining that he needed the acceptance from one or more communities in order for me to enter, yet he did not seem to do anything at all with regards to that. I later found out that he probably was afraid to make that contact due to other reasons of much bigger concern than me and my study, a reminder of putting things into proportions. Often, when people you meet take an interest in your work, it is to consider its options in relation to an entirely different agenda which may or may not reveal itself during the research period.

I have made an effort of explaining how I do not accept the assumption of powerless locals, and that reverse power relations are obvious in many cases, as those referred to above. I believe age and experience help to acknowledge these situations, it definitely helps me to handle such occurrences with more confidence and greater clout - to protect myself and to make progress in my investigations, but also to gain trust by standing up for and explaining the purpose of my presence, which in the opposite case may remain a mystery to those I seek interaction with.

I have become more conscious about power relations, inequalities, and me being an outsider, although I tend to forget that once I find myself in the familiar environment of the tropical rainforest. I have good feel

of Amazonian livelihoods, traditions, habits, gender relations etc., which makes it easy for me to ask questions and tell stories that exactly push the limits of people's understanding of themselves and the world, and provoke them to ask more questions and reflect. I want marginalised people to change their situation and for that they need perspective. The fact that I not only aim to do no harm, but actually believe that I can induce changes is probably the reason that I do not suffer much of an ethical crisis doing development fieldwork. I am not too concerned about reinforcing patterns of domination, nor do I question the legitimacy of my research among less privileged people because I sincerely believe that what I do is for the benefit of both parties. Inequalities and power structures exist, which implies that interaction will always be skewed, and thus often appears as intervention; still I defend the position that development practitioners and researchers must continue to interact and interfere. Our knowledge and our own behaviour is complicit in forming practice; we all do it, indigenous peoples and institutions too. The important thing is to be aware, reflect and seek to balance interests, and weigh in with whatever power we have or represent for the benefit of our collaborators.

So where does this place me as a researcher? While being convinced that my presence and face to face encounters provoke reflections and in the best cases empowers individuals, families or communities, I am much less convinced about how my research, analysis and conclusions can benefit the subjects of my study. Even when translating and sharing my thesis, I doubt it would change much. This is why the cooperation with Forests of the World is so fortunate. Much of their work regards advocacy activities for indigenous peoples. Their time for fieldwork is limited, while I after stays of much longer durations can provide them with deeper knowledge, making them better advocates. Another objective as organisation is to inform indigenous peoples about relevant policies, discuss with them their place in history and in the region in order for them to make good, informed decisions about their future, and to claim their rights as citizens and indigenous peoples. When accompanying at the workshops in the communities, I more or less actively took part in the 'empowerment' of community-members, as well as of their leaders, when sharing my insights in other indigenous peoples' practices, strategies, achievements or failures. Exchanging knowledge like this makes more sense to me than merely sharing my academic work, although I will be happy to do that also. In Scheyvens' (2014) words this makes me an academic-activist.

There are other general points in favour of continued development fieldwork, the first three inspired by Gupta and Ferguson in Scheyvens (2014). First of all the fieldwork provide Western researchers with intimate knowledge of marginalised places and peoples; secondly, it usually focuses on informal knowledge and social and practical routines that cannot be obtained through text-based criticism or large-scale surveys; and third, it nurtures understandings and provides for new perspectives on things we thought we

knew, just by the geographical and social shifting of location. Finally there is a real world value, assuming that all of the mentioned benefits from development fieldwork are either translated into policies and practices that are relevant and beneficial for the peoples or environments studied, or otherwise shared with the research participants.

5. An Alternative for Bolivia?

This last chapter briefly presents the main body, i.e. the three papers, before synthesising the findings in a discussion of the research questions and closing with a perspectivation.

5.1 Claims: the articles and their arguments

Each of the articles contribute to the investigation of historical and contemporary claims to land and self-determination by exploring three different types of claims: a historical claim, based on a sense of justice; a political claim based on a call for equality; and a claim based on identity to determine development locally. Table 4 gives a quick overview.

Table 4: Principal contributions of the three articles

Article	Topic	Concepts	Argument
1. Amazonian Erasures: Landscape and Myth-making in Lowland Bolivia	Historical review of dominating political economies in the history of Beni.	Material and conceptual landscape transformations. Myths of the pre-modern.	Myths of the ‘underdeveloped’ are deeply entwined with dominant development and economic politics. Indigenous landscapes may be erased again.
2. Contextualising consent	Consultation based on the principle of free, prior and informed consent (FPIC) in TIPNIS.	Post-liberal visions. Plurinationalism. Indigenous nationalism. Resource nationalism. Deliberative democracy.	FPIC as direct democracy reproduces inequalities and support populist governing. A ‘closed space’, after a thorough deliberative process, can provide more equity, and points towards plurinationalism as imagined by territorial peoples.
3. Coproducting Development Alternatives. The making of a Lifeplan in lowland Bolivia	Local participatory project to elaborate a Lifeplan for the Living Well of the Movima.	Co-production of alternative modernities. Participation. Development visions and perspectives. Decoloniality.	Alternatives to simple landscapes of modernity are coproduced through politicised, practical engagement that reconfigure livelihoods and institutions in ways that are both distinctively indigenous and locally controlled

Article one (2018), published in *Rural Landscapes: Society, Environment, History* shows how local practices and wider world tendencies have always come together. It narrates how the peoples of my specific interest, the Mojeño and the Movima, proactively responded to changes and formed the landscape of today. It also tells how, after having lived for about two centuries in quite prosperous societies as ‘Mission-Indians’, the rubber boom around 1900 finally dissolved these civic centres, making way for myths about free land and stray cattle. Before that, since the first half of the nineteenth-century, the indigenous peoples had resisted, with increasing difficulty, the new Eurocentric visions of the relationship between land-use and tenure, with the idea of private property and consequent policies undermining existing conceptions of property. Mercantilism had gradually replaced trade and craftsmanship, and republican bureaucracy had slowly marginalised indigenous leadership. With the rush for rubber many fled to the forests, a tendency that continued throughout the twentieth century, when ranching took speed and an agrarian reform allowed for European descendants to take over the natural plains and the cattle. The indigenous peoples settled in the forests, forming communities in the image of their former societies, with the *Cabildo* as the central institution. While maintaining, or recovering, autonomy, the lowland peoples remained invisible as economic, as well as political actors until when in the 1980s and 1990s, they emerged as a political and social unit, laying claim to the land they occupied, with relative success. The paper argues that myths that historically have foreshadowed dispossessions are reappearing as the Bolivian government has designated the Amazonian Department as a key growth area. Through mechanisms of material and conceptual landscape changes, indigenous peoples’ practices have earlier been erased from the landscape. With the paper I encourage development researchers and practitioners to observe history with all its complexity when negotiating development and to pay particular attention to essentialised characterisations of indigenous peoples and their interests in order not to reduce the available space for them to manoeuvre politically.

Article two, in second review in *Latin American and Caribbean Ethnic Studies*, contributes to the debate of the ambiguous attempts of various Latin American countries to establish post-liberal democratic systems beyond traditional voting. It depicts fundamentally different visions for the young Plurinational State: the wish of national level strengthening on the one side and the striving for self-governed collective entities on the other, and explores the status of indigenous collectives in the contemporary era of neo-extractivism in post-liberal Bolivia. With an empirical study of a consultation based on the principle of Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) in the indigenous territory and national park Isiboro-Sécure (TIPNIS), I shed light on the built-in paradox of FPIC, i.e. the presuppositions of equality that assume away the very structural

imbalances that it is meant to resolve. The exclusion of the territorial leadership, and the absence of the indigenous peoples' regional and national organisations in the process as well as allies among NGOs, seriously enhanced power-inequalities and allowed for the emergence of a new, government-close group of 'indigenous facilitators' who challenged the legitimately appointed leaders. The paper illustrates the implications of the event for the involved that experienced division all the way down to family-levels, and the breakdown of communal and territorial institutions. Consultation based on the right to FPIC has been a long-held claim of the indigenous peoples. The article shows that, after having succeeded in establishing FPIC as a legal requirement when state or corporations wish to operate on indigenous lands, the next challenge regards its implementation under unequal conditions. I argue that the implementation of FPIC as direct democracy facilitated by government officials only reproduces inequalities and facilitates populist governance, while a 'closed space', after a thorough deliberative process, can provide more equity in decision-making. This resembles lowland indigenous representatives' own suggestion, as a step towards their vision of a plurinational state and the devolution of decision-making and transfer of real power to local, self-determining entities. They claim new administrative spheres and certain political autonomy at the local level. Not a state within a state, but spaces for participation and transformation.

Article three, to be submitted to the journal *Development and Change*, offers an ethnographically based study of a minor development project in the young Movima indigenous territory. It explores ideas about 'co-production' and 'participation', accompanying the work of a Bolivian NGO and the territorial government in elaborating a 'Lifeplan' for the governance of the territory, and the management of its resources. In it, I argue that development practice in indigenous communities can generate positive, contextually meaningful outcomes when proceeding on certain conditions. Because development involves access to resources, practitioners and proponents of 'local development' must first of all understand the effects of coproduction on political institutions. Moreover, the effects of projects must be assessed as long term processes of social change, and finally, when 'developers' claim to benefit disadvantaged populations and aim not to reproduce hegemonic structures, projects must be implemented in a consciously decolonial manner. The article, while acknowledging the reasoning of development critics, argues for a greater emphasis on local agency in development studies. It shows how coproduction results in the charting of development paths that differ from those otherwise offered to the Movima, and suggests that active participation happens when local people see an opportunity to politicise the development agenda. The study also reveals the difficulties of the NGOs to leave their epistemological bias behind when implementing activities and writing up the Lifeplan. However, the translation of the aspirations of the Movima into the 'hegemonic language' of developers and powerholders is essential for the Movima in their claim-making. The coproduction is a prerequisite for the creation of viable livelihoods and the reproduction

of places that are distinctively indigenous, even when – or because - they embrace modernity. Overcoming overwhelming inequalities, and claiming the radical return of control to the people, over their daily lives as well as over resources and institutions, requires the combined efforts of a whole range of progressive actors and practitioners, local as transnational. Collaboration, rather than consensus, should guide relations with indigenous peoples to reduce reproduction of power in exchange of ideas and decision-making.

5.2 Imaginations and alternative practices: a synthesis

Each of the three articles in this thesis examined a specific type of claim to land and self-determination – the historical, the political and the identity-based claim. Taken together, they contribute towards an understanding of how lowland indigenous peoples imagine and negotiate development and to answer the research questions, repeated here: a) *What shifting development paradigms in the Bolivian Amazon can be traced?* b) *How have local ideas and possibilities transformed Amazonian socio-economic and environmental outcomes of different development paradigms?* c) *What have been the efforts and strategies in the lowland indigenous peoples' access to, and defence of, land and self-determination?* d) *How does the contemporary national government attempt to integrate the Amazonian region into the state?* And e) *How do the lowland peoples' articulations and practices provide alternatives to development?* I will provide answers in a paragraph for each of the questions in the following.

The 'historical article' (one), naturally, provides us with most insight regarding *shifting development paradigms in the Bolivian Amazon* in the past, starting with the immense efforts of the peoples of precolonial western Amazon to include marginal lands and transform them into fertile and productive fields, sustaining dense populations. The shift was involuntary. The few that survived slave-raids and diseases brought from Europe gathered in centres where, slowly, they recovered in a fundamentally different society, coproduced with the Jesuit 'society of Jesus', in principle at the distant Pope's disposal. There was a flow of resources into the centres then, which however turned with the next shift. Mercantilist economic theories and administrative centralisation were ideas flowing from Europe that continued and intensified after the independence from the Spanish crown in 1825. Eric Wolf (1982) shows that landscapes, societies and peoples that have been designated traditional, or premodern, are being denied any significant history of their own, using Marx's concept 'mode of production' to investigate the general processes at work in capitalist development and their effects on micro-populations. Bunker (1985) likewise links the uneven development of the Amazon, compared to other regions at the continent, to the world capitalist system and the local modes of production it gives rise to, and also points to official corruption in modernising agencies, tipping the balance towards large enterprises. In Beni, individual property rights were put forth to include and put taxes on all land and houses in the region, but only the wealthy elite of

European descendants were able to take advantage of that possibility to purchase land. Instead of subsistence use and exchange of surplus production for European goods, the Amazon region became a source of wealth to be channelled out of the region. Bunker (1985) introduced the concept 'mode of extraction' as a primary mechanism to Amazonian 'underdevelopment'. Nature was commodified with the merchant capitalist paradigm, the Beni was territorialised (Rasmussen and Lund 2018) – and terrorised - as industrialisation took speed in the 'old world', and the demand for commodities grew. Article one adds to the materialist approaches of Wolf and Bunker the investigation of the creation of myths that legitimised a certain development, erasing the history of whole populations in the meeting between two worlds. The world capitalist paradigm obviously still prevails, in Bolivia following a series of alternate liberalisations and centralisations of the economy. The 'political article' (two), and to a lesser degree article three, focus on the recent shift from a radical neoliberal development paradigm to a centralised developmentalist agenda. This is quite far from the shift towards a different relation with work and nature that many, among both scholars and social movements, had hoped for when new ideas flourished, in parallel, and entwined with, the leftish government shifts in a number of Latin American countries in the beginning of this century. Even if the paradigm shift towards a decolonial alternative to development itself has not exactly penetrated society, it is still an aspiration that inspires scholars as well as territorial indigenous groups and their allies among national and transnational non-government environmental and social organisations. Article two exemplifies how a coalition of lowland peoples contributes to the desired new paradigm by proposing a different democratic order at state as well as at local levels, refuting the perception that the lowland peoples are mere passive recipients of policy changes, unaware of their possibilities and consequences (Reyes-García et al. 2010). The making of a Lifeplan (article three), that aims to redirect resource-management to the territorial or communal level, is another illustration of decolonial efforts of a lowland people and their allies to construct an alternative to the prevailing paradigm, an alternative that revolve around the return of control to the people over their lives. The collaboration with development and conservationist organisations may simultaneously serve both as extensions of development regimes and practices *and* as sources of alternatives to such regimes. This thesis, especially article three, demonstrates that even though power-structures and western epistemic dominance in discourses (Cornwall 2007; Cornwall and Brock 2005; Rist 2007) and practices (Cooke 2004; Henkel and Stirrat 2001; Mosse 2007; Ribot and Larson 2005; Williams 2004) are reproduced in such collaborations, they may also form the very foundation for indigenous peoples to make claims and maintain their distinct livelihoods. The national and transnational network forms part of the lowland peoples' lived alternative to hegemonic production patterns and political systems, in their aim for a paradigm shift.

The second research question investigates how *local ideas and possibilities have transformed Amazonian socio-economic and environmental outcomes of different development paradigms?* Throughout the thesis I have aimed to show how ideas of local people, utilising the available means and options, have transformed the development trends that arguably have been imposed on the Amazonian populations, to align with existing ideas and systems in ways that contributed to uphold viable livelihoods and the reproduction of culture. Leaving out a parenthesis in the mid-twentieth century, where the indigenous lowland peoples through the Loma Santa movement sought to distance themselves from, and exclude, the *karayana* (white people), local practices and reproductions have always come together with tendencies in the surrounding world. The Amazonian cultures are thus moulded by precolonial, colonial, republican and post-republican rule and practices, and marked by the ‘bricolage’ (Cleaver 2002) of bits and pieces of different, sometimes overlapping, legalities. Some are more prominent than others, like the Cabildo system, introduced by the Jesuits and adapted to local governance structures (article one), which may have changed profoundly, but still today are attributed that era. When nature conservation during the 1980s became a global issue, lowland peoples organised around the management of national parks and protected areas (article two). Still today, indigenous management is perceived to be nature preserving, and is decisive for the engagement of many environmental NGOs with indigenous territories (article three). Local influence in direct response to hegemonic development paradigms has not been limited to the very local level production of ‘hybrid’ livelihoods and institutions (Escobar 1995 [2012]). The end-twentieth century decades of neoliberal development enabled and spurred an influential lowland movement, backed by NGOs and foreign donors, which became successful in securing both material and political ends, negotiating the establishment of indigenous territories, and participating actively in national constitutional reforms (Postero 2007). Environmentally, these socio-economic outcomes have secured large tracts of biodiverse, forested landscapes, moulded by the different needs to secure lowland, territorial peoples’ livelihoods. The thesis emphasises that the lowland peoples do not resist modernisation efforts or development institutions (e.g. Vincent 2004), but rather turn them to their own purposes.

Addressing the third question, *what have been the efforts and strategies in the lowland indigenous peoples’ access to and defence of land and self-determination?*, I argue that the socioeconomic and environmental outcomes described above have not just been a mere, necessary adaptation to changing externally inflicted conditions, but conscious efforts and strategies of the lowland indigenous peoples to access and defend land and self-determination through shifting paradigms. The Jesuits could not have survived, and much less have carried through with their ideas of indigenous reductions, had the peoples of the Amazonian plains not accommodated them, literally speaking, and contributed to the project with their knowledge and skills. During the ‘isolationist’ period in the twentieth century, the lowland peoples withdrew to, or recolonised,

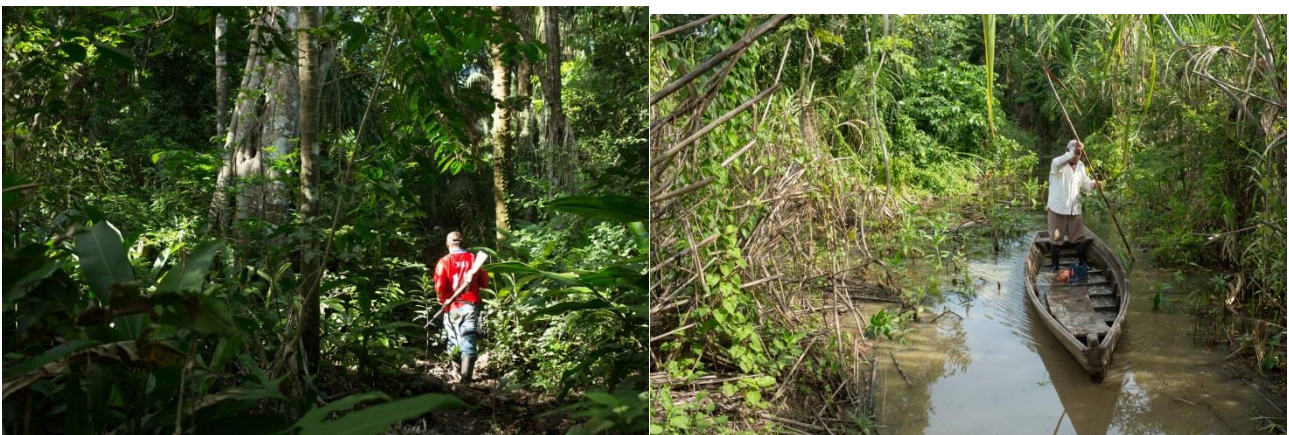
large forested areas considered peripheral then, and managed to establish themselves here, reintroducing the cabildo system and reproducing their distinct cultures (article one). With increasing pressures on these forested lands from the beginning of the 1980s, they proactively took charge of the protected areas, often with the assistance of NGOs, and thus strategically appropriated the social and political space of these areas. The organisation in regional centrals, upwards affiliated nationally and internationally with indigenous umbrella-organisations, and downwards with subcentrals, later territorial governments, provided them with an effective tool to make claims, mobilise and negotiate. In the constitutional amendments in (neoliberal) 1994, they used their newly gained influential organisation and successful movement to claim recognition as original cultures and were granted universal citizens' rights which, however, did not improve their livelihoods or decision-making influence. Thus, the claims they made in the recent Constituent Assembly in 2008 focused on 'pluriversal' rights and the building of a different state composed of equal, self-determining entities (article two). Both the second and the third article analyse the difficulties of the lowland territorial peoples to pursue that vision, but show how they use both contentious and law-centred strategies to defend and develop the land and the rights they have gained during the past decades. Contentious strategies include marches and blockades of rivers; law-centred strategies have been proposals to be included in the Constitution and in new legislation such as the consultation law, or the use of grievance mechanisms. This happens in close alliance with national and transnational organisations, funded by foreign donors as exemplified in the last article. A distinct strategy of the Movima has been to mobilise the highland and now constitutional concept, Vivir Bien, to express their aspirations for their territory and its relation with other local and regional governments in a proactive claim for self-governance. Local people are thus not passive recipients of 'development' although their agency tends to be forgotten, downplayed or revolve around NGO- and elite-capture (Larson 2003; Platteau 2004; Ribot and Larson 2005), nor are the lowland peoples 'victims of progress' (Bodley in Gow 2001). Neither are they bound through clientelistic networks produced by foreign powers through NGOs, as suggested by Bolivia's Vice-President (Linera 2012). All along the lowland peoples have been actively planning for their own development.

Regarding the question of *how the contemporary national government attempts to integrate the Amazonian region into the state*, article one concludes that essentialising and degrading discourses, and re-emerging myths of idle land and premodern peoples in the lowland, can foreshadow new dispossessions of indigenous lands with severe consequences for the options of the lowland peoples to maintain the basis for their cultural reproduction, which is the land and its specific management and governance structures. Article two illustrates how a specific right obtained by the indigenous movement, the consultation based on the principle of FPIC, is used by the government to legitimise interventions on indigenous lands.

Simultaneously, opposition is weakened through the co-optation of indigenous leaders and the exclusion of the allies of the lowland peoples, whether NGOs or lower ranking state agencies. An efficient method to integrate people in the centralising state-project, and exclude opponents and experts, has been the implementation of consultations as direct democracy. Policies, like the Law of Popular Participation from 1994, promote a political party-based democratic system, which not only impede downward accountability of political leaders (Pacheco 2005; Ribot and Larson 2005), but is incompatible with territorial governance structures (Cameron 2013; Postero 2007). The Movima article (three) reveals that the reach of the government is not all pervading. The area around Santa Ana is not a stronghold of the MAS government; neither of the local indigenous peoples, it should be added. Relatively few, rich families own the land and dominate decentralised institutions, resisting the creation of indigenous territories (Larson 2003; Pacheco 2005). Even when the government is not strongly represented here, its policies and harsh discourse against 'eco-imperialists' influence the degree to which the Movima can access assistance and funding from NGOs and donors, further complicating their struggle for land and self-determination. Likewise, the resource and indigenous nationalist rhetoric of the government may indirectly influence people in the region and prepare for an eventual change. If the government succeed in an alliance with the landowners to 'develop' the land into large-scale agriculture to replace ranching, the shift can be swift. It would put an end to the hope of the Movima to someday regain access to the plains and the higher ground through the implementation of the land-revision. The government's roll-back of neoliberalism did not change the economic politics based on the extraction of resources, rather activities were expanded. Simultaneously, civil society has been weakened, and the relational ontology expressed by the Vivir Bien, with a different relation with nature and production, has been downplayed and transformed to fit a conventional modernising development direction. Still, the concept is being mobilised by the government as part of the indigenous nationalist rhetoric.

I argue that *the articulations and practices of the lowland peoples provide alternatives to development*. The final research question asks *how?* The main claim is that the territorial lowland peoples' social and political practices are decolonial, in that they consistently transform shifting modernising efforts, which are inherently colonial, into means that can support their own control with land, resources and social structures, and thus maintain places that are distinctively indigenous. Amazonian practices may have been alternative to those of contemporaneous societies already in precolonial times. Unlike other known cultures, like the Inca or the Maya, the traces of the Amazon region points to the existence of a heterarchy; a mix of urban-like places, perhaps some hierarchical societies, tribal peoples and agricultural communities, independently governing their social and political life, while cooperating on major infrastructures, and trading and communicating over long distances (article one). The Jesuit-Indian amalgam was alternative to

the project of the Spanish crown to a degree that caused the expulsion of the Jesuits in 1767. Their collective, or perhaps rather corporate, approach to land tenure, production and distribution not only stood out; its ability to create viable, productive centres created envy in the few impoverished Spanish settlement in the region at the time. The alternative prescribed in the Loma Santa movement and myth almost speaks for itself, and still today, the image of Loma Santa with its landscape of abundance and the church, pointing to the Cabildo institution, guides territorial arrangements, and moreover, adds a strong spiritual and moral layer to the struggle of defending the territories. The soon four decades long internalisation of, or alignment with, the transnational environmentalist agenda now permeates lowland territorial peoples' identity, most likely because it is easily compatible with a diversified livelihood strategy, and close to some of the practices considered specifically indigenous (article three), such as spending time in the forest (photos 10 and 11). Taking care of and relating with nature has thus become a consistent articulation of the territorial peoples that today oppose the extractivist agenda of the developmentalist Bolivian government. The final decolonial articulations and practices of the lowland peoples that I wish to highlight are the very arrangements of territorial livelihoods and governance, which counter neoliberal assumptions of the non-viability of rural livelihoods due to 'meagre assets, government failures and market imperfections' (López and Valdés 2000), and offer an alternative to both national and local governments' visions of development for the region. The collective ownership of land gives each productive unit, the extended family, a say regarding the use of land and resources through the community cabildo, or through the territorial assembly. This way, control of land and resources is subject to all families of the community. This return of control to the people over their lives, resources and institutions, which have been the core claims of the indigenous struggle, can be referred to as people's delinking from contemporary legacies of coloniality.



Photos 10 and 11. Left: Hunting in the Movima territory. Right: Flooded path in the Movima territory (photo Bo M. Johansson 2016)

5.3 Perspectivation: alternatives at risk

In closing the thesis, let us briefly return to its aim in the larger perspective - to contribute to the search for answers on how to promote human practices and material flows that do not undermine ecological processes and systems, or in other words, to find solutions to modern problems beyond modernity. The collective land and resource governance in the indigenous territories exemplify practices that prevent, or radically slow down, decisions of fundamental and sweeping land use changes. More than this, the model allows for a different relation with nature, based on knowledge and skills that derive from practice and spending time in the immediate environment, which was among the primary aspirations of my informants, even if only seasonally possible due to work outside the territory, as is the case of many Movima. This practical decoloniality actively delinks from the current 'mode of extraction' (Bunker 1985) and initiate a process of de-commodification of nature. The return of control to the local level is not without internal conflicts and tensions that can be severe, but the communal level has so far proven resilient and able to deal with problems like leaders working for their own gain, and to recover from disputes that are often based in the affiliation of some people with political parties. I thus turn to external factors that put the alternative project at risk.

Although legal frameworks concerning indigenous rights exist, government territoriality in the study area is evident. Rights are compromised, minimised and amended in order to address other priorities, forming part of what the government perceive to be a decolonising alternative to neoliberalism, i.e. nationalisation of resources and redistribution of benefits from their extraction. This quite resembles the former 'dependistas' vision and politics, and remain within the modern paradigm. Strategies to control resources establish a vertical dynamic that invades the territories and de-structures regional economies, destroys biodiversity and violates processes of citizen decision-making (Svampa 2015; article two).

Official discourse, however, trivialises the social and environmental consequences of this economic strategy, while stimulating resource and indigenous nationalist sentiments. The procedures to approve indigenous autonomy or self-governance have slowed down, if not stopped completely, and legal frameworks restrict and undermine the opportunities to exercise it (Cameron 2013; Tockman and Cameron 2014). Furthermore, a degrading discourse against lowland peoples gives the impression that they possess unnecessarily large, undeveloped land-tracts which they are unable and unwilling to manage properly (Canessa 2014; Article one).

These territorialising mechanisms are already affecting day-to-day life of indigenous communities through subtle and indirect means, but also direct state interventions in the territories have broken social relationships and institutions, making resilience to hard environmental conditions weaker, and strategies to

face poverty less effective. In TIPNIS there was a fear that this would in the end be an excuse to dissolve indigenous territories.

A reason for territorialisation, different from the quest for new resources and productive land, or 'national sovereignty', may be observed. The small 'white' economic elite who traditionally held power in Bolivia is a permanent threat to the MAS government. Around 400 individuals own 70%, and large landowners in general own 90%, of the productive land (Enzinna 2008; Webber 2012). In very general terms, this group can be placed geographically in Santa Cruz, the south-eastern lowland's economic centre, hosting the conservative opposition to the MAS government. The increase in government activities in the northern lowland can be interpreted as an attempt to establish a new economic axis, bypassing Santa Cruz.

In this thesis the focus has primarily been on the project of the state, and also the development institutions, when analysing and assessing the external relations of indigenous peoples, influencing their livelihoods. It is important to keep in mind the larger coloniality inherent in the commodity consensus and the fact that the spatial pressure on the Amazon is very much determined by the (over)consumption in both 'the Global North', and other growth regions, like BRICS. There is a need that development researchers and practitioners to a larger extent redirect attention towards the roots of coloniality that determine the place of the Amazon in the world system: the modern modes of production, extraction and not least consumption.

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The Articles

RESEARCH

Amazonian Erasures: Landscape and Myth-making in Lowland Bolivia

Lisbet Christoffersen

Radical land-use changes are under way in Bolivia's Beni Department. As a prelude to changes, tales of idle land and premodern peoples have emerged, resembling the Pristine Myth that accompanied the 'discovery' of the Americas. In this article, I revisit the history of this area to show that its landscape and people have been re-narrated over time in ways that resonate with political economic concerns. I describe three dominant historical landscapes of Moxos, and the transformations that took place in between them, and show how material and conceptual landscape changes fed each other and obscured previous systems. In reinforcing loops they thus allowed for the birth or rebirth of myths of empty landscapes and traditional peoples, myths then used to naturalise transformations. I argue that new variants of the myths once again will erase indigenous peoples and their management practices from the landscape, and I stress the importance of investigating history with all its complexity when negotiating development. We must pay particular attention to the dangers of myth; essentialised characterisations of indigenous peoples and their interests risk reducing the available space for them to manoeuvre politically – but also for us to understand the nuanced relationships between history, landscapes, its peoples and the wider world.

Keywords: landscape transformations; pristine; premodern; landscape management; development; Moxos; Bolivia

Introduction

I usually fly up to Trinidad in the Bolivian Amazon on my way to the indigenous territories that are central to my study and had thus already seen the northward expansion of the soy fields from above. Driving through them was overwhelming. Impressive landscapes used to be here: a mosaic of dense forests and grazing land with scattered vegetation and wetlands with an abundance of birds, alligators and capybaras. Now, newly established fields stretched all the way to the horizon. Driving north was like travelling backwards through the landscape transformation taking place: first the endless soy fields and then the bare soil where all the vegetation had recently been removed. Not a single landmark was left to rest my eyes upon – not until several hours later, when huge scattered piles of woody plants awaiting incineration appeared, almost as if someone had built monuments over a bygone era.

Other radical landscape transformations are under way in the Beni Department, formerly known as Moxos. So far, the extraction of natural resources, the main strategy for continued economic growth in Bolivia (Hindery 2013; Pellegrini, Ribera and Marco 2012), has mainly taken place

in the southern lowland departments, but the recent launch of major infrastructure projects are prelude to changes. An example is the resumption of plans to build two large hydro-electric power stations that will alter the ecosystem dynamics of the Madidi National Park, an important biological hotspot and one of the largest protected areas in the world; it will affect close to 20 indigenous communities in the overlapping indigenous territory (Finer and Jenkins 2012). Another example is the expansion of the road-network, part of the Initiative for the Integration of the Regional Infrastructure of South America, IIRSA, comprising more than 500 megaprojects, of these almost 50 in Bolivia, primarily in the Departments Beni and Pando (CAOI 2008). Highways are projected to cut through indigenous territories and protected areas, raising concerns about migration, deforestation and contamination. Moreover, large oil and gas deposits beneath the forests where the Andes descend into the Amazon Basin (Hecht, in Hindery 2013) cause general uncertainty about the future of indigenous territories and protected areas there.

Along with the early signs of coming landscape transformations come tales of places and peoples in need of change. They come from different actors but contain common references to unexploited land and traditional peoples. Such narratives serve to naturalise and justify the preferred development as envisioned by the narrator. The indigenous lowland peoples hold land through collective titles, constituting the forested almost 25%

of the department, which otherwise primarily consists of savannah, *pampa*. They apply a diversified livelihood strategy that, among other practices, includes a varied use of the forested landscape. The Movima and the Mojeño, among whom I conducted fieldwork, were not always forest dwellers. An earlier landscape transformation obscured their previous production patterns and led to the contemporary distribution of land and its use, at the *pampa* as well as in the forests.

This paper deals with the way myths emerge and are used in the appropriation of both land and development agenda. I present two major transformations of the Moxos landscape. Both are built on myths about the empty, unexploited land, poorly managed by premodern natives that almost accidentally were present here. Today these essentialising myths appear again, legitimising an economic development with drastic ecological and socio-economic changes as a result, and threatening to erase lowland peoples and their management practices from the landscape once again. This is a development that fails to consider potential valuable alternatives close at hand and that excludes the voices of central stakeholders. I tell a history that challenges current myths and show how it is not the first time that people and landscapes are being enrolled in stories that legitimise developments that may not be in their interest. The historical review shows how the Mojeño and the Movima proactively responded to changes and formed the landscape of today but remained invisible as economic, as well as political actors – as collectives with agency.

The aim of this paper is to underline the importance of investigating history with all its complexity in negotiations about development, and of paying particular attention to the dangers of myth. Retelling and reinterpreting history is essential to reflect critically on contemporary narratives. By bringing together archaeological, ethnographic and historical data, I show how landscapes and peoples have been recast under changing political economies and how myths from multiple sources (economic developers, conservationists, politicians, migrants, scholars and local people) come together in a series of transformations leading to the repeated re-narrations of landscapes and peoples. I argue that regional political and economic 'development' has always been deeply entwined with myths of idle landscapes and explain how these myths can still thrive, although research has disproved them over and over again.

Re-narrating Histories – Creating Myths

The European expansion in search of wealth and the parallel transition to capitalism, accelerating in the course of the industrial revolution, thoroughly founded a perception of nature as resources and commodities, which has come to dominate economic development worldwide. It also inspired a world history that is the history of exactly that development: the history of the developed, modern countries that have reached their climax and encourage the 'still-developing countries' to follow by demanding the adoption of the same path to qualify for assistance (see Mitchell 2011 on 'travelling experts in democracy' for

a contemporary example). In line with Eric Wolf (1982) and his 'people without history', I claim that landscapes, societies and peoples that have been designated *traditional*, or *premodern*, are being denied any significant history of their own. Inspired by Wolf, I am convinced that the history I am about to present must be relational in character, because it is intertwined with distant events, and we therefore must aim to understand the world as a whole instead of as self-contained societies. Wolf used Marx's concept of production to investigate the general processes at work in capitalist development and their effects on micro-populations to include those peoples and societies that have been denied a place in the Eurocentric history. In my approach, the angle from which we observe is that of the lowland indigenous communities in Beni. European and regional development and expansion will be included when relevant to explore linkages that affected Benian political and ecological landscape transformations directly. While the effects of changing modes of production on the lowland indigenous peoples still underlie the analysis, an add-on to Wolf's materialist approach is the investigation of the creation of myths that legitimised a certain development – the 'westernisation' of the economy – and erased the history of whole populations in the meeting between two worlds.

The resilience of the myths owes to the fact that evidence fails to demonstrate their emergence, Sluyter (2003) states. They emerge during a process that materially and conceptually transforms the landscape while it at the same time obscures such transformations. In combination with the objectification of nature and its separation from culture, society and humanity (Descola 2013; Latour 1993; Moore 2017), these blind spots in history block the effective understanding of relationships between landscapes and its peoples, as well as these peoples' interconnectedness with the wider world. This study's investigation of multiple contemporary re-narrations of landscapes and peoples shows the urgent relevance of understanding what myths can do.

Literature on myths in South American contexts usually concerns the way the narratives of indigenous peoples are used to make sense of the world and explain their own place in it (Hugh-Jones 1988) or to come to terms with history (Lévi-Strauss, in Gow 2001). As is apparent by now, the myths that I am concerned with are those that originate in the Western or westernised mind and make sense in the forced implementation of the capitalist order and praxis. This includes Western myths dominating nature conservation with an entrenched assumption of stability, equilibrium and harmony in research and practice (Pierotti 2016). There is one important exception, one indigenous myth, which is the Mojeño myth of Loma Santa, the sacred mound. It narrates how the Mojeño came to settle in the forest, and it depicts their idea of an ideal world.

Hans Renes (2015) describes how ecologists tend to use the 'traditional landscapes' model, suggesting a stable, premodern past versus a dynamic and rapid contemporary landscape change. Recent periods are regarded as more dynamic than more distant ones, and when traditional landscapes are still found, it is due to marginality,

isolation and stability. The premodern landscape changed only in details, slowly and gradually. This belief somehow resembles the Pristine Myth (Denevan 1992, 2011), the idea that the colonial Europeans transformed nature in the Americas, whereas the Indian impact had been benign or non-existent, a belief which was refuted by Denevan, among others. This article presents several 'pristine myths', reflecting how the ideas of 'something pristine' have had different expressions at different times.

Inherent in pristine myths is the conceptual nature–society divide. Nature in the premodern landscape tends to be deemed 'underdeveloped', as are its peoples, who may even be considered as 'cheap nature' (Moore 2017), not quite human, and thus assigned to a domain that allows for exploitation. They must undergo or be used in a modernisation towards a separation of nature and society in order to develop nature into productive landscapes. Also in development practice and research, conceptions of premodern/pristine landscapes continue to occur, promoting the continued dominance of 'expert knowledge' over 'local knowledge', despite numerous studies questioning the advantages of this regime (e.g. Goldman 2005; Neumann 1998). At a global scale, the dichotomy has proven disastrously counterproductive regarding global consequences of natural–social phenomena such as climate change or industrial agriculture, reliant on disappearing fossil fuel and water, and it has generated major social disparity. Realising this, however, seems to be a lot easier than to eliminate the conceptual nature–society dichotomy, manifest in the material world as the continued desire to develop supposedly unexploited land and resources, side by side with the desire to conserve supposedly unspoiled nature (Sluyter 2003).

The assumption of 'traditional landscapes' simplifies the task of landscape conservation by focusing solely on landscapes that avoided recent changes, thus impairing our understanding of landscape history and management. It also indicates the existence of balanced environments, which is highly questioned by contemporary ecological–developmental biologists (Pierotti 2016). By ignoring local history, we risk forgetting that landscape management is always the work of man. Perhaps an understanding of dynamics could help promote human practices and material flows that do not undermine ecological processes and systems, and inspire the efforts of researchers to suggest relations to nature that can oppose the nature–society dichotomy in contemporary conservation debates (e.g. Büscher et al. 2016).

A Political Ecology of the Moxos Plains

I developed three levels of analysis: i) a focus on locality and people to foreground livelihoods, interventions and responses to changes; ii) an analysis of material and conceptual landscape transformations to determine the (re)creation of myths; and iii) a profound historical approach to understand how local practices and wider world tendencies have always come together.

- i) Together, locality and people could be called *place* in the sense of Aletta Biersack's (2006)

interpretation: the grounded site of local–global articulation and interaction. The important idea is that local people make changes, interact and actively contribute to determine effects of transformations in a given locality. The local people of my study are the Movima and Mojeño peoples of the Beni Department, also known as the Moxos Plains, or simply Moxos. Their on-the-ground responses to changing conditions, through interaction, articulation and pro-action, play a prominent role in the analysis to disprove essentialised representations.

- ii) The myths of the premodern, the traditional and the un(der)developed landscapes and peoples are resilient. Not only do they continuously legitimise the appropriation of the development agenda by those who develop others, they also help maintain the image of the indigenous peoples as 'victims of progress' (Bodley in Gow, 2001). Hvalkof's (2006) title 'Progress of the victims' points to the problem of what the myths do, namely, obscure successful labour and production patterns that have secured reproduction and maintenance of the indigenous populations. Sluyter (2003) suggests an analysis of material and conceptual landscape transformations to identify the emergence of the Pristine Myth in a specific place. Identification and feedback processes of the transformations provide the basis of a more general falsification of the myths of pristine or premodern landscapes and peoples. I apply this analysis to my case of landscape transformations in the Beni. The loop to current appearances of the myth is an add-on to Sluyter's work. Current representations of the lowland and its peoples from segments relevant to the contemporary and future development of the Beni include those of the government, migrant farmers and foreign and national NGOs. The NGOs have come to play a significant role as part of indigenous communities' relationships with the wider world; they represent indigenous peoples according to their specific interests in the region.
- iii) Historical political ecology can be characterised as 'a field-informed interpretation of society–nature relations in the past, how and why those relations have changed (or not) over time and space, and the significance of those interpretations for improving social justice and nature conservation today' (Offen 2004: 21). The indigenous land tenure systems today are regionally differentiated, moulded by precolonial, colonial, republican and post-republican rule, and marked by the 'bricolage' (Clever 2002) of bits and pieces of different, sometimes overlapping, legalities. Cleaver's argument regarding institutions is that the dichotomies traditional/modern and informal/bureaucratic are false; instead, local resource management is a complex blend of legalities, existing norms and mechanisms

consciously adapted to new purposes or, less consciously, new arrangements conferred with the legitimacy of pre-existing norms and practices. The history of the two ethnic groups, the Movima and the Mojeño, presented in this article, indicate exactly how complex this blend is.

History within political ecology is important to understand the intersection between environmental and political change. In Beni protected areas designated 50 years ago were not really 'managed' until the 1990s (SERNAP 2005), when the lowland peoples raised their voices because of increasing colonisation and related negative environmental impacts. Literature and analysis on lowland indigenous resource management, governance and social mobilisation often begin here. Focus on these relatively recent events, although milestones, somehow discounts earlier efforts of the lowland peoples to maintain influence on their livelihoods while also playing a part in regional politics, organisation and trade. It underestimates the historical significance of their struggle to gain and maintain control over land. I seek to balance this by presenting their rich and turbulent history upon which the more recent struggle builds; as a trade-off, the more recent history will be treated with less detail. Anthropologists and archaeologists investigating the role of humans in shaping the environment dominate historical political ecology (Hellermann 2013). This is true for my study as well. Based on their evidence, I substantiate how the Moxos landscapes too were shaped by humans, and vice versa.

My own empirical research is based on observations when travelling by plane, river, car, foot, motorbike or horse during every season; from talking to people about changes, past and current events and practices; and from participation in daily activities during long-term and return visits to lowland communities. I conducted fieldwork within three territories situated in the south-central part of the Department, TCO¹ Movima, TIM¹² and TIPNIS³, and spent time with their territorial leaderships, the Subcentrals, and spiritual leaderships, the *Cabildo Indigenales*, placed in the towns of Santa Ana de Yacuma, San Ignacio de Moxos and Santísima Trinidad, respectively. I base my historical research on a review of secondary literature, interviewees' perceptions of the past and observations of indigenous organisation, custom and celebrations. I had first-hand impressions of land grabs in the 1960s and second-hand narratives from the time just after the rubber-boom ending in 1912. I also learned about the golden time with the Jesuits and how they fought the republican colonists afterwards; the Movima and the Mojeño have long memories. All empirical data collection took place during visits to Beni between 2013 and 2016.

The Landscapes and the Transformations

In the following I describe three dominant historical landscapes in Moxos and the transformations that took place in between them. I start by giving a brief description, to a large extent based on my own empirical material, of today's landscape. I call it 'the divided landscape' and

suggest it constitutes the third dominant landscape, literally formed in the decade of the 1990s with the creation of indigenous territories. Following that, I present myths about the lowland and lowland peoples, as expressed by different sectors of Bolivian society today. We then start the historical review by returning to precolonial Moxos, the first dominant landscape, and the assumptions about its nature and its peoples prior to the arrival of the Europeans around 1600. The second dominant landscape, the 'mission landscape', began when the Jesuits settled in Moxos in 1668. The history of lowland colonisation has seldom been told with an indigenous peoples' angle, but with his important book, *Mission Culture on the Upper Amazon*, David Block (1994) does exactly that. The description of the mission-period is almost entirely based on his work. It is followed by the transformations that took place subsequent to this important period in the history of Moxos, transformations that take us forth to recent times and close the cycle of the historical recounting.

In each of the three periods, I focus on population, landscape, land use, organisation and institutions. The in-between unstable periods will describe material and conceptual landscape transformations and how they obscured former systems, allowing for the birth of myths. The chosen periods reflect my attempt at a locally centred view of the area's history rather than conventional divisions; independence from Spain, for example, did not affect life in Moxos much, while later republican reforms had serious impacts on land tenure, and particular international market demands affected labour organisation. After the historical review I round off with my own material again; the section 'Retreat and Mobilisation' outlines some important events leading to the organisation of the lowland peoples, and the resulting division of the landscape, now manifest in collectively titled communal land.

The contemporary divided landscape

Indigenous territories and the developmental state

The Beni stretches from the Andean foothills north-eastward into the Amazon Basin. Its climate is hot and humid. Some 75% of its 200,000 km² are seasonally, sometimes disastrously⁴, flooded plains, with constantly changing waterways; the rest are periphery and gallery forests⁵ and forest islands (**Figure 2**). Eighteen indigenous peoples represent around 40% of the population in the Department. The Mojeños, the name deriving from Moxos, are the most numerous, with a population above 43,000, while the Movima count less than 8000 (Ávila 2009). Xavier Albó (1990) has designated the two peoples as '*groups of intense acculturation*' based on the moment, duration and intensity they experienced colonisation and the socio-political order that followed. The Jesuits were the first Europeans to settle in Moxos, and although they were expelled in 1767 after just one hundred years, conversations with both Movima and Mojeños confirmed that they consider this period as basic to their cultural foundation and social and political formation (Albó 1990; Molina 2002).

Land held by indigenous peoples through a collective title constitutes close to 25% of the Department, mainly

forested landscapes. The allocation of communal land was the result of the impressive organisation and mobilisation by and of the lowland peoples in the 1980s, resulting in the months-long protest march to La Paz in 1990 'for Territory and Dignity' (Contreras 1991; Jones 1990; Ströbele-Gregor 1994), led by the lowland organisation Confederation of Indigenous Peoples in Bolivia (CIDOB). Parts of their land claims were overlapping protected areas. The indigenous peoples succeeded in appropriating the social and political space of the protected areas to some extent by organising themselves around the management of this land, which initially had been declared protected without their consent (Mason et al. 2010). Other stories told of tough processes of demarcation of land with unfavourable outcomes, especially where large cattle-ranchers laid counter-claims, but the settlement of boundaries provided relative rest and the peace needed to consolidate the territories. Filling out the political space coming with these has been the major internal challenge ever since (Ávila 2009). While the land held under collective titles is considerable, it does not quite reflect population composition. Many Mojeños and Movimas reside in the urban peripheries, maintaining close relations to the rural areas.

In addition to the 18 peoples, the sparsely populated Department is home to migrants from the highland, clearing forest and settling as small-scale farmers, and large landowners that use the plains for cattle grazing. Moreover, the state has become more active in Beni, interested in exploiting oil and water resources as in the south-eastern Departments, from where the large soy fields are approaching. The government aims to convert 10 mio hectares into farmland over the next decade, which has already put pressure on the forest. While initially contemplated to be advanced through supporting smallholder activities, a new agro-capital–state alliance between the elite of the lowlands and the government since 2010 has implied an emphasis on industrial agriculture (Webber 2017). The Morales government thus continue the extractive economy, nationalised and articulated as 'neo', indicating that progressive extractivism exists. The practice of neo-extractivism consequently becomes a

politically legitimised development strategy (Burchardt and Dietz 2014; Hindery 2013; Pellegrini 2016), repeating, however, the negative environmental and social impacts of the 'old' extractivism (Gudynas 2010). Vice-President Linera has called this economic strategy 'Andean-Amazonian Capitalism' (Lewis 2012), articulated as a necessary step towards socialism (Linera 2012). The Beni has great potential for the envisioned development, and the preparations alone include mega-infrastructures that affect, or will affect, indigenous territories.

In the territories, most communities are located along the rivers that bind them together. The houses are grouped according to family relations. In addition to socialising on a daily basis, these family units constitute working communities (Reyes-Garcia et al. 2010). Trees are accepted in the small *chacos*, cleared for multiple crops that, although seen more sophisticated elsewhere in the western Amazonia (Denevan et al. 1984; Berkes, Colding and Folke 2000; own research⁶), still imitate the natural succession of regrowth. Some parts of the forest are never cleared but contain useful species that are taken care of. Other parts, constituting better cropland, are cleared repeatedly. Surplus meat from hunting is distributed along family lines, in the village, and to neighbouring communities and urban areas (**Figure 1**). Many communities apply a system of 'cattle-modules', a capital stock formed by the herd, 'yielding' as it grows, and 'harvested' from for communal consumption or sale. Some families have their own cattle roaming freely along with the communal herd. Not all communities have access to plains for cattle, but the families maintain access to beef through relatives residing on ranches as wage-labourers. From the forest they occasionally sell planks of hardwood. I observed how permission for this was given at the community meeting. This is where common activities are planned, and decisions made about all that concerns the community, like maintenance of commons or allocation of land to newcomers. This way, control of land and resources is subject to all families of the community. Indeed, local governance structures complicate major changes in land use because of its cumbersome procedures.



Figure 1: Left: Movima going hunting, community San Pedro de Apere. Photo by Bo Morten Johansson. Right: An ox provides better transport than a horse when the pampa is flooded, community Montes de Oro, Movima 1. Own photo.



Figure 2: River with gallery forest and two water reservoirs at the upper left. Own photo.

While the extended families form the basic units, Movimas and Mojeños elect a *Corregidor* or equivalent representative of the community, along with other authorities and committees (Díez Astete 2011; Reyes-García et al. 2010). They are in charge of ensuring good social relations, appointed with consideration to experience. Many community-members are directly involved in local governance, responsible for presenting issues in the *Cabildo*, the community meeting, and carrying out decisions made there. Decisions concerning the whole territory belong at a kind of general assembly. The Movima-Assembly allows the Corregidor plus two men and two women from each of the 27 communities to participate in decision-making; others can participate, but only in discussions. It lasts for days, and important decisions may need to be brought back and authorised in each community. The assemblies appoint leaders for the Subcentrals, the executive leaderships of the territories, whose external role, I was told, is to represent the communities before political authorities, companies and organisations. Internally they must keep communities informed about activities and seek and maintain unity. In reality, many of the Subcentrals are quite weak, depending on inside or outside support for activities and subsistence. The Subcentrals are 'sub' to regional Centrals that are affiliated to national and international indigenous organisations.

These organisations that initiated as grassroots mobilisers have suffered from fragmentation due to government co-optation and exclusion internally (Regalsky 2010; Webber 2017) at all levels, and the pursuit of autonomy within the constitutional framework (Cameron 2013) has not yet resulted in territorial autonomy. TIM1 is the one territory in Beni that has progressed; their process witnesses cumbersome bureaucratic requirements and a legal framework (LMAD 2010) profoundly liberal and

municipal despite the right to exercise autonomy in accordance with the applicants own 'norms and procedures'. While the Morales government, at least initially, continued the process of titling collective land, it has paradoxically restricted the exercise of the rights recognised with that title, such as the right to consultation and indigenous autonomy (Regalsky 2010; Schilling-Vacaflor 2017). These rights were established in the new constitution of 2009, which was demanded publicly by the lowland peoples in 2002 and later adopted as a demand by highland indigenous-peasant organisations during extensive uprisings against privatisation. When Morales and the MAS-party assumed the presidency in 2005, they established a constituent assembly that elaborated the Constitution of the Plurinational State of Bolivia (Regalsky 2010; Schilling-Vacaflor 2011; Paz et al. 2012). Despite power asymmetries within the assembly, the pieced-together constitution is both progressive and ambitious regarding participatory and pluralist democracy, as well as social rights and rights regarding nature. However, the developmentalist and centralist direction of the MAS-government (e.g. Regalsky 2010; Webber 2017) has provoked a series of disputes and has caused a rupture in the relationship between the Morales government and the indigenous organisations that still hold plurinationality as their aspiration.

While the organisational structures built and expanded since the 1980s experience a breakdown and emergence of parallel top-down structures, the *Cabildo Indigenales* in the urban centres that emerged from the Jesuit seventeenth-century complexes continue to be central institutions to both urban and forest dwellers. The festival cycle frequently brings them together, and lately this indigenous church community has resumed significance as a unifying political institution. All indigenous leaders I talked to, young and old, mentioned this institution

as instrumental to their engagement in indigenous political or cultural activities. The indigenous movement emerged from the urban *Cabildos* in the 1980s (e.g. Díez Astete 2011). The *Cabildo* in Trinidad was founded in 1701 and holds a high degree of legitimacy. Apart from celebrations, it is used for activities like adult education and, increasingly, political meetings. It is first and foremost a religious institution, responsible for religious celebrations. This way the *Cabildo* remains indivisible, I was told, and shielded against government intervention. The MAS government encourages cultural diversity in its depoliticised form and thus supports the urban *Cabildos*, famous for their festivals.

With the indigenous territories, the landscape is literally divided, and the lowland peoples live in an almost parallel universe, socioeconomically as well as politically, despite their vast social network comprising urban areas.

Contemporary myths

There are a number of divergent perceptions of the lowland indigenous peoples' ability to manage land and resources, none of which really trust them to perform the task. The perceptions are rooted in the way authorities, smallholders and NGOs interpret land, production and conservation, and the accompanying role of the indigenous peoples in this conception. The idea that lowland peoples are sitting on vast tracts of unproductive land is shared by the President and highland colonists alike (Achtenberg 2013; Canessa 2014).

In interviews with officials I was told that the lowland peoples are poor and backward, although rich in culture, in need of development and political education⁷. The government further argues that the lowland leaders are corrupt and tied up in clientelist relationships with foreign organisations, constituting a 'neo-colonialist' and 'eco-imperialist' lowland regime (Linera, 2012). This justified the establishment and support of parallel government-friendly organisations (Christoffersen 2014; Beunder and Kleijn 2014; Lalander 2014) after the irreversible break between the Morales government and the indigenous organisations previously supporting his candidacy. The break was prompted by a violent police intervention in a peaceful protest march in 2011 against a planned highway through the TIPNIS (McNeish 2013). The constitution mandates prior consent from indigenous communities regarding measures that will affect them; however, Evo Morales has proclaimed that 'letting a group of families tell us what to do would mean paralyzing all our work on electrification, hydrocarbons and industries' (Canessa 2014: 164). A new consultation law has been drafted that fundamentally changes the consultation process towards a negotiation about compensation, and which stresses that 'due to their strategic character and public interest, the execution and continuity of extractive activities will be guaranteed' (Schilling-Vacaflor 2017: 1065). With regard to protected areas, Vice-President Linera has stated that Bolivia will not act as park wardens for the North (ERBOL, 2010). In its efforts to expand extractive activities, the government thus frames national parks as the result of 'foreign interests', preventing the people living in the

parks from developing, while simultaneously portraying the lowland indigenous peoples as a couple of backward families.

Another group interested in sharing the land of the lowlanders are the highland migrants in search of farmland. Driven by poverty and encouraged by shifting agricultural reforms and policies, they clear forest for small-scale agriculture. They are, of course, indigenous too, belonging to the group referred to as 'originary indigenous peasants', who along with urban highlanders and coca growers constitute a large group, possibly a majority of the Bolivian population, which Canessa (2014) boldly claims are advantaged with a privileged citizenship under the Morales government. His assertion is based on the facts that the government is keen on celebrating and institutionalising highland values and actively encourages the colonisation of lowland areas by highlanders. In addition to that, highland migrants are invited to actively affect the lowlanders' attitude towards 'development', here in relation to the road through TIPNIS: 'You need to explain, to guide the indigenous compañeros ... young men, you have instructions from the President to seduce (*conquistar*) the Yuracaré women so that they won't oppose the building of the road' (Morales in Canessa 2014: 165). Many highlanders view lowland indigenous groups as the 'new *latifundistas*' (Achtenberg 2013). They generally perceive the lowland indigenous peoples as lazy and ignorant of productive ventures; to them the communities seem disorganised, and the community members never work properly. 'They must always be ordered', I was told. Canessa's description of immigrants' attitude towards the lowlanders echoes this, with statements such as 'we have brought civilisation', 'the people here are very simple' and 'before I came there was nothing here' (2014: 163). The smallholder notion of 'a piece of land to work' inhibits recognition of the landscape management of the lowland peoples and cause conflicts, sometimes violent, which reaffirms the myth of hostile savages – a term often used by this segment (Canessa 2014) and even by a highland peasant leader in the press about marching lowland protesters (McNeish 2013).

The third group I highlight are the NGOs, ranging from indigenous rights advocates, over income-generation-focused organisations, to environmental conservationists and climate-change adaptationists. They all claim to support indigenous peoples⁸; most often, however, they want to change or improve their practices. I made the following observations: 'Indigenous peoples must organise (differently) in a transparent way and meet the requirements of good governance'; 'management plans must be developed and activities monitored'. Some believe 'the use of natural resources should be restricted'. Generally the perceptions seem to be that 'the indigenous peoples are knowledgeable, but unable to transform knowledge into income'; 'have forgotten much of their traditional practices'; or simply that they would benefit from adopting other systems of production. Moreover, they are perceived to be 'weakly organised, and cannot administer funds', so most foreign NGO support is administered by local

partner organisations capable of project implementation, bookkeeping and report-writing. In this regard they are in accordance with certain public institutions, typically municipalities, who keep administration of funds specified for indigenous peoples tight. Finally, some organisations either see indigenous peoples as ‘natural environmentalists’ or as the opposite, as a threat to the ‘natural nature’. Different NGOs thus have different prerequisites for cooperation, while simultaneously basing these demands on a misconception of landscape, management and institutional history, resulting in the continued diffusion of institutions and technologies from the West in development models, and the measuring of success according to Western standards. Does the assumption that native cultures lack the rationality to use their lands effectively lie implicit in this, reaffirming the myth of the premodern?

It is fair to add that certain NGOs have been, and still are, essential partners and supporters of the lowland peoples in their struggle for land, rights and market access, and that they equally suffer repression and limitation of their work under the Morales government. Apart from new, complicated registration procedures and harsh rhetoric against them, the new consultation law directly limits their scope for action regarding support to communities by the prohibition of third parties and advisors to ‘complicate’ consultations (Schilling-Vacaflor 2017: 1064).

To sum up, the lowland populations and their production systems create a material landscape which is easily conceptually determined as idle. The ongoing conceptual transformation is no different from two predecessors in failing to recognise the landscape management of lowland peoples in the articulations of unused land and premodern peoples. Positive feedback loops linking material and conceptual transformations (Sluyter 1999, 2003) did the same twice before.

We return to the contemporary situation of the Movima and the Mojeño after having explored the early landscapes of Moxos and their transformations. We start 500 years ago, when the two groups were far more numerous, and lived on the open plains of Moxos.

The precolonial landscape, its transformation and dissolution

Rearranging landscape and waterways

Remains from a precolonial culture on the Moxos plains convey important information about a forgotten past. When one flies over, large earthworks reveal themselves. A pilot casually mentioned that ‘those immense ponds you can see everywhere are artificial and ancient’. Many seemed to know: ‘The moulds have been dug out, they found a lot of bones and potsherds’, yet no legends were told, no people mentioned, even though the mounds in cases were built upon continuously and occupied until 500 years ago (Erickson and Balée 2006).

First-hand accounts of precolonial Moxos are few. Around 1600, expeditions entered the upper Amazon in search of a fabulously rich land ruled by the ‘Gran Moxo’. Most expeditions failed before they even reached the plains; some were caught on horseback by annual floods; others starved or were decimated by disease, desertion and indigenous resistance (Block 1994; Denevan 1966; Roca 2001). They uniformly reported dense indigenous populations. The first detailed demographic and geographic descriptions were by the Jesuits, but at their arrival European diseases had already ravaged the indigenous populations, and the capture and removal of many people for slavery had disrupted social structures and productive capacities. Luckily, archaeologists can help shed light on what was here before the Europeans came.

Immense infrastructures (**Figure 3**) that include geoglyphs, canals, causeways, reservoirs, mounds, embankments, fish weirs and raised fields are found on the extensive plains. Large, populous societies systematically transformed and maintained the landscape in order to make marginal land productive, works that indicate that a technically sophisticated civilisation existed here (Balée and Erickson 2006; Denevan 1966; Erickson 2006; Mann 2008; Walker 2008; Walker and Ribeiro 2011). This evidence contradicts prevalent understandings of the Amazon as inapt for larger settlements and agriculture of a more permanent character, limited by the environmental conditions and technical capabilities as reasoned by Betty



Figure 3: Left: Raised fields up to 20 × 600 meters. Photo: Clark L. Erickson. Right: Built Pre-Columbian landscape (as interpreted by Daniel Brinkmeier, Field Museum of Natural History, Chicago).

Meggers (2003), among others. Erickson (2006) stresses human intentionality in the *building* of landscapes, a sort of 'landscape accumulation' produced by a conscious, indigenous knowledge system operating in a historical context. In Beni alone 10,000 mounds for settlements have been identified, some large, indicating possible urban centres (Mann 2008).

Contemporary archaeological thoughts may bring us closer to the political ecology of the 'earthmovers'. Albó (1990) drew the almost automatic conclusion that because of the sophisticated infrastructures, there must have been a centralised organisation, but remains from hierarchical institutions would expectedly be standardized and repetitive with regard to constructions (Henry and Barrier 2016). Homogeneity would prevail, but the archaeological evidence from Moxos stresses heterogeneity in earthworks. It tells of a complex mosaic of societies linked by networks of communication and trade. Since there is no sign of a central power, communities must have unified to produce the large earthen constructions. Henry and Barrier (2016) studied social bonds in a North American case without evidence of top-down leadership. They argue that kinship was performed and that it required ongoing maintenance of social ties to sustain coalition and consensus. Walker and Ribeiro (2011) suggest that the Arawak⁹ built their identity on control of fertile floodplains and trade routes along main waterways, corresponding well to the observation that dominant groups occupied the riverfronts when the Europeans arrived. The Jesuits noted developed patterns of trade and warfare, a surplus agricultural production, and political and religious specialists.

Jesuit eyewitnesses provide us with important information about precolonial organisation (Block 1994): multifamily groups formed the building blocks of economic and social life; they shared daily tasks or formed productive units in the same communal dwelling or used kin to retain access to river resources. Moxo communities had residences and kitchens used by extended families and a central 'drinking-house' (Denevan 1966). The village leader functioned as advisor and harmoniser more than ruler, and his privilege was the respect of the other villagers. He was one among various political and religious specialists.

Why and how has this been erased from history? Or rather, how have contemporary lowland peoples been disconnected from this ancient civilisation?

Material transformation: Societal collapse, abandonment and forest colonisation

Part of the explanation must be that people died following the Europeans' arrival. Different estimates indicate a decline in population up to 90%, from 350,000 to 35,000 inhabitants (Block 1994) at the beginning of the Jesuit period around 1668 (for comparison, about 420,000 inhabit the Beni today, according to the 2012 census). The survivors were not able to retain the labour-intensive agricultural practice. Many of the earthworks are found beneath forest cover, indicating that today's western Amazon forest was once considerably smaller. The central argument of Erickson and Balée (2006) is that

the constructions have had a positive impact on landscape vegetation. The contemporary forests are thus the legacy of past human activities and recent time's less intensive human management; there may even be *more* forest today because of human activities.

Conceptual transformation and emergence of the myth:

Savages and wilderness

Two thesis titles on Jesuit enterprise from different epochs are illustrative of the tropical image handed over through generations: 'A Vanished Arcadia', from 1901, and 'The Lost Paradise', from 1976 (in Block 1994), expressing the fascination of life at the edge of western civilization, close to a pristine nature. Descriptions of the landscape by the Jesuits themselves are, however, quite different; nature is fierce, hostile and not traversable; and the peoples living in its aquatic environment were portrayed as practically amphibious. They must, however, have noticed the fertile mounds and levees, since they introduced both cattle and cash crops.

The first mention of the Movima derives from an expedition in 1621, describing them as 'naked people, vile and addicted to witch-craft' (Denevan 1966: 52). A later Jesuit account states they were 'naked barbarians living in misery and without government' (ibid.). The Mojeño were described in far more moderate terms and considered among the most civilised ethnic groups (Block 1994). Regardless, the Jesuits described the Indians as children to be enlightened. It was the tools and goods they brought, though, and the location and relative protection that the mission complexes offered that convinced the savannah peoples to cooperate. By accepting the Jesuit agenda, and the subsequent merging of institutions and management practices, the indigenous peoples helped obscure the transformation and nourished the myth about the wild being tamed.

The mission landscape, its transformation and dissolution

Productive mutualism and prosperity 1668–1767

The settlement of the Jesuits secured the reproduction and maintenance of the reduced native populations, but also their recovering in a much broader sense. Under the relative protection from slavery in the mission complexes, the *Reductions*, the indigenous peoples resumed the thoroughly organised, yet altered, agricultural production. European tools and techniques increased the yields, and the division into professional disciplines, education and systematisation generated relatively prosperous communal societies, able to survive and live well in solid houses adapted to the environment around impressive wooden churches that were achievements of Jesuit architecture and indigenous artisans. They had a well-developed river transport system and were able to trade surplus production of food, tools, textiles, carvings, ceramics, boats and wagons to the wonder and envy of the few, destitute, secular Spanish settlements (Block 1994 when no-one else are mentioned).

The landscape changed. The population now gathered in urban centres. Cultivated fields occupied mounds and

river levees, adding new layers of fertile soil to them. Closest to the centres were cotton and citrus, introduced by the Jesuits; then came traditional subsistence crops, then cacao; rice on the seasonally flooded pampa, and farthest away the pastures for the cattle, multiplying in a semi-wild state. Bush-meat and fish continued to be an essential part of the mission diet. Forest products were extracted, which was reported to deplete materials for gathering and to induce usufruct disputes, an indication of competition over land and resources around 1700.

'The nature of the mission period was one of creative tension between Europeans and Native Americans' (ibid: 46). It was also a transitional period, bridging the precolonial heterarchical society and the capitalist epoch. The indigenous neophytes were introduced to the *Cabildo* government. They brought their organisation and their own leaders to the Reductions, where it was expanded, as new professional fields were introduced. Labour organisation shifted from family-based to community-oriented. They organised in two classes, *Familia* and *Pueblo*. *Familia* comprised the indigenous political leadership. The *Pueblo* worked in agriculture, herding, construction and transport, and composed the mission defence forces. Well-developed intra-family networks crosscutting and linking *Pueblo* and *Familia* provided easy access to the ruling class. The mission Indians shaped European tradition to local realities in the formation of a new amalgam.

In 1767 the decree stating that the Jesuits were to be suppressed in all Spanish-held land as part of the Bourbon Reforms, aiming to strengthen the Spanish crown and stimulate mercantilism (Mahoney 2010), ended their century-long presence in Moxos. The mission institutions, however, survived for another hundred years. Eyewitnesses described vibrant, model cities with shops, artisans, sugar-mills and public kitchens. David Block is not alone in portraying the Jesuit period as an almost golden age; to both Movima and Mojeño the period has had an immense impact on the way they organise and how they define themselves (Albó 1990; Díez Astete 2011). To them, this is where history begins; this is who they are and what they have lost.

Intensification and commercialisation (1768–1870)

The initial change was slow. Although mission Indians lost the influx of European products, they were left at the most attractive locations with a new production system, in addition to understanding Spanish and the European economic system. By the time of the expulsion of the Jesuits, 50,000 heads of cattle and 20,000 horses pertained to the missions, and indigenous handicrafts were priced outside Moxos. From accounts and inventories, it is clear that the missions produced more than subsistence (Block 1994: 69). A new bureaucracy emerged, mirroring mercantilist economic theories and administrative centralisation that prevailed in Europe. Intensification of mission activities should increase revenues from the colonies. Cash-crop fields were enlarged at the expense of subsistence crops. Cattle were concentrated into larger herds, and mission artists produced huge amounts of high-quality handicrafts.

Independence in 1825 did not change the order. Although a 'New Plan' marked an economic transformation towards commercialisation, 'mission Indians' successfully resisted its enforcement; they skilfully used the petition system and exploited the gap between governors and *curas*, a new class of cleric authorities. The missing imports concerned them, as did the shift towards cash crops, and changes to mission culture. At one point they achieved authorisation to re-establish food crops on export-crops land; at another, a governor was forcefully driven from Moxos, accused of having failed to observe custom.

Moxos became its own governorship, the Beni, in 1842, and a series of reforms introduced categories that initiated a conceptual landscape transformation. The indigenous peoples and settlements were perceived as hindering development with their corporate approach to property. Individual property rights were put forth to include all land and houses in the region, taxes put on such holdings, and mission-buildings offered for sale along with their communal gardens, chocolate groves and cane fields (Jones 1990). The idea of private property and consequent policies undermined the existing conception of property rights. It opened the possibility for those with the ability to take advantage of the new legal set-up to take over the important geographical hubs and good land in exchange for the payment of annual taxes. Instead of subsistence use and exchange of surplus production for European goods, mercantilism and central administration changed the way merchants, new bureaucrats and settlers perceived the Moxos landscape: a source of wealth to be channelled out of the savannah (Block 1994).

Although slowly, land changed hands and the new government buildings overshadowed the churches in both architecture and political activities. Moreover, mission economy was increasingly under pressure as an influx of cheap fabrics undercut craft production.

Landscape transformations (1870–1980): Rushes and ranching

The industrial development in the Old World raised a demand on rubber. In Beni, a region of scarce labour, the mission settlements provided workers, attracted or forced, to the rubber zones, seriously affecting the population and its ability to reproduce itself. Consequently, mission settlements now existed only as scattered villages along the rivers (Block 1994). Many mission Indians sought refuge in the forests¹⁰; Mojeños now living in TIPNIS are descendants of rubber-boom refugees (Jones 1990; Canedo 2011).

By the end of the rubber boom in 1912, a relatively stable socioeconomic order began, but the decline for the indigenous peoples continued. Some worked for white patrons in a debt-servitude system (Assies 2006), while the remainder worked their own land at a small scale and traded, unfortunately always to their detriment. Soon they exchanged their possessions and labour too. Characteristics of merchant capitalism include trade for profit, wage-labour and competing markets, all of which, as we have seen, gradually changed the material landscape, including its institutions. Competing markets ended the

local processing of goods, and the rush for commodities categorised former craftsmen as wage-labourers or slaves. Central events pushed this disastrous development further for the indigenous peoples: the commercialisation of cattle and faunal furs and an agrarian reform in 1953.

In the 1940s, commercial ranching was recommended by an American commission (Jones 1997; Webber 2017), and by the end of the decade, fresh beef was flown out of Beni in surplus airplanes from World War II. The national government considered the 'semi-wild' cattle theirs to administer and issued letters of credit on large cattle herds (Jones 1990). The older generation of Movima and Mojeño remembers this well, especially the goods that came flying in. Initially, many of them took part in the business. Meanwhile, a new political party, Movimiento Nacionalista Revolucionario (MNR), came into power in 1952. They initiated a period of nationalist reform. A large agrarian reform gave the highlanders land (back), but parcelled and privatized into small plots, *minifundios*; the indigenous landholders were designated campesinos and organised in unions. The MNR government recognised the indivisible indigenous land but did not prioritise this form of tenure. Agricultural properties depended on local circumstances; thus, in the lowland, cattle farms could extend to 50,000 ha (Assies 2006), *latifundios*. In Beni, land titling took off as the value of beef rose, especially after 1965. The land rush ended in 1979, when the 'ranching frontier had closed' (Jones 1990: 3). Cattle were everywhere, but the indigenous peoples had lost access to their long-accustomed beef and dairy products. Importantly, they had lost the plains with the higher ground for their gardens; now cattle occupied these during flooding (Jones 1997).

The concepts of commodification and privatisation thus escalated with the rise in beef-price and easy transport, and the agrarian reform privatised all of the grazing

plains. The indigenous peoples lost that race and were left landless. Increasingly impoverished, they withdrew to the forests and became invisible but continued their system of collective property and *Cabildo* government. Without beef they relied on bush-meat. The only way left for them to pursue the goods they were used to was to hunt for the fur-traders. They got caught in a debt-grip; moreover, in the 1980s, logging companies put additional pressure on their last strongholds. Then they started to organise: this is where the incredible story of mobilisation begins (Contreras 1990; Ströbele-Gregor 1994), initiating a new epoch for the lowland peoples.

Sum-up: The material-conceptual transformation cycle

While the first transformation established a feasible and acceptable substitute for the precolonial lifestyle with the mission-culture amalgam, the new vision of the relationship between land-use and tenure in the second transformation prevented the recovery of the indigenous peoples. Mercantilism replaced trade and craftsmanship; bureaucracy marginalised indigenous leadership in the urban hubs that were simultaneously depopulated by labour extraction to commodify natural goods, or by escape and death. Later, because of the commercialisation of beef and the agrarian reform, immigrant ranchers occupied the pampa and took over the cattle. The agricultural land increasingly became pasture; the cattle now belonged to others and slept and fed on the high ground most suited for cultivation (**Figure 4**). The categorisation of the savannah as grazing land obscured the indigenous labour that had created those higher grounds and fertile patches of agricultural land that could have provided the legal bases to avoid dispossession. Instead, the savannah peoples withdrew to the forests, thus positively stimulating conceptions of the landscape as unexploited,



Figure 4: Cattle occupying raised land during flooding in 2014. Photo by David Mercado/Reuters.

which resulted in an accelerating material transformation into a depopulated landscape of cattle ranches.

Retreat and Mobilisation

The retreat to the forest was never described as such by those I talked to. What brought them here was the search for Loma Santa (Riester 1976; Lehm 1999), the Sacred Mound. Doña M (TIM1) was a child then:

I was born near San Ignacio, but when I was nine we moved to Monte Grande. It was in the time of 'Loma Santa'. When the news about Loma Santa came, the families started to leave. The news told about a clean, beautiful virgin land, with animals – cattle – and a church. God had blessed the animals. We left everything, and started to walk. We settled here, built Cabildo, school, everything. This was in 1987. It wasn't Loma Santa, but we settled because they hadn't found it, and they were tired of walking. They never found Loma Santa but they settled there, in the Chimáne forest.

The description of Loma Santa is quite persistent. Not all agreed they should have just given up everything. Doña P (TIPNIS) was loudly annoyed about how her family had 'just left the cattle' and some good, fertile higher ground near San Lorenzo at the pampa. She did not, however, question Loma Santa; she knew about a pilot who once landed there, and her son almost reached it while hunting up-river. Another informant was more pragmatic about the paradisiacal nature of the mound: 'This is our Loma Santa. TIPNIS is our Loma Santa'. He thereby expressed what many fellow residents and lowland peoples feel they are struggling for these years. Lehm (1999) suggests the Loma Santa migration was an act of re-colonisation.

Both Mojeños and Movimas narrated how they got collective titles to the land. They had different reasons for mobilising in the three territories I visited, but they were all related to outside pressure. The penetration of small-scale coca farmers in the south of the TIPNIS was one incident that provoked protests from the peoples living here. Debt-servitude was another, as Don M (Trinidad) related:

When I came back in 1981, my parents had walked away. I found them in Puerto [TIPNIS] and settled there. The community members almost acted and talked like slaves. They were indebted from the commercial furs trade, they didn't know how much they owed, and they didn't understand the accounting or the value of a pelt. A block of salt costed 1 boliviano; they bought it for a load of maize or a pelt.

They pooled their labour on the initiative of Don M, and with a joint employment contract to clear some forest, 50 men and women were able to free the community of its debts in a week. He later became a significant mobiliser in the lowland peoples' movement, and the community has been, and still is, known as a protagonist in the efforts to maintain and extend the rights acquired.

Farther north, the Movima struggled with powerful cattle farmers to access resources at all. Don J told:

I saw the lives of the humble indigenous brothers, they worked unpaid; the women only earned their food. The suffering was from injustice, everything was private and the cattle ranchers prohibited us, the humble people, to go to the forest and cut wood for a canoe, and if we did, we had to work one or two days.

In the Chimáne forest, mobilisation was provoked by intruding timber companies. Doña M recalled: 'Same year [1988] entered the timber company. This is what started the mobilisation. Since 1986 companies took out resources and didn't even consider the communities that were there.' The penetration of the companies into the Chimáne forest was the specific occasion for marching in 1990, but mobilisation had begun simultaneously elsewhere in Beni for a range of different reasons. They gave up searching for Loma Santa; the land was no longer free and endless. What they primarily sought was recognition, rather than representation; they marched, not to overthrow, but to be counted in (Figure 5).

They succeeded beyond expectation. The timing was perfect. The granting of areas for nature conservation to indigenous peoples in the 1990s was not uncommon, often based on the assertion (myth) that native peoples' views of nature and ways of using natural resources were consistent with Western conservationist principles (Conklin and Graham 1995). In Bolivia, the expansion of the protected area service occurred simultaneously with growing demands of recognition of indigenous peoples' rights, and co-management arrangements were made between the National Service of Protected Areas (SERNAP), and the indigenous peoples in overlapping areas (SERNAP 2005; Mason et al. 2010); Anthias and Radcliffe (2015) argue that such arrangements were an 'ethno-environmental fix', not explicitly governed by neoliberal policy, but nonetheless formed in relation to the wider, neoliberal project prevailing in the decade, and actively promoted by World Bank, as a safeguard to protect vulnerable populations and valuable nature from the destructive effects of the market. An attempt, probably, to ensure the institution's legitimacy at a time when the privatisation of hydrocarbons and mining industries was promoted by the World Bank itself in numerous developing countries.

When withdrawing to the forests between the 1870s and 1980s, the Mojeño and the Movima found a degree of autonomy from the dominant culture(s). It was a retreat, not isolation; they joined the groups that never entered the Reductions, and they kept contact with relatives elsewhere and with markets to some degree, while preserving autonomy, language and custom (see also Van Valen 2013). They own land now, forest, and they feel strongly connected to this land, the Loma Santa, which they searched for and (almost) found here. By emphasising their deep connection with the land and their will to protect it from interventions, they help



Figure 5: The 1990 march to La Paz 'For Territory and Dignity' that initiated the process towards indigenous territories and other collective rights (Source: Global research 2011, <http://www.socialistproject.ca/bullet/b540.jpg>).

obscure the history of oppression and relocation, and feed the myth of the original forest dwellers and indigenous peoples as nature preservationists.

Re-narrating Landscapes and Indigenous Peoples in Moxos

By retelling and reconstructing the history of the peoples of Moxos, the myths in colonial and postcolonial development were falsified. The analysis treated landscape transformations as simultaneously material and conceptual, fulfilling the criteria that Sluyter (1999: 395) set for falsifying myths.

First, westernisation did not *materially* transform a precolonial, pristine landscape into a productive landscape. Neither the Jesuit nor the commercial cattle farmers did that. Diseases killed entire populations of indigenous peoples, and the intensively cultivated precolonial land was invaded by forest and water. Thereafter, a Jesuit–Indigenous amalgam society materially transformed the landscape. Later, the abandoned mission-land was privatised and 'put to work' (Moore 2017) with the cattle industry, while in fact the land did not live up to its potential to sustain a much larger local population, as it had done before the arrival of the Europeans, as well as in the mission-landscape era.

Secondly, westernisation has *conceptually* transformed a non-pristine precolonial landscape into a pristine precolonial landscape. Twice: first when the Jesuit fathers, around 1650, discovered the naked people in the impassable environment, and again when mission fields, groves and cattle were deemed idle after commodity rushes around 1900 had depopulated the Moxos plains again.

Finally, the material-conceptual transformations of the Moxos landscape have themselves obscured the transformations, through positive feedback processes.

These include re-categorisation of former agricultural land as wasteland. Depopulation, old-field succession or forest invasion along with free-roaming cattle visually validated a myth of pristine or unused land. Policies to privatise and tax land prevented the recovery of the indigenous population. They withdrew to the forests, further validating the myth visually, and contributing to the material transformation into the divided landscape of today, with vast, depopulated plains, and forests inhabited by former savannah peoples like the Mojeño and the Movima.

That the economic and demographic development in Moxos has been inseparable from the myths of the idle and the premodern is comprehensible, but how can we understand the role of 'western' myths in relation to conservation? By replacing 'myth' with 'deep-seated assumption', Raymond Pierotti (2016) was able to investigate the emergence of 'equilibrium thinking', which has dominated ecological research and work for more than a century. Apart from tracing the first assumed existence of a balanced nature without any quantitative underpinning, he found that terms in ecology disciplines derived directly from economic models, for example, 'producers and consumers', and the very idea of competitive relationships. These metaphors travel with environmental NGOs and intergovernmental institutions; they are, however, not useful, he says, if not in fact directly misleading. A more sophisticated and complex understanding of how environments and organisms interact is emerging as a field within modern ecological and evolutionary thinking, focusing instead on interaction and cooperative relationships. The myth of a natural state of balance combined with the reluctance to think of human organisations as part of nature (Moore 2017) obscures the relationships between land and people and the fact that man is always involved with landscape management; instead it promotes the idea of separating nature from man in nature conservation. Another myth deriving

from equilibrium thinking, and related to the idea of a premodern, stable past, is the assumption of indigenous peoples living in harmony with nature, which obscures the struggle of everyday livelihood and the fact that they have been, as stated by Pierotti, 'attuned to thinking about variability rather than stability in the environment' (2016: 9).

The role of indigenous peoples as nature preservationists was first assumed during the previously mentioned allocation of land to native groups in the 1990s, but it was not merely imposed on them from outside. In Beni the indigenous peoples had already proactively appropriated the space of the protected areas (Ávila 2009). A strong interest in maintaining control over their land, the asset to their development aspirations, and to keep settlers out, stimulated cooperation with the SERNAP, who in turn would have faced considerable difficulties in protecting parks from the onrushing agricultural and migrant frontiers without indigenous groups leading those efforts (Mason et al. 2010). Through decades trust was built between the protected areas' co-managing parties, enabling both park-control and gradually also the expansion of local economic benefits of the areas. An attempt in 2006 to transfer greater control with parks to the military, fire SERNAP-managers and allow settlements, resulted in the indigenous communities' occupation of SERNAP-offices, demanding the conservation of the areas and recognition of their role as co-managers. They succeeded and even had an indigenous leader named the new SERNAP-director (ibid: 429).

Today, the SERNAP has been centralised and the director replaced by a MAS-member, according to the former President of Subcentral TIPNIS. This had caused major distrust and uncertainty, not only in the leadership but generally in the TIPNIS-communities, where SERNAP was no longer present in the period of my studies. Meanwhile, the interpretation of what activities are rendered legal has narrowed substantially (Anthias and Radcliffe 2015) to put pressure on the inhabitants to give up the protected status of the park and allow for 'development'. In the development vision of the government, however, the lowland peoples see no role for themselves to play; instead they expressed fears relating to migrant farmers and state extractivism, and frustration that they have been divided, excluded and co-opted by the government. They are aware of the dominating discourses but know they cannot be entirely ignored. Indigenous peoples own land collectively now, and they work within the constitutional frame to obtain autonomy (Cameron 2013). They insist on being part of the plurinational state, but on their own conditions, and they demand democratic inclusion in regional development by invoking rights to prior consultations (Schilling-Vacaflor 2017). In their pursuit of autonomy and self-determination, they point to a local, collective model of resource governance and landscape management (e.g. Díez Astete 2011) that with its corporate approach to property constitutes an alternative to the government's envisioned development. However, the lowland peoples' own voices were largely absent during the years of my study, silenced by the profound dissolution of indigenous organisations. This is part of the

'invisibilisation' they suffer currently; it is the narratives of other sectors that dominate public spaces.

The roles of lowland peoples collectives have become more reactive, though, and their alternative management model obscured by the contemporary conceptual landscape transformation of the Beni. From being part of the indigenous state-building project, they find themselves excluded, internally divided, but mostly in opposition to the government. Initial steps towards economic benefits from the protected areas stopped with the rupture between the MAS-government and the indigenous organisations and the subsequent centralisation of park management. This rupture contributed to the internal division that I experienced in the TIPNIS, where some blame the indigenous leaders for the economic and political situation while others blame the government. Processing and trading goods were always central, but now there is no outlet. The withdrawal to the forests secured the property and governance systems of the Mojeño and the Movima, but they lost their economic role. Today, their land is coveted, while they have become redundant, but play the role of 'watchdogs' regarding activities in protected areas, and raise awareness of livelihood conditions in lowland territories.

Maybe the only obvious stage left at the moment is the 'nature preservation' one. This will, at least initially, imply a continued close relationship with environmental NGOs and intergovernmental institutions, with the diverse approaches and requirements such cooperation induces. Assuming the role of preservationists is perhaps not far-fetched (Chhatre and Agrawal 2009; Mason et al. 2010; Porter-Bolland et al. 2012). The forest retreats still exist as forests, and when deforestation occurs, it is primarily due to external parties: smallholders, agribusinesses, infrastructure or expanding cattle farmers (Müller et al. 2012). Common property regulation in the territories is one explanation; their production system, where the dichotomy forest/farmland does not really apply, is another. Nature perception is moreover involved. I found relations to nonhuman societies when interviewees explained how an animal has its bird, whose presence will tell the hunter that prey is around, or how creatures of the forest can transform and act in some parallel time, a challenge when watching over the crops all night without seeing intruders, but still finding the field raided in the morning. Their universe seems socialised, without the concept of nature as external to the social reality. Nondualist worldviews like this have been found among Arawak-speaking (Descola 2013; Hvalkof 2006) and other Amazonian peoples (Descola 2013), as well as among Amerindians on both continents (Pierotti 2016).

Hvalkof (2006) helps us understand the implication of this. The smallholder colonists, for instance, generally adhere to the conventional modernist progress ideology, and see themselves as agents of civilisation placed at the margin of society. They operate within the nature–society dichotomy space. Placed at the periphery of civilisation, their manifest challenge and destiny is subduing and civilising nature. Opposite to them, the lowland collectives find themselves at the centre, surrounded by a sphere of social relations. Within this sphere are other

ethnic groups, colonists, whites, plants, and animals, each group with its own logic and sphere of social relations. They keep relating to groups within their relevant world, which indeed can be wide, and continue to add layers to their identity. Seeking 'relations of relevance' among climate change mitigators and biodiversity protectors seems obvious, except that those organisations at the moment face similar repression and hostile discourse from the MAS-government (Achtenberg 2015; Ellerbeck 2015; Gustafson 2013).

In search of more advanced 'management of change' (Renes 2015: 2), should we look to indigenous practices instead? Or even myths? Pierotti (2016) suggests so, because contemporary ecological-developmental biology shares important thematic elements with defining myths of indigenous thinking, such as connectedness and relatedness. Indigenous metaphors originate from a tradition that derives knowledge from observation of relationships, and they can thus be understood as descriptions of important ecological relationships that may have helped them navigate changes effectively, he says. The mission period literally forms the basis of the Loma Santa myth. The search for Loma Santa describes the mission Indians' loss and adds a strong spiritual and moral layer to their struggle of defending the territories today. It describes in detail a landscape of abundance that they will strive to maintain and, importantly, a church, thus pointing to an institution, the *Cabildo Indígena* that still holds profound legitimacy among both Movima and Mojeños. While I note that listening carefully to the narratives about Loma Santa could have provided a considerable shortcut in my own research regarding institutions, I will not dig further into Moxos myths or human–nonhuman relations, but will confine myself to pointing out a possible direction for those who aim to suggest relations to nature opposing the dichotomies. After all, capitalism and modernity separated nature from people; we need a different logic to bring them together again.

The historical review revealed rather stable continuities regarding social organisation. Although both Mojeño and Movima hold the Jesuit-cabildo as their model organisation, the mission-amalgam suggests the indigenous peoples contributed with some of their existing norms and mechanisms. While existence and livelihoods have been challenged and changing, the continuity of institutions has proved to manage change. The study of the complex blend of legalities, norms and mechanisms that form the Mojeño and Movima institutions remain understudied, but they may represent a great potential as an ingredient in a future alternative development in Moxos.

Conclusion

Throughout the Moxos history, economic development was intertwined with the myths of the pristine and the premodern. Re-narrations legitimised and naturalised the appropriation of land and the exploitation of nature; whether less-valued human natures, land, or extractable natural resources. Ever since the first slave raids and the later commodity rushes, the purpose was to put nature to work in order to generate surplus for whoever was able to make, or take advantage of, new legal set-ups and put

the power behind to implement them. Simultaneously, the myths obscured existing property and production patterns. Traces of local peoples' plight and work on the landscape during pre-colonial and mission period were erased.

With the contemporary developmentalist agenda, we can sense how lowlanders and their domesticated landscapes can be erased again. There are various signs of imminent new material landscape transformations: The government's grand economic lowland project, the continued downhill migration, the approaching soy fields, the limiting of rights, the amendment of laws, and the restrictions on civil society and foreign NGOs. A simultaneous degrading discourse on lowland peoples *conceptually* transforms recognised ethnic groups into 'a few families', protected areas into 'neo-colonialized parks', and managed forested landscapes into 'unproductive land'. The patronising attitude of the government, followed by manifest legislation impairing the rights of the lowland indigenous collectives, disclose a perspective – the contestation of their rights vis-à-vis the interest of 'all Bolivians' – that is facilitated by the erasure of the process that led the lowland peoples to the territories, and the following struggle to obtain collective titling. The complex systems of tenure, production, distribution, and governance applied by lowland peoples, covering the Department like an invisible web and supporting a large population, become obscured. Like earlier, the measure that determines land use is not productive capacity, but to what extent the production can enter the dominant economy. The highland migrants, the large-scale agribusinesses, and the extractive industry offer tangible contributions to the Andean-Amazonian Capitalist project of the government. Most likely, the landscape will transform again.

The Movima and the Mojeño proactively managed change, making a virtue of necessity when material and conceptual transformations erased their former societies. They maintained advantageous locations and positions by accepting the Jesuit Reductions. They appropriated the space of the protected areas when they had lost their land and animals at the pampa, with the tangible expression in the creation of territories. They linked up with environmental and rights-based movements while keeping decisions on how to use the land within their own structures. They still make attractive partners for a broad range of NGOs and do need supporters to maintain their Loma Santa and make visible their corporate development alternative. If the lowland peoples fail to justify their existence as self-determining entities, the contemporary divided landscape may prove to be a parenthesis, to the utter detriment of the lowland indigenous peoples.

With this paper I have pointed to the importance of investigating history with all its complexity when negotiating development, paying particular attention to the dangers of myth. Essentialised characterisations of indigenous peoples and their interests risk reducing the available space for them to manoeuvre politically and economically – and for us to understand the nuanced relationships among history, landscapes, its peoples, and the wider world.

Notes

- ¹ TCO: Tierra Comunitaria de Origen, most often translated as Native Community Land.
- ² Territorio Indígena Multiétnico 1.
- ³ Territorio Indígena y Parque Nacional Isiboro-Sécure.
- ⁴ The latest was in 2014, when both Movima and TIPNIS communities were flooded for months.
- ⁵ These are forests that form corridors along rivers or wetlands and project into otherwise sparsely wooded landscapes.
- ⁶ Bachelor thesis (1997) on Kichwa swidden-fallow system based on 11 months of fieldwork in the Ecuadorian Amazon.
- ⁷ The need for political education was expressed by two observers of the consultation in TIPNIS about the status of the territory and a proposed highway through it. They work in the SIFDE (Intercultural Service for Democratic Strengthening under the Plurinational Electoral Organ). The assertion about the backward people in need of development was expressed by a consultant contracted by the Ministries of Public Works, Services & Housing, and Natural Environment and Water to conduct the TIPNIS-consultation. The observers also said that 'a political position to promote acceptance of the road was prevailing' (Christoffersen 2014).
- ⁸ The statements derive from development management plans, cooperation agreements, evaluations, my previous experience as consultant, and to a lesser extent from working within an NGO and its partner-organisation in Bolivia.
- ⁹ The Arawak is a main linguistic group, to which cluster the Mojeño belong. That the Arawak were the landscape-builders has been commonly agreed, but findings in the Movima area suggest that their role perhaps has been overemphasized and that the region has a much more multi-ethnic history (Walker 2008).
- ¹⁰ For a detailed account of lowland indigenous migration patterns and resistance during the rubber boom, see Frederic Vallvé 2010, Gary Van Valen 2013, and Anna Guiteras Mombiola 2010.

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Competing Interests

The author has no competing interests to declare.

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Contextualising Consent

Lisbet Christoffersen

Abstract

With increasing extractive activities and associated infrastructures in the Bolivian lowland, land disputes rise with corresponding frequencies. Consultation based on Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC), a longstanding demand of indigenous peoples, is adopted in national legislation and deployed in cases of interventions on their lands. Based on own empirical material, this paper chronicles a contested consultation in the Indigenous Territory and National Park Isiboro-Sécure (TIPNIS), and explores how FPIC entered the broader indigenous struggle for land and self-determination. The case displays the built-in paradox of FPIC, i.e. the presuppositions of equality that assume away the very structural imbalances that it is meant to resolve. It casts light on the implications of the event for the involved, and depicts fundamentally different visions for the young Plurinational State: the wish of national level strengthening on the one side, and the striving for self-governed collective entities on the other. The article thus enters the debate of the ambiguous attempts of various Latin American countries to establish post-liberal democratic systems beyond traditional voting. I argue that the implementation of FPIC as direct democracy only reproduces inequalities. A closed space, after a thorough deliberative process, can provide more equity in decision-making, which is what lowland indigenous representatives also suggest.

Keywords: plurinationalism; indigenous nationalism; resource nationalism; FPIC; TIPNIS

Introduction

In august 2017, the Bolivian government annulled the Law 180 that had established the protected nature of the Indigenous Territory and National Park Isiboro-Sécure, TIPNIS. Among the reasons given was that it prevented the TIPNIS inhabitants to access ‘health, education, housing, electricity and other benefits’ (Miranda 2017). Importantly, the law also prevented the construction of a contested highway through the park. The annulment of the law followed a consultation of TIPNIS communities that ostensibly conformed to the principles of Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC). That consultation is the subject of this paper.

Few places have attracted the amount of attention as has the TIPNIS due to fierce protests arranged by its inhabitants, backed by the general public and civil society, against the highway planned to cut through it (McNeish 2013; Paz et al. 2012). The protests resulted in an agreement with the government on the above mentioned Protection Law 180 that renounced the highway construction. This caused refusal by indigenous organisations to participate in a ‘too-late consultation’, as the matter in their view was already settled, but consultations were still carried through. The result, surprisingly, showed an overwhelming acceptance of the project (MOPSV 2012). This was what initially triggered my interest in the case. Shortly after this contested process (Comisión Interinstitucional 2013), a new consultation law was drafted (Comisión Nacional 2013).

The article explores the status of indigenous collectives in the post-liberal state of Bolivia. It thus enters the debate of the ambiguous attempts of various Latin American countries to establish post-liberal democratic systems beyond traditional voting, addressing two major tensions. The first concerns political economy perspectives, where centralised states continue and expand extractive activities, often in indigenous territories and national parks, while applying a biocentric discourse. The second considers ethno-political questions regarding rights and inclusion in the state as both individuals and collectives, which have become even more pressing since the country voted in an indigenous president in 2006. These tensions reproduce in the FPIC-arena. FPIC and its application, in this paper, is used to instantiate and understand how power shapes inclusion in contemporary Bolivia. The article assesses FPIC as a tool to transfer real power in decision-making in situations of significant political and economic interests. I understand FPIC, claimed by indigenous peoples, in Bolivia mainly from the lowland, as their bid on how the new Plurinational State should develop its decision-making system. This resembles Gaventa's (2004) reconceptualisation of participation, extended to politicising social rights through the recast of citizens as their active creators by encompassing participation in social and economic life (29-30).

The conceptual framework used to approach FPIC encompasses Gaventa's concept of participatory spaces (*ibid*), and Cornwall's (2004) use of it in discussing power-relations surrounding and penetrating the created space, wherein FPIC is operationalised as an act of deliberative democracy. Most often this happens as a performance of direct democracy thereby raising important questions of equality in participation. Deliberative democratic assumptions thus also form part of the framework.

Based on original data, the paper chronicles the FPIC-process in TIPNIS, its interpretations, impacts and its aftermath. It is specifically interested in understanding how FPIC entered the broader indigenous struggle for secure livelihoods, land and self-determination, wherein the creation of institutions to promote equality among self-governing entities and participation in socio-economic matters is central. By examining the process and the outcomes of the TIPNIS consultations, the case casts light on the implications of the event for communities, families and individuals within the concerned territory, the actual battles that took place and shifted the power locally, and the emergence of new grassroots working to delegitimise the process. It also shows how some community participants and state officials, despite questionable intentions and loud contestations, actually undertook the task to create a common space for deliberation and accommodate new learnings.

The paper thus contributes to the general debate on the potentials and limitations of diverse forms of participation embedded in concrete social and cultural contexts and, more specifically, to debates on the role of FPIC for indigenous rights in the post-liberal project, by offering an analysis of a particular case within shifting political dynamics in Bolivia. Hence, it provides a context-driven account of the contestations involved, and some of the specific difficulties faced by those movements, whose vision of a new political order after the regime-shift is profoundly challenged. It passes on the perspectives of local actors on such processes – a shortcoming of much previous research on consultations as pointed to by Schilling-Vacaflor (2012). Moreover, the paper provides

insights in the rooms for manoeuvring that can appear and exist within otherwise constraining situations. The implications of FPIC are ambiguous for the indigenous collectives. On the one hand, consultations help legitimise resource extraction and associated activities in their territories and provide risks of co-optation and division. On the other, the adaptation of FPIC as mandatory procedure in an area of increased state interest and presence may on the longer term enable indigenous groups to politicise what has become a formal procedure, given their persistent insistence on the development of an inclusive state. The right to meaningful participation in decision-making is a prerequisite for them to making other rights real. I argue that the focus on the deliberative speech-act in the invited space is too narrow. The implementation of FPIC as direct democracy in such reduced perspective only reproduces inequalities. A closed space, after a thorough deliberative process involving external expertise and support, can provide more equity in the decision-making, which is what lowland indigenous representatives also suggest.

The introduction continues by situating FPIC among literature and presenting the analytical framework and the methods applied in more detail. The next section presents the case and outlines the context, within which the consultation took place. Following the empirical narrative, the discussion will revolve around the potential of FPIC to fulfil its promises of contributing to the democratisation of resource governance (McNeish 2011; Schilling-Vacaflor 2012), thus constituting a viable contribution to the post-liberal project.

FPIC

The frame to analyse the consultation includes FPIC as the claim for an inclusive process, and outlines its resemblance with deliberative democratic ideas. In its operationalisation, questions of equality, participation and agency can be thought of within concepts of participatory spaces (Gaventa 2004; Cornwall 2004).

FPIC as a policy statement represents the aspiration of creating a more permanent space for local voice and can be understood within the stated post-liberal project of Bolivia, which with the new constitution and consequent institutions (Nolte and Schilling-Vacaflor 2012; Wolff 2012) expresses intentions to introduce a different democracy. For decades, indigenous peoples have demanded participation in decision-making procedures at all levels regarding measures that will affect them and for the meaningful recognition of indigenous political institutions, sovereignty and citizenship. As a key principle, FPIC informed many aspects of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, UNDRIP (2007) (Szablowski 2010), and is integral to the exercise of their right to self-determination. The right is affirmed under the ILO Convention 169 (1989) and the UNDRIP (2007), both ratified and/or incorporated into national law in Bolivia (Tomaselli 2016).

To understand the extent of the FPIC-principle as promoted by indigenous peoples, the following paragraphs establish the link between its idea and the presuppositions of deliberative democracy.

Deliberative democracy focuses on the process preceding decision. Decisions are legitimate to the extent they receive approval through participation in the free and unconstrained deliberation by all those subject to a decision (Bobbio 2003; Cohen and Benhabib, in Dryzek 2001). The thinking on deliberative political interaction derives from Habermas' core assumption of *communicative action*:

The power of the better argument and the public sphere, where citizens discuss common affairs. Facing these concepts is the threat of the ‘system’s colonisation of the lifeworld’, where market and bureaucracy, using money and power as steering instruments, replaces communicative action (Fultner 2011; Habermas 1998). Both the assumption and its threats coincide with the idea of FPIC and the contexts loaded with political and economic interests, in which it is applied. Cornwall (2004) points to the important argument of Habermas that a space outside the state’s domain is an essential precondition for citizen-engagement that not simply serves to legitimise the existing political system.

The principles of equality, reciprocity and inclusion are institutionalised by the right to FPIC. Grievance procedures ensure that FPIC remains a dynamic principle, constantly negotiated and tried, which is reflected in the following account of its interpretation: Processes must consider rights and practices, respect customary laws and be conducted in good faith. *Free* refers to a self-directed, non-coercive process. Consent must be obtained *prior* to approval of any project and *prior* to adoption of legislative or administrative measures. The time needed to understand and evaluate the activities must be respected. *Informed* refers to ongoing communication between the parties and the provision of information in appropriate forms and languages, including risk-assessments. Communities should have the liberty and the resources to engage independent counselling. *Consent* refers to the purpose of reaching an agreement and the option to reconsider if activities change or new information emerges (Colchester 2010; ILO 1989; Rodríguez-Garavito et al. 2010; UNDRIP 2007; UNPFII 2005). The definitions of the FPIC elements thus resemble presuppositions of deliberative political interaction (Schilling-Vacaflor 2012, 2013; Christoffersen 2014) such as equality in both participation and among participants.

There are at least two inherent challenges in the operationalisation of FPIC as a deliberative democratic process: the first is whether the premise of shared meanings can be fully assumed in intercultural communication; the second is the overwhelming threat of ‘the systems’ colonisation of the lifeworld’, when state and market hold interests in territories and seek consent. Critics stress that inequality in power and social position determine the coordinating force in interaction, and encourage reproduction of existing hierarchies because abstractions such as equality and reciprocity are processes of historical struggle (Kohn 2000). This resonates with the concerns of how FPIC has developed.

Unsurprisingly, FPICs operationalisation exposes reproduction of power relations and social exclusion (Buxton 2010; Perreault 2015; Szablowski 2010), and the growing body of literature critically analysing implementations reflect the numerous ways in which this is being expressed. Schilling-Vacaflor and Eichler (2017) use the term ‘implementation gap’ referring more broadly to the ambiguity of indigenous rights as protective but simultaneously enhancing governability of peoples and their territories (Anthias and Radcliffe 2015; Postero 2007). Critical findings often revolve around the *who* and the *how*: this include divide and rule mechanisms (Perreault 2015; Schilling-Vacaflor and Eichler 2017) e.g. exclusive processes with negotiations with ‘more flexible’ individuals, disregarding community elected leaders and avoiding inclusive assemblies or representative organisations. The enrolment of community-members in projects of extraction has

been found as a means to attract benevolent individuals along with the offering of goods or money. Bribes and threats have also been used. The *who* also concerns contentious issues like ethnic boundaries (Fontana and Grugel 2016) and the exclusion or inclusion of entire communities that are prone to either reject or accept the given intervention (Tomaselli 2016). The *how* mainly addresses the application of the elements *free, prior and informed*, and include excuses of time and budget constraints, lack of influence on design and procedure, and biased, incomplete or highly technical information (Cariño 2005; Schilling-Vacaflor and Eichler 2017; Szablowski 2010; Tomaselli 2016).

Various authors (Cariño and Colchester 2010; Leifsen et al 2017; Nolte and Voget-Kleschin 2014; Rodríguez-Garavito 2010; Schilling-Vacaflor 2013) add that the principle has evolved to become a set of rules and practice; reduced, in other words, to a narrow system of legal procedures. Rather than an iterative process of dialogue, FPIC is turned into a formality aiming to depoliticise interventions that its claimants meant to politicise. These concerns all relate to FPIC becoming another ‘tick in the box’, resonating with general post-structural critiques of development practice, where ideals are reduced to tools, thereby co-opting alternative ways of thinking about development (Cornwall 2006; Kothari 2005).

The concept of spaces for participatory governance is understood by Gaventa as a (non-static) continuum ranging from closed, over invited, to created or claimed spaces (Gaventa 2004, 35) – arenas where civil society and the state meets. It thus provides an apt figure to understand FPIC, in its framing as well as in its implementation and contestations. Cornwall (2004) analyse the political ambiguities of participation through this concept of space, and questions whether official spaces, inviting people considered marginal, can potentially help them to engage meaningfully to deliver agreed-on priorities, or whether they are simply pseudo-democratic instruments subject to potent forms of exclusion.

Participation critiques have mainly concerned the co-optation of ideas of emancipatory participation by orthodox development institutions, neutralising the radical thoughts to policy-intentions of ‘empowerment’ with no real threats to the larger neo-liberal project. As a declared post-neoliberal decolonising project (Linares 2012), the Plurinational State of Bolivia offers the opportunity to observe how similar mechanisms play out in the country that has developed towards the centralisation of power rather than its devolution as hoped for among the lowland peoples (Regalsky 2010; Webber 2017). Just like the ‘indigenous’, the ‘state’ is neither static nor homogeneous. I assume a differentiated view on the state, its actors and institutions, representing different interests, views and positions of power.

I use ‘post-liberal democracy’ as an analytical concept, whereas ‘post-neoliberal’ in the paper refers to the distancing from the end-of-century form of government that dominated Bolivia.

Choice of case and field methods

My purpose is to provide an understanding of FPIC in the long-standing struggle of indigenous peoples, and to explore its impacts. I see the TIPNIS as representative of many lowland territories: they experience internal conflicts, are multi-ethnic, and face multifaceted and complex threats. Infrastructure, extraction, highland migration and government co-optation are common concerns.

The TIPNIS inhabitants stand out by their protagonist nature regarding the indigenous struggle on the one hand, and a close relationship between Bolivian President Morales and the highland migrants on the other. Various consultations have been carried out in cases of hydrocarbon activities, regulated by the Hydrocarbons Law since 2005, especially in the more ‘developed’ Santa Cruz and Tarija Departments. Accordingly, most scholarly evaluations concern consultations in those settings. The TIPNIS consultation took place in a new constitutional context, which made the case particularly interesting.

Most empirical data was collected in 2013, few months after the conclusion of the consultation. It comprises the narratives of 52 interviewees who had been involved in the process: community-members, indigenous leaders and officials from the consulting committees. I had the opportunity to observe community-meetings and less formal group-meetings. In the office of the TIPNIS leadership, I observed several meetings, and was invited twice to join CSO-meetings regarding the consultation, facilitated by Caritas and the Permanent Human Rights Assembly of Bolivia (APDHB). I also talked to those who had been indigenous facilitators during the process and now challenged the ‘old’ leadership.

I stayed in two communities with different experiences related to the consultation. The first had literally fought internally over whether to reject the consultation or not and had experienced the breakdown of institutions as a consequence. The second had initially agreed to reject the consultation, but later decided to accommodate the commission anyway. Albeit united, they felt abandoned by their leadership. The different experiences help to nuance the analysis of the impacts of the event. I spent six weeks in the territory and had the opportunity to talk to members of other communities when travelling on the rivers Mamoré, Isiboro and Sécure; afterwards I approached officials to get their perspective. In semi-structured interviews I asked community-members about their livelihoods, their knowledge and thoughts of the highway, the meaning of the territory being ‘intangible’, their visions for the territory, and the consultation itself. I recorded all interviews with the consent of the interviewees, and the gender division was about even. In one community, I had the opportunity to present my preliminary findings in plenary, while in the other, I had key findings verified by individual community members.

In 2016, I revisited the two TIPNIS communities, spending a week in each. In between, I kept contact with grassroots and leaders, representing those that reject the result of the consultation and actively oppose the highway-construction, mainly from the lower Sécure and the Isiboro/centre of the TIPNIS.

Context and Case

Bolivia's post-liberal tensions

The Constitution of 2009 emphasises the plurinational nature of the Bolivian population, grants rights to recognised indigenous communities to manage renewable resources and allows for indigenous autonomy, including the exercise of political, juridical and economic systems (Cameron 2013; CPE 2009). The Constitution as well as the National Development Plan (PND 2009) include

pre-colonial concepts and are inspired by alternatives to development, especially in their openings, with an emphasis on an economy of solidarity, as expressed by the notion of 'Vivir Bien' (Escobar 2010; Gudynas and Acosta 2011). Gargarella (2012) understands a new constitution as a response to specific problems of a political community, and identify the marginalisation of indigenous peoples as Bolivia's specific challenge and social inequality as the general issue (ibid, 145).

As a response to earlier nation-building projects seeking to create unity based on 'mestizaje' and the promotion of liberal democracy with the centrality of the individual, universal rights, indigenous peoples in the 1980s and 1990s organised to challenge the idea, that indigenous cultures can be reduced to individual identities and rights. Moreover, those rights never reached many indigenous communities and did not provide effective participation in society and the economy. Instead community rights and de facto local autonomy, gained during prior regimes, felt threatened by the then new neoliberal citizenship regime, and the indigenous organisations argued that respect for collective rights must precede the individual ones. What began as demands for specific rights, over the following decades turned into ideas and claims of organising the state in an entirely different way, to reflect a more heterogeneous citizenry (Yashar 2005). The attempt of neo-liberal multiculturalism (Hale 2005; Gustafson 2009; Postero 2007) to manage difference through official interculturalism in a constitutional amendment in 1994, and solve redistributive problems by calling on the market, failed. Racism and coloniality persisted in discourse, economy and state structure. Hence plurinationalism emerged as a claim seeking to reconcile both a strong state and indigenous self-determination. This apparent paradox is perhaps better understood if seen also as a response to the claim of departmental autonomy, violently put forward by the rich lowland elite as a defence of race and class privileges (Gustafson 2009) around the turn of the millennium. As it would show, plurinationalism was however not wholeheartedly embraced by the nationalist left. Plurinationalism describes the agenda of the indigenous collectives, primarily from the lowland. Their history differ from that of the highlanders.

The demand for the new constitution was expressed publicly by the lowland peoples in their fourth march in 2002 (Postero 2015; Regalsky 2010; Paz et al. 2012) and afterwards adopted by indigenous-peasant organisations. Along with various social organisations they formed the Unity Pact in 2004. During extensive uprisings against privatisation, known as the water and gas wars (Fabricant and Hicks 2013; Gustafson 2011), that ultimately ousted the neoliberal president Lozada, it was a main demand (Schilling-Vacaflor 2011). The established parties had to accept the demand of the Unity Pact for a Constituent Assembly that would reconfigure the state and approve electoral forms other than the 'one citizen, one vote' (Regalsky 2010:45) liberal notion. However, the MAS-party¹ demanded an early election, restoring the legitimacy to the established political system and postponing the revolutionising assembly. When assuming the presidency in 2005, they established the Constituent Assembly, but in a less innovative form, rejecting the demand of the indigenous organisations for representation as collective subjects (Regalsky 2010).

¹ 'Movement Towards Socialism', the political coalition headed by union-leader Evo Morales

Already from the beginning there were profound tensions between those supporting the proposal of the Unity Pact for a new Plurinational State, and the MAS-coalition (Postero 2015; Schilling-Vacaflor and Kuppe 2012) representing a more class-oriented indigenous movement (Lalander 2017). The main priority of the Unity Pact, including lowland- and highland Ayllu²-organisations, was the creation of strong, self-governed entities, while the MAS-coalition aimed for the construction of a new state-hegemony and national-level strengthening to counteract neoliberal forces, among other. Albeit far from the Unity Pact's proposal of equal coexistence of plural governments, and despite power-asymmetries within the Constituent Assembly and subsequent changes by Congress (Postero 2015; Schilling-Vacaflor 2011; Regalsky 2010), the pieced-together constitution is both progressive and ambitious regarding participatory democracy and political pluralism. However, the implementation of FPIC has become a central dispute, confronting Bolivia with built-in contradictions of the constitution (Fontana and Grugel 2016; Lalander 2017; Perreault 2015; Schilling-Vacaflor 2013). The global indigenous movement was persuasive in formulating the FPIC mechanism (Szablowski 2010), its procedural considerations and institutionalisation (UNPFII 2005). In Bolivia, lowland indigenous peoples have been influential in translating FPIC into domestic legislation (Schilling-Vacaflor 2017, 2014) as well as making it a fundamental constitutional premise (CPE 2009, Art.30).

The dispute is advanced by the prevailing economic and political interests that conflict with indigenous-territorial rights. Despite new narratives and a progressive legislation regarding nature, the economic model based on extraction continues after the political shift (Pellegrini 2016; Pellegrini and Ribera 2012; Gudynas 2010). The MAS government has a clear long-term vision of where the country should be heading, and how to get there (Linera 2012). Extraction of natural resources to alleviate poverty, among other domestic problems, is an integrated part of this vision. The aim is to exploit hydrocarbons with an active state-role, convert millions of ha into agricultural land, integrate regions by developing the road network, and provide energy to these activities by the construction of mega-dams. The economic strategy of the MAS is accompanied by a discourse of resource nationalism (Pellegrini 2016), appealing to the 'general interest' of Bolivians and the national sentiment that crystallised during the gas-war (Gustafson 2011). The extractive activities, however, repeat the negative environmental and social impacts related to this economy (Bebbington and Bebbington 2011; Gudynas 2010), and the scale of the projects is enormous. Activities will increase in the vast, northern lowland of Bolivia, where indigenous groups inhabit resource-rich lands, in many cases with collective titling. Like in the present case, future consultations will to a large degree be conducted by the state and regard interventions in indigenous territories, seen as representing huge development potential.

The priorities and positions expressed in the Constituent Assembly play out on the ground. Pellegrini (2016) notes that the aforementioned national sentiment, based in a widespread consensus that the country has been in the hands of a corrupt elite, manipulated by foreign interests, does not question extraction as such, but rather the distribution of its benefits. Meanwhile, the lowland collectives have been further weakened: due to co-optation of most of the strongest leaders

² Ayllu: A form of community-governance tracing its roots to the pre-Hispanic period

(Regalsky 2010), and the organisations of the Unity Pact leaving en masse after having been denounced as traitors by government officials (Webber 2011), the Pact has disappeared. Many of the indigenous organisations have been subordinated to the state, reinforcing the party-based political system rather than strengthening indigenous autonomies. Simultaneous harsh rhetoric from the government against both national and international NGOs in the Amazonia, accusing them of political meddling (Achtenberg 2015; Gustafson 2013) and geopolitical or ‘green’ imperialism (Linera 2012; Postero 2015; Webber 2011), has prevented NGOs from supporting the lowland peoples. Critics of the economic model have been represented by the government as traitors (Schilling-Vacaflor 2012). This assertion of sovereignty is also underlying an accompanying degrading discourse on the lowland peoples, portraying them as a few families paralyzing development, simple, lazy or even savages (Canessa 2014; Christoffersen 2018; McNeish 2013).

In sum, a peasant political movement, national in scope, including middleclass and urban sectors has emerged (Regalsky 2010), creating a sort of ‘indigenous nationalism’ where original nations, *originarios*, are seen as defenders of Bolivia’s resources (Fuentes 2007). Canessa (2014) asserts that this large group, possibly a majority of the Bolivian population, is advantaged with a privileged citizenship. This claim is based on the facts that highland values are celebrated and institutionalised, that highlanders are encouraged to colonise the lowland, and the description of the particular kind of citizens, the ‘originary peasant indigenous’, in the constitution. It is against this backdrop we must understand the TIPNIS-case.

Situating the TIPNIS

The 200,000 km² Beni Department is located in the North-eastern Bolivia. To the west, the Andes descend into the Amazon basin forming a biodiversity-hotspot. Beneath the forest are large hydrocarbon deposits. The National Park ‘Isiboro-Sécure’ was founded here in 1965. While the establishment of the protected area did not initially affect the indigenous peoples living there (Reyes-García et al. 2014), immigration from the highland in the 1980s caused conflict (McNeish 2013). The migrant smallholders belong to the current government's core constituents (Canessa 2014), and are affiliated with the indigenous-peasant unions. The migrants deforested the southern part of the territory, and the three lowland peoples³, already inhabiting the Park, began to organise to defend the land and its resources. They organised around the management of the National Park and thus appropriated the social and political space of this area (Ávila 2009). The organisation of the lowland peoples happened during the 1980s as a result of increasing pressure from loggers, ranchers and smallholders on the forests, their last stronghold (Christoffersen 2018; Yashar 2005).

In 1990, the lowland peoples conducted the first of a series of marches that all entailed achievements promoting collective rights (Paz et al. 2012). The people of TIPNIS were among the protagonists of the lowland movement that centred on territorial self-determination. As a direct result of the first march, the National Park became ‘Tierra Comunitaria de Origen’ (TCO, Native Community Land) in 1990, and a ‘red line’ to stop migrant settlers was negotiated. The Subcentral TIPNIS was established as the indigenous administration of the TCO and was granted the collective

³ Tsimane, Yuracaré and Mojeño-Trinitario

property title in 2009. Throughout the 1990-decade, the lowland movement was quite successful in securing both material and political ends, negotiating territorial autonomy in several regions, and participating actively in constitutional reforms (Ávila 2009; Yashar 2005).

The TIPNIS has been co-governed with the National Service of Protected Areas, SERNAP, with relative success in a long process of adjustment and trust-building. In 2006, most of the SERNAP's senior managers were fired in an attempt to 'nationalise' protected areas by transferring control to the military and allowing settlements. In response, indigenous communities occupied SERNAP offices and secured the continued local management-model, even with an indigenous leader from TIPNIS as the new SERNAP-director (Mason et al. 2010). The shared interest between the co-administrating parties, to keep settlers out, contributed to the local acceptance of protected area management. TIPNIS is divided into zones defining for what purposes, and to what extent, its resources can be used (Fig. 1). The red core is subject to the highest protection, while the yellow management zones allow for traditional use of resources. The green zones, where natural resources can be used, include the settlements of the indigenous peoples. The orange-spotted area in the south indicates the deforested area, the 'Polygon 7', which is part of the Park but not the TCO. TIPNIS has had its internal conflicts too. Rather than related to ethnicity, fragmentation and subdivisions have regarded the territorial leadership. Accusations of 'own gain' related to timber sales, and customary law-based punishments, were experiences eagerly shared with me, even by those who had been involved.

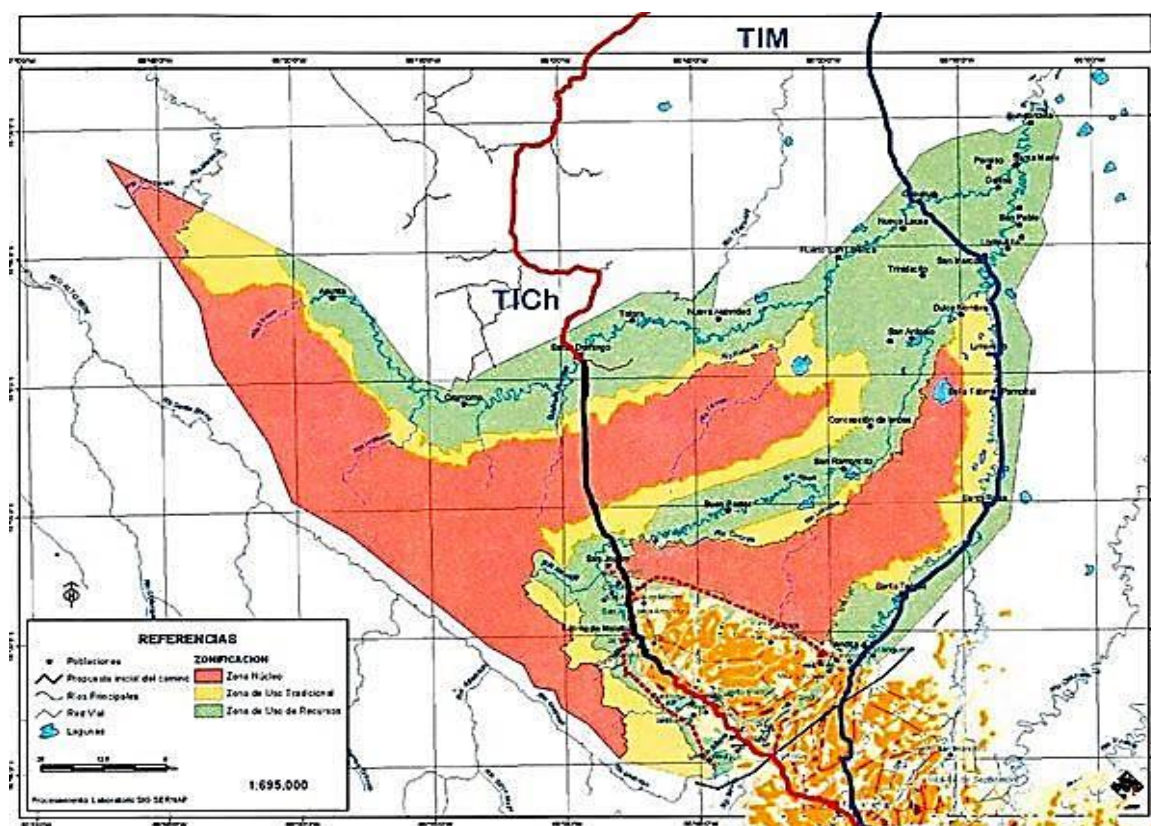


Figure 1: Map of TIPNIS indicating its management zones and the polygon 7. The proposed road is the black line between the red lines that show the road already constructed. Source: SERNAP 2005

Culturally, economically and politically, the highland migrants in Polygon 7 diverge from the lowlanders, bringing with them the private-property logic of the peasant family. For Amazonian peoples, land is a collective territory, a ‘casa grande’ supporting extended families’ subsistence, while for the peasants, land belong to those who use it productively as proprietors (Achtenberg 2015). This fundamental difference stems from the large agrarian reform in 1953, whereby land was redistributed to the highlanders, parcelled and privatized into small plots, according to the principle of ‘who works it owns it’ (Postero 2007). ‘De-Indianised’ (Postero 2015:404), the new smallholders were designated peasants. In the lowland, mainly benefitting European descendants, the reform privatised the grazing plains and the large herds of cattle originating from the Jesuit-period. Cattle farms could extend to 50,000 ha (Assies 2006). Many former mission-Indians, among them the largest ethnic group, the Mojeños, withdrew from the natural plains to the forests (Jones 1990), but continued their system of collective property and governance.

Bolivia’s 34 lowland peoples generally organise in extended families with high levels of autonomy (Díez Astete 2011). In the case of the communities in this study, a *Corregidor* to represent the community, be responsible for coordinating community-work and ensure good social relations is appointed, but many more are assigned responsibilities. These positions are duties rather than privileges and most adults are involved with local governance at some point. The leaders of the Subcentral are appointed by the Meeting of Corregidores, an assembly where all communities of the TCO are represented.

The TIPNIS-controversy

In August 2011, lowland peoples marched in defence of the TIPNIS against the planned Villa Tunari - San Ignacio de Moxos highway (Paz et al. 2012; Tomaselli 2016). The highway is part of the Initiative for the Integration of the Regional Infrastructure of South America, IIRSA, of which Brazil is the prime mover. Only the part going through the TIPNIS is not yet built (fig. 1), yet the communities inside the 14.000 km² TCO had not been consulted about its construction. The march got increasing attention and sympathy, especially after a violent police intervention (McNeish 2013). That this took place in the new institutional context of the Plurinational State caused a final rupture between the Morales government and the lowland organisations.

The protesters achieved the enactment of Law 180, ‘the Protection Law’, declaring TIPNIS protected by status as ‘intangible zone’. The road plans were abandoned, but diverging interpretations of ‘intangibility’ became the core of an ongoing conflict, and the main topic in the subsequent consultation. Assembly members from the MAS-party interpreted ‘intangibility’ in a very comprehensive way: ‘it means no hunting, no cutting wood, no sowing and no touching of the ground’ (Paz et al. 2012, 223). Several environmental licenses for tourism and commercial activities were withdrawn as a consequence (Hirsch and McNeish 2011). The indigenous leaders immediately objected to this interpretation, referring to constitutional rights to sustainable use of natural resources in indigenous territories (Paz et al. 2012). This right was clarified by a Supreme Decree in February 2012 (Tomaselli 2016).

In January 2012, indigenous peasants from the Polygon 7 (fig. 1), expected to benefit directly from the road (Delgado-Pugley 2013), marched pleading the right to be consulted about the Protection Law (Canessa 2014; Paz et al. 2012). They hope that President Morales, who started his career as a union leader in exactly this area, will provide them with more land, which is precisely what the lowland peoples fear. New policies to encourage migration of highland colonists to lowlands (Reyes-García et al. 2014) combined with a new road remind them of former colonisation projects that gave land to highlanders, in particular the 1967 state-sanctioned settlement programme (World Bank 1996), peaking in the 1980s (Yashar 2005), reducing the subsistence resource base of the lowland peoples. The contra-protesters demand was met: the right of the affected communities to be consulted about the intangible nature of TIPNIS was established.

The 'Catch-22' consultation

The consultations were conducted during five months in the second half of 2012. The Subcentral TIPNIS and the associated indigenous organisations did not recognise the consultation, and attempted to prevent the 15 consultation-commissions from entering the territory. Despite the protests, 58 communities were visited by the commissions, while 11 communities resisted. The ministries in charge with the consultation were the *Ministerio de Obras Públicas, Servicios y Vivienda* and the *Ministerio de Medio Ambiente y Agua*. The commissions were composed of consultants and observers. The observers came from the Intercultural Service of Democratic Strengthening (SIFDE), part of the Supreme Electoral Tribunal. In addition, indigenous facilitators accompanied; some were park-guards, others were volunteering.

The observers had drafted the regulation that would guide the consultation. As it appears (fig. 2) the right of indigenous peoples to give or withhold their consent was clearly established as one of two types of public consultations. It was further specified how the consultation should be free, timely, informed, participatory and conducted in good faith (SIFDE 2012, 8-10).

Consulta Previa, Libre e Informada como mecanismo de democracia directa y participativa. Características.	Consulta Previa, Libre e Informada como derecho colectivo de las naciones o pueblos indígena originario campesinos. Características.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Se trata de un mecanismo de democracia directa y participativa. El Art 11 de la Constitución Política del Estado Plurinacional hace referencia a la Consulta previa como uno de los componentes de esta forma de democracia (Parágrafo II, numeral 1) Los titulares de este derecho político son los ciudadanos y los ciudadanos (la población), y no exclusivamente las naciones o pueblos indígena originario campesinos. Esta referida a la explotación de recursos naturales. La función de observación y acompañamiento del proceso, a cargo del Órgano Electoral Plurinacional, a través del SIFDE, se realiza en coordinación entre la autoridad electoral y las organizaciones e instituciones involucradas. Sus conclusiones, acuerdos o decisiones tomadas no tienen carácter vinculante, pero deberán ser considerados por las autoridades y representantes en los niveles de decisión que corresponda. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Se trata de un derecho colectivo de las naciones o pueblos indígenas originarios campesinos. El Art 30 de la Constitución Política del Estado Plurinacional hace referencia a la Consulta previa como uno de los derechos de estas colectividades, cuando se trata de la aplicación de medidas administrativas y legislativas. En este marco, la Consulta también se reconoce como un derecho político de estas naciones y pueblos, cuando se trata de la explotación de recursos naturales. Los titulares de este derecho son las naciones o pueblos indígena originario campesinos, exclusivamente. Los resultados de la Consulta son de carácter vinculante o de cumplimiento obligatorio. Su marco normativo de sustento esta conformada por las normas del sistema internacional de derechos humanos indígenas como el Convenio 169 de la OIT y la Declaración de Naciones Unidas sobre los derechos de los pueblos indígenas. Las entidades veedoras no tienen un carácter electoral, sino, una relevancia de derechos humanos.

Figure 2: Comparative table of the two types of Free, Prior and Informed consultations (SIFDE 2012, xii). The first (left column) is a mechanism of direct democracy where citizens in general get the opportunity to state their opinion; the second (right column) is a collective, political right of indigenous peoples, where the result is 'binding or of mandatory compliance.'

The commissions set out with a two-point agenda to reach agreement between the State and the communities of the TIPNIS (MOPSV 2012, 31)

1. On whether TIPNIS should be an intangible zone or not, to make viable the development of indigenous activities and the construction of the highway
2. On the establishment of safeguards to protect the TIPNIS, and the prohibition and eviction of illegal settlements

The official result was that 55 communities *agreed* to the highway construction and 57 communities *opposed* the protection law (MOPSV 2012; SIFDE 2012). The broad definition of intangible in point one, allowing for the equation of community activities and the highway construction, already indicates an explanation of this surprising result.

The Consultation

In the following I describe the consultation process as experienced in two TIPNIS communities; then I turn to the views of the consulting parties. Finally, indigenous leaders, who did not participate, express their opinions, and facing them, an emergent leadership close to the government, who functioned as indigenous facilitators during the consultation. The section ends with the outlining of important developments in the years following. Names of informants have been changed.

The consulted I: resistance and division

In the community Puerto San Lorenzo around 40 protesters from up- and downriver had camped for about a month, joining those community members that wanted to resist the consultation by preventing the commission from going ashore. Puerto San Lorenzo, with its 190 inhabitants, of which 59% are children, is one of the largest settlements on the river Sécure and famous for hatching political leaders. It has no electricity, no sewerage, and water only from the river. Although the 'resistance' had brought rice and yuca, went hunting and fishing and took turns in the kitchens, it became increasingly difficult to provide food for everyone, and after a month without entry-attempts of the consulting commission, they left. Then the commission arrived, briefed by supporters of the process. This subsection describes how the consultation unfolded in a community already profoundly divided in the perspective on having the consultation or not.

The commission arrived in planes on September 20th 2012. Subsequently two indigenous leaders attempted to follow to attend the meeting, but the runway had been blocked by consultation facilitators and other supporters, causing a clash between community members: 'Doña Maria tried to remove the blockade. It was Aldo, Roberto and the Corregidor who blocked the runway. Aldo's son fought on Marias side' (Community member, TIPNIS, March 21, 2013). This episode was the culmination of a fundamental disagreement in the community about how to handle the situation: physically resist? Proactively assist? Or simply await the government's initiative and listen to their proposal? For many months the usual institutions had not functioned. Instead people had organised in groups pro or contra the consultation, which had become pro or contra the government itself, except a group who attempted to remain neutral. The resistance-camp and the subsequent episode at the runway had surpassed a limit, beyond which everyday community coordination and social cohesion could no longer be upheld. Now, six months later, no community meetings had been held, common village maintenance had thus been random and sporadic. The school, the sportsground and the landing strip were in a terrible shape, and community-members did not visit each other, some were even reluctant to leave their houses. Most of the inhabitants expressed profound despair and embarrassment over the state of the community, and many blamed the Corregidor. He had been 'with the government', thus unpopular among protesters, but primarily he was accused of not fulfilling his role as community leader.

Despite the physical fight at the runway, the consultation was carried through. Food was provided by the commission and small gifts were handed out. Apparently, mostly children attended at that point. Very few stated that they had attended the meeting; some said they passed by for a while just to listen: 'Six persons expressed their views, no more' (TIPNIS, March 3, 2013). Whether the lack of participation was due to passive resistance towards the consultation, not trusting it to be conducted in good faith, or to avoid further conflict, is difficult to tell. I had different answers, it was probably both. The meeting lasted 3½ hours. Twenty-six people signed an agreement according to the observers report. My informants said they signed because they attended the meeting, not because they agreed. Other communities had similar experiences. In Gundonovia, protests against the consultation resulted in a relocation of the meeting with only some families participating. In another case, families randomly present when the commission arrived, and without mandate from the community, had been consulted. In cases community members were not present because the

meeting had not been properly announced. Now, no-one knew what had been the result, and the meeting had not clarified their concerns about the planned highway: ‘supposedly it will not be on the ground, this is what we don’t understand; they say it will not destroy anything, because it will be above’ (TIPNIS, March 7, 2013). Basic information, such as the precise course of the road or possible environmental impacts, had either not been presented or not understood. The community-members had multiple, reasonable concerns:

‘What worries us are the colonists, that they will come with the road, entering, entering. They are many (...) they will finish everything, animals and trees, and apart from timber, where the government plan to make the road is where the oil is’ (TIPNIS, March 30, 2013)

The consulted II: reluctance, accommodation and deceit

When the consultation-commission arrived to the community Tres de Mayo, they were received by all the community-members, and then told to leave again. Afterwards community meetings went on for a month until it was finally decided to accept the consultation anyway; this time the commission was welcomed with food and football-games, as they like to arrange whenever guests arrive. This subsection describes how the consultation played out in a community that managed to uphold its institutions throughout the process.

The community members had agreed to be firm in their rejection of the highway but would like a connecting road to neighbouring villages and ranches. ‘We had discussed and debated to tell them clearly that we are not against the road. The only thing we want is that it doesn’t pass through the heart of TIPNIS’ (group discussion, TIPNIS, March 20, 2013). By taking their time, they had been able to generate consensus on their position. However, they were not prepared for the entire agenda or aware of its ambiguity, and ended up signing an agreement to annul the Protection Law. Understandable when unfolding the event:

The consultants introduced a theme of huge interest to the communities: development. They were encouraged to propose projects; consideration of these projects, however, was part of a package that included acceptance of the highway (see agenda-point 1). But in the consultation-agenda presented in community Tres de Mayo, the themes were side-ordered (fig. 3). The promise of ‘development’ was perceived as linked to acceptance of the consultation itself.

‘The road should not pass through TIPNIS, for this we have been fighting until this day, that is why we marched (...) we didn’t want the consultation to enter, but then we saw that without the consultation there would not come any projects to the community’ (TIPNIS, March 14, 2013)

The consultants explained that the whole territory was declared ‘intangible’, disregarding the hitherto zone-division of the park (fig. 3). The highway itself did not become a substantial issue, because the community-members felt they had already been firm in their rejection of it.

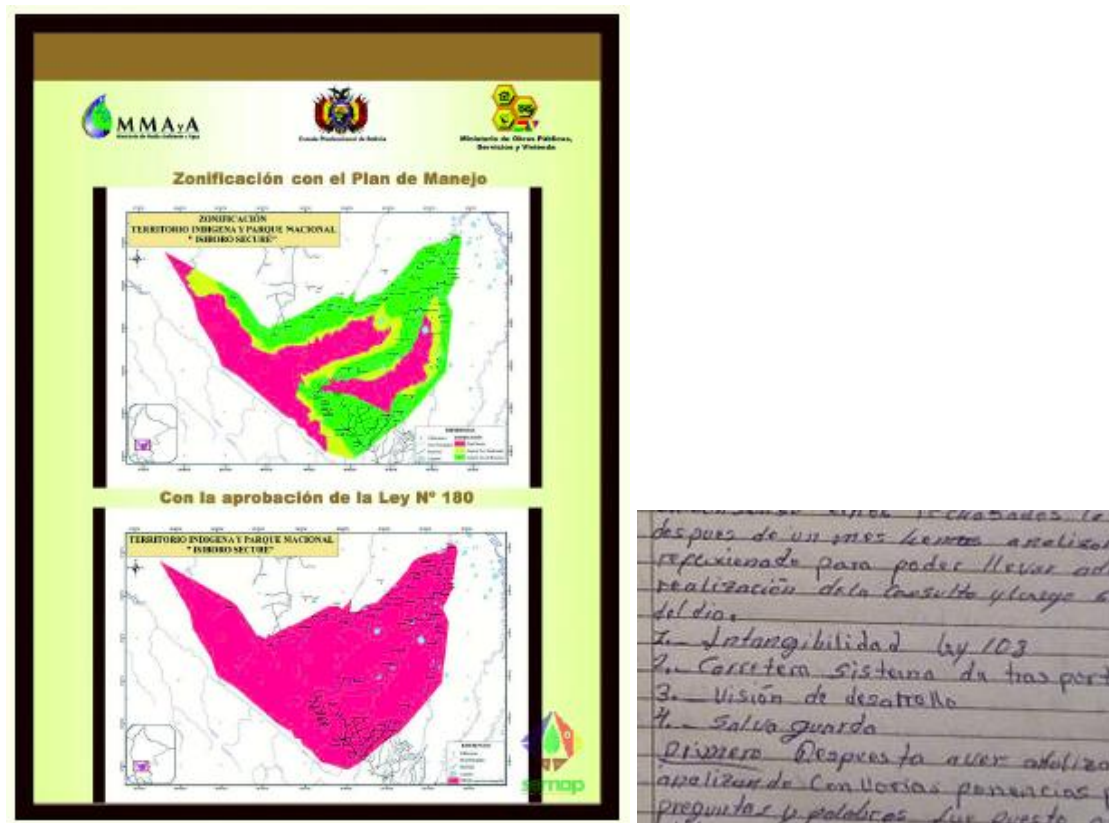


Figure 3: Left: poster brought to the communities by the consultation-commissions (MOPSV 2012). The Protection Law is being interpreted as turning the whole park into the category ‘highest protection’. Right: the consultation-agenda as noted in the meeting-minutes in the community 1) Intangibility 2) Highway 3) Development-vision 4) Safeguards (own photo)

Well-prepared, the inhabitants in Tres de Mayo appreciated the consultation. Satisfied with the attention, they stressed that at least the government had come to their community; no other government had ever bothered. They were asked about development visions, and time was taken to finish discussions. The personal encounters had been significant in a positive way: ‘they understood us (...) they listened well and we agreed’ (TIPNIS, March 14, 2013).

However, there had been no notice of further developments since the consultation. The Corregidor had parted with the commission to pick up a promised generator, but now, four months later, they knew nothing of him either. The community appeared orderly, well-managed and united compared to the former, but the inhabitants were somewhat stressed out and extremely suspicious to outsiders. It turned out to be the division in the leadership and the lack of information that bothered them.

‘It’s our leaders that worry us. There is no coordination (...), no information of what is happening. They are bad leaders. It’s like our Subcentral has two heads’ (group discussion, TIPNIS March 9, 2013)

I was the one to reveal the result in both communities: they had rejected the Protection Law and accepted the highway-construction.

The consulting: getting to yes

This subsection presents the experiences and viewpoints of members of the consulting committees and displays their different interests as well as the power-relations between them. It also shows further attempts to secure the acceptance of the road.

For better or worse, the process had been an unforgettable experience for the involved officials. Resistance had been widespread in the central and northern part of the territory. An observer told there had been supporters, foreigners as well as people from other TCOs, the so-called ‘intangible’, humorously naming them after the contentious concept in the Protection Law. Sometimes the commissions had to go ashore far from the community they aimed to visit and walk through the forest, or land on a ‘nearby’ ranch and access the place on horseback. ‘Sometimes we walked in fear’ (Observer, Trinidad, April 5 2013). Encountering resistance had obviously not been that funny. But there were also positive experiences. The general difficult logistics sometimes caused the commissions to stay up to five days in a community, on other occasions they had to await the community to gather, or a Corregidor to return home. During that time they faced challenging environmental conditions and depended on the local families, who had generally been very accommodating. ‘[it is] a part of our Department that we only recently have gotten to know; their reality, how they live’ (Observer, Trinidad, April 7 2013).

The event was celebrated with fanfare by the government as the indigenous peoples’ practise of their right to prior consultations. President Morales himself open the process with huge media-coverage and the consultants’ subsequent report documents with photos how community-members gathered, debated and signed the agreement in each of the visited communities. The opening picture shows how community representatives sign the final summary of conclusions. According to several informants, few of those attending this session were leaders appointed ‘from below’, and those who were did not necessarily have the approval from their communities.

The result was an overwhelming rejection of the Protection Law, and the approval of the highway (MOPSV 2012). From the reports it appeared that almost all communities had stated conditions, but the result was presented publicly as a simplistic yes/no count⁴.

Two of the interviewed observers were being critical to both the process and the result: ‘A political position to promote acceptance of the highway was prevailing’ (Cochabamba, April 12 2013). They also stated that far the most communities had only accepted the highway with conditions. These observers, both higher ranking officials within the Supreme Electoral Tribunal, were very dedicated to extract learnings from the process, which they described as rich and multifaceted. They saw themselves as playing a more active role in future consultations. They were however not invited to participate in the subsequent evaluation, part of the drafting of a new consultation law.

The executive consultants had been trained by a Canadian expert in negotiating compensations with indigenous communities. The observers equally participated in the preparatory workshops: ‘I got to

⁴ e.g. <http://www.bolivia.com/actualidad/nacionales/sdi/52131/resultados-de-consulta-a-pueblos-del-tipnis-son-irrefutables-y-democraticos-sanchez>

the conclusion that the consultation in other countries is a negotiation opportunity (...) simply to legitimise works that will be done, independently of what the consulted say' (Cochabamba, April 12 2013). This notion was indirectly confirmed by a consultant. He had answered to the concerns of the TIPNIS inhabitants regarding migrants by directly entering a discussion on safeguards to limit the damage. To the worries about resources and contamination he had pointed to the poor living conditions in the communities and more than indicated how to progress: 'I told them: "I agree with the intangibility, we must take care of our natural resources, animals and plants. But I don't agree that you remain in your current conditions. You must speak up and say if you want to be intangible or not"' (La Paz, April 30 2013).

In a further attempt of the ministries to secure an acceptance of the highway, they identified 69 communities to be consulted, while the Subcentral TIPNIS said only 63 belong to the TCO. Communities from the 'Polygon 7' (fig.1) were consulted, and their organisation was involved as facilitator. A civil rights lawyer from the organisation 'Fundación Tierra' defended the position of the Subcentral TIPNIS: 'Consultations have been made with communities (...) that are not part of the collective titling' (La Paz, February 13 2013). These six peasant communities would with certainty support the cancellation of the Protection Law.

The co-managers from SERNAP, in turn, were not consulted, nor involved with the contents of the consultation. They, too, had concerns about the highway: 'We worry because all the water comes from there (...) if there is a liquid oil spill it will be all over the park' (Trinidad, April 4 2013). Despite extensive knowledge of the area's biophysical elements and indigenous population, SERNAP merely functioned as the logistic facilitator. With their collaborative experience with the communities, SERNAP would presumably have been able to deliver complicated information in accessible terms, but did not get that role.

The excluded and the challenging leaders

The leaders, that had attempted to enter the community to assist the consultation in Puerto San Lorenzo, represented the indigenous organisations that had been excluded from the process; some would say they had excluded themselves. This sub-section quotes the territorial leadership opposing the consultation, as well as the government-close leaders who emerged during the process.

Conflict has previously proven effective in the indigenous struggle for rights and land (Paz et al. 2012); the contentious repertoires even improved their deliberative position (Schilling-Vacaflor 2012) and have thus frequently been used as a strategy among lowland peoples (Schilling-Vacaflor 2017; Anthias and Radcliffe 2015). In this case, however, the strong position against the consultation prevented the leadership from participating constructively in the process, which seriously upset any balance of equity in the procedure. When it turned out that the consultation was carried through despite open resistance to it, the leaders had not been able to restructure their approach to this situation. There were no indications that the government had sought cooperation with the indigenous leadership either. The leaders, who had negotiated the Protection Law, had more knowledge about the highway and the FPIC-concept than the average community-member. The fact that they were not actively involved in the process had two serious consequences: one, the

task of accommodating the consultation was imposed on each community, whose members had little prerequisites to anticipate the consequences of the agreements they concluded; and two, parallel organisations with more cooperative leaders emerged during the process because coordination was needed.

A group, who had functioned as facilitators during consultation, challenged the TIPNIS leadership after the process. Without being appointed through the usual procedure, they constituted themselves as a new territorial leadership. The president of this new Subcentral accused the established TIPNIS-leaders of having approved of the Protection Law without consulting with ‘the base’, and now the ‘intangibility’ generalised all activities, so that communities had to give up e.g. tourism (see also Anthias and Radcliffe 2015). They accused the Subcentral TIPNIS and the regional indigenous organisations to have sold their souls to NGOs, echoing the rhetoric of Vice-President Linera, who claim that landowner domination has been produced by NGOs through the creation of ‘a clientelistic network of indigenous leaders’ (Linera 2012, 29). The Subcentral TIPNIS, in turn, accused the newly emerged leaders of ‘being with the government,’ meaning betraying the independence of the territory; ‘co-opted’ was the cautious expression, ‘corrupted’ the harsher.

The indigenous organisations opposing the consultation do not recognise the result. They question the good faith of the government due to the distribution of benefits along with the agitation for the abolishment of the law. More than the food and the little gifts, they referred to the ‘indigenous facilitators’ who had been recruited bypassing the Subcentral. They had been offered communal gifts, such as boat-engines, generators or solar-panels, along with transport and accommodation at workshops, in La Paz among other. The protesters say that they will never see any projects, that their ‘land has been sold for a generator’. According to the indigenous leaders, the direct democracy approach is outside the frame of indigenous self-determination and respect for customary procedure. The president of Subcentral TIPNIS said that details about the project should have been brought to the Subcentral as the representing institution: ‘we would discuss and analyse it technically, bring it in, and tell the communities: Look, this is what the government wants, these are their pretensions, now you have the word’ (Trinidad, April 9 2013). Instead, they experienced attempts to limit their access to the territory by intensified control with documents and limitation of fuel purchases. They had also lost support from NGOs: ‘They are discouraged. The government threatened those who work with TIPNIS (...) that they will lose their permit to function in Bolivia’ (Trinidad, April 9 2013)⁵.

This was the situation two months after the consultation had ended. Correspondence and negotiations were still ongoing between the government and the ‘new leadership’. Although convinced that the newly emerged leaders had been tricked and corrupted by the government to betray the defence of the territory, the ‘organic’ leadership was not able to act. It had no means to turn the tide. Access to the territory was restricted. They had no NGO-support, little contact and gradually less legitimacy within the territory: ‘we haven’t seen their faces here’. They could not help me access the territory, only issue a letter explaining that I travelled with their acceptance. The

⁵ The Danish NGO ‘Ibis’ got expelled from Bolivia because of their support to indigenous organisations during the TIPNIS conflict

TIPNIS president was politically experienced, he was able to present a convincing analysis of the situation, but paralysed action-wise. But others were moving about.

Families from inside the TIPNIS and from the Department capital, Trinidad, were loosely organising a network. A central person was a boatman, constantly travelling the rivers with goods and passengers. He brought me in and facilitated the contact to different families that would host me. With him came news and messages, and it was he who brought in a commission that aimed to challenge the consultation-result of the government. This commission was composed of the human rights assembly APDHB and Caritas; they visited 36 communities and revealed serious shortcomings of the government consultation (Comisión Interinstitucional 2013).

Years later

In 2015, the network had become more firmly established. The group comprises young activists and former leaders, some dating back to the 1990-movement. The government-close leadership that had emerged during the consultation may not have entirely disappeared, but its role is now withdrawn. The new grassroots literally threw them out and took over the office. When revisiting the two communities in 2016, the woman who fought on the runway had become Corregidora. The local institutions functioned again, although division was still distinct. Another curious thing was that when talking to people about the re-emerging 1990s protagonists, they actually expected them to take the lead again. Some had been excluded and punished according to ‘customary law’ because of misuse of their positions, but this seemed to play a less important role now, it was even used as the explanation for their responsibility – ‘they owe us’. The new grassroots and old leaders travelled both the territory and the whole country to mobilise support. In 2017 they managed to invite for a territorial assembly in the TIPNIS and appoint a new Subcentral. The appointed leaders, among them the woman from the runway, all come from the communities inside the territory; they claim to represent the TIPNIS, although not all communities attended the assembly. Increasingly vocal against the highway, they appear in the media and even managed to find their way to the COP 23 in Bonn in 2017, which suggests they have found resourceful allies.

Meanwhile the drafting of a new consultation law (Comisión Nacional 2013) took place. The draft stresses the importance of achieving a balance between the consulted and ‘the interest of the Bolivians’. It prohibits third parties and advisors to ‘complicate the consultations’ and explicitly expresses that the execution of extractive activities will be guaranteed (Schilling-Vacaflor 2017, 1064), definitely determining the limits of deliberation on the overall economic strategy. Initially the Guaraní People, with ample experience in law-centred strategies, was involved with a well-developed proposal (APG 2013), but withdrew with the reason that the government was unwilling to compromise (Schilling-Vacaflor 2017). As mentioned, the TIPNIS-observers were excluded from the process despite their central role.

The Ambiguities of Consultation

The insights from this study, nuancing the perspectives found in the already significant literature on the TIPNIS conflict, support earlier suggestions that the government sought to legitimise a decision

already made, and show how disruptive an enforced consultation with a predetermined result can be. The consultation was neither free, prior, informed or performed in good faith. Community-members were threatened that basic state services, livelihood activities and locally based commercial activities, no matter how environmentally balanced, depended on the annulment of the Protection Law. Two thirds of the highway was already built, hence no ‘prior’, and basic information about the road was inaccessible. Yet the overriding concern among community members and leaders was the role of their own institutions in the process. In this final section, I discuss this finding following the main points of first, the nature of the claimed space, as opposed to the invited. Second, the opportunity produced in the invited process to generate new spaces, while others were restricted. Third, the ‘entering of FPIC’ in the longer-term indigenous struggle, and finally, the post-liberal disagreement as displayed in the TIPNIS case.

The essential requirement for the space to participate in decision-making, claimed by the lowland peoples, is that processes must be self-directed (Schilling-Vacaflor 2017). The TIPNIS-consultation was supposed to be an act of indigenous peoples’ right to self-determination (fig. 2), not an act of direct democracy, which, as in many other cases, proved inappropriate to balance power-inequalities (Fontana and Grugel 2016; Schilling-Vacaflor 2012). On the contrary, it stimulated distrust and suspicion because it caused uncertainty of leadership and procedures. Like Habermas’ public sphere, deliberation must take place in a space outside the domain of the state or any other powerful intervener. This is important, because much critique of deliberative democracy refers to the isolated speech-act which is exactly the one-off event that FPIC has become, ignoring structural conditions of inequality and power-imbalances. A new deliberative democratic institution, as advocated by the indigenous peoples, is far beyond a mere participatory instrument; it must respect existing institutions and alliances to balance power-relations. Equity in procedure is about capacity of participants to engage in the process of mutual persuasion (Knight and Johnson 1997). Even when reluctance turned into respectful face-to-face meetings and discussions of necessities and projects took place, which is core in political deliberation, autonomy and self-determination, the situation ended up allowing for the manipulation towards an acceptance of the highway project. The presence of the observers sharpened the consultants’ performances and important observations were made by this third party. These are important steps towards equity in procedure and respect in dialogue. However, the front-line officials did not have a free mandate to reach a mutual accepted agreement. They were sent out with a developmental bias and an expectation of delivering a certain result. Nor did the community-members have a real mandate, as the consultation was deemed unlawful by their organisations. The involvement of leaderships, management partners, advisors and experts could have promoted some equality in the deliberation. For example, the community Tres de Mayo debated their position, securing effective participation prior to the consultation, but failed to understand the broader context. Support from external advisors could have prevented fatal misunderstandings and the more experienced leaders could have reached a better agreement on their behalf, but they were side-tracked during the consultation. Aguilar-Støen and Hirsch (2017) have shown the importance of involving experts for local people to assess the quality of impact assessments. Indigenous peoples create spaces for manoeuvre exactly through alliances (Bebbington 2000; McDaniel 2002; Szablowski 2010). In this case, Caritas and APDHB provided

important support to document serious flaws of the consultation. The provision of the draft law - the prohibition of third parties - would seriously increase inequality in future consultations. The proposed model, where the territorial leadership would consult the communities, then deliberate with the intervener, in Gaventa's (2004) typology, approximates a 'closed space' for decision-making. However, with legitimate representatives and a mandate to negotiate based on an informed internal consultation, it could prove more appropriate when it comes to balancing equalities.

Invited spaces produce possibilities for agents to create new spaces (Cornwall 2004). An opportunity was grabbed by individuals willing to co-opt the government agenda to challenge both the established TIPNIS leadership and the usual governance procedures. Although supported through the 'divide-and-rule' policy of the government, a strategy that has happened at all levels under the MAS-government (Pellegrini 2016; Regalsky 2010; Schilling-Vacaflor 2012; Schilling-Vacaflor and Eichler 2017), the attempt exemplifies that claimed spaces 'from below' are not necessarily expressing the 'joining together in common pursuits' (Cornwall in Gaventa 2004, 35) in a legitimate way. New grassroots also saw the opportunity to appropriate the 'power-vacancy' that appeared due to the paralysed leaderships. Contrary to the government-close claimers, their aim was to re-establish the territorial government while also mobilising resistance in the 'old contentious way'. The division had of course begun several years before the consultation; the event only displayed it openly. It led to an immediate polarisation, and the undisguised establishment of a parallel, government-friendly organisation. Not just the indigenous organisations experienced restrictions as regards accessing the deliberative space. Important considerations of how to institutionalise procedural and political equity in deliberative processes could have followed the TIPNIS experience; indeed this institutionalisation would be a cornerstone in the realisation of the Plurinational State. One state-segment saw it as an essential task to find ways to make the Plurinational State work; the observers' exclusion from the evaluation reveals the importance of power-relations within the state apparatus for the possible spaces that can be opened, and thus the extent to which FPIC can be used for transformative engagement.

Depending on the time span of the broader indigenous struggle observed, the 'entering of FPIC' in that process can be assessed differently and quite ambiguously. There is no doubt that the TIPNIS consultation, fixed in time and limited in content, but framed as indigenous peoples' practice of their right to self-determination, pushed the already troubled communities over the tipping point. It threatened their very foundation: the social cohesion between egalitarian families based on a system of co-decision regarding the commons they hold. The consultation displayed the limits of power-sharing in the Plurinational State and the economic project of the MAS-government that cemented its hegemonic understanding of development, ignoring lowland peoples' relationships to their adjacent environment and aspirations of strengthening the locally based economy. While procedures, schemes and careful documentation created the impression of diligence, growing frustration was documented in the communities and among indigenous leaders, stemming from a fundamental fear of a setback in their struggle for recognition as self-governing peoples. The emergence of struggles as 'legal procedure' (Rodríguez-Garavito 2010) left the communities vulnerable facing this more 'subtle expansion' of state space. So far, however, the resilience, agency and achievements of the lowland movement have been remarkable (Yashar 2005). In the

1980s they organised in communities, installed what has become a renowned part of the Bolivian social movements' repertoire, the march, and they claimed and gained collective territories to get control of land and become self-determining entities. With this they created a political space for linking to the state and simultaneously become targets for development funding. All along the lowland peoples have been actively planning for their own development, and the fact that consultation, in cases of development interventions, has become mandatory according to national law is a major achievement, quite enviable seen from a wide range of other countries world-wide. FPIC will continuously be invoked by indigenous collectives when states and companies launch activities that affect them. Respecting existing governance structures in the institutionalisation of it will remain an essential claim. The TIPNIS case was a 'trial', orchestrated to a large extent by the lowland peoples in order to expose what they deem a major betrayal by the government. They miscalculated their own strength this time, and that of the MAS, and exposed the inability of the indigenous organisations, in their predominant form, to resist co-optation from above and maintain its legitimacy from below. The envisioned plurinational project seems distant, however, this study suggests that despite imploding organisations, the basis for a continued struggle to become part of the state on equal terms as self-determining entities, is far from eliminated. Interestingly, it is community-grassroots that are becoming new leaders, indicating that the political base of the movement is quite solid.

With the lowland peoples' views on what rights belong to the collective title in a FPIC-situation, we are in the heart of the conflict between centralists and plurinationalists. A post-liberal vision of the latter include participation in the state as collectives with self-appointed representations, whether in consultations or in parliament (Tomaselli 2016). In the post-liberal reality, however, direct democracy has a prominent place in both the constitution and the Electoral Law from 2010. Critics argue that far from contributing to deepening democracy, this helps to consolidate the hegemony of the ruling alliance and undermine the representative institutions that balance conditions of participation more equally (Wolff 2012). Paradoxically, mechanisms of citizen participation seem to have broadened, in parallel to executive and/or presidential powers having been strengthened. This facilitate populist governing, relying on appeals directly to the people and favours government controlled segments (ibid). Along with nationalised resources, this weakening of liberal representative democracy reflects the MAS-government's response to neoliberalism and exposes their idea of the post-liberal order. Likewise, the hostile attitude of the government towards NGOs can be seen in the light of the 'distancing from neo-liberalism', as the civil society undertook the role as service-providers and local problem solvers during the 1980's and 1990's, encouraged by neoliberalist regimes seeking to minimise the state. Civil society grew in power and finally overthrew the regime that created them (Postero 2007). Plurinationalists and their supporters among NGOs clearly face challenging times with the advent of resource nationalism and the claim that MAS now represent civil society and that the state is 'already indigenous' (Canessa 2014, 167). Nonetheless, the Plurinational State is an ongoing process, constantly negotiated, even when, at the moment, ethnic rights seem subordinated to broader class-defined social rights (Lalander 2017), and party politics challenge the unity of the collectives (Gustafson 2009; Yashar 2005). The right to self-determination still challenge established governance procedures, demanding the construction of

a new relationship with the state. According to the indigenous collectives, the state should transform by adapting to existing socio-economic and cultural realities, institutionalising the plurinational nature of the country. This exercise is envisaged within a framework where peoples respect each other's self-determination claims, based on a non-discriminatory interpretation of law and distributive justice (Doyle 2015). This resonates with the premise of the new constitution of Bolivia; that diverse cultures co-exist in equality. This is what encourages the lowland peoples. In the future they will keep combining strategies; contained like the law-centred strategies of the Guaraní, as well as contentious, like the blockades and marches.

FPIC will continue to be one of the means that the indigenous collectives will depend on in their struggle for self-determination, and they will keep invoking their right to FPIC as a tool among others in their struggle, and as a horizon of their vision of the Plurinational State.

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Coproducing Development Alternatives. The making of a Lifeplan in lowland Bolivia

Lisbet Christoffersen

Abstract

Local development projects are often criticised by post-structuralists, neoliberalists and industrialist states alike. In this paper, I argue that a participatory approach to interventions is essential to enabling indigenous people to embrace modernity in order to create viable livelihoods in ways that are both distinctively indigenous and locally controlled. Through the analysis of a specific development project, I show how the Movima people in the Bolivian lowland coproduce institutions, places and livelihoods with allies among NGOs whose interests are complementary to theirs. This coproduction results in the charting of development paths that differ from those otherwise offered to the Movima. In their struggle to create a plurinational state and communalise social life, the Movima challenge government and development hegemonies in a way that resonates with the thoughts of decolonialists, albeit with the inevitable pragmatism that typify lived alternatives. In a search for practicable alternatives beyond the modern development paradigm, I argue for a fine-tuned understanding of coproduction.

Keywords: indigenous territories, Movima, NGOs, participation, coproduction

Introduction

We arrived at the Movima territorial leadership's building in Santa Ana well after sunset on September 25. 2015. We, representatives of a Danish donor organisation and a Bolivian NGO, had come to complete a series of workshops to take place in each of the 27 Movima communities that constitute the Movima territory. In collaboration with the communities, the objective was to elaborate an overall 'Lifeplan to *Live Well* (Vivir Bien)', which would guide the Movimas' social, political and productive activities, and also instantiate their right to determine their own development within the Plurinational State of Bolivia. That evening, we arrived in Santa Ana hoping to confirm plans for the next day's meeting. We were surprised that the people who met us were ready to start discussing development needs of the young territory right away, after all this was a preliminary project without material outcome, and the Movima were not compensated for their time of engagement. The discussion, lasting for hours, ranged from the difficulties that the Movima face to suggestions for future projects. Some Movima in attendance argued that initiating productive activities was the most urgent concern. A large group emphasised the revival of Movima culture and language as the main priority, while yet others emphasised the need for communication skills, leadership and the strengthening of internal and external relations. It was midnight when we closed the meeting, agreeing to continue discussions the next day. How can we understand their motivation to participate so actively in a relatively small development project?

The Movima is a small¹, lowland people, one of 18 in the Beni Department of the Bolivian Amazon, living in a vast, scarcely populated area. Expansion of ranching in the mid-twentieth century marginalised the Movima geographically, economically and politically. Although they now own land, labour and power relations, established then, largely remain the same. Because the Movima territory is fragmented (fig. 1), it cannot pursue autonomy (Cameron 2013) or apply to become an indigenous municipal district (Stocks 2005), a status that would grant it funds of its own. Further complicating the situation, the territory is dispersed throughout four different municipalities. Since 2009, when the Movima obtained collective land-titles with the active support of NGOs and foreign donors, their territorial leadership, the Subcentral of the Movima Indigenous People, SPIM, has been searching for ways to strengthen the territory internally, and as a self-determining entity within the Beni. To do this, SPIM have allied with the Bolivian NGO 'Centre for Legal Studies and Social Research' (CEJIS), to develop a 'Lifeplan' to govern land and resources, and reinforce the territorial organisation. The Danish organisation Forests of the World (FoW), which has been working in partnership with CEJIS on a number of projects in Bolivia in the past decade, supported the project that would clarify Movimas aspirations regarding development activities, and identify opportunities and constraints in that regard. CEJIS and FoW view the production of Movima development as a collaborative effort, depending on what Movima communities themselves imagine.

This paper, ethnographically grounded in the Movima Lifeplan project, explores ideas about 'co-production' and 'participation,' and argues that development practice in indigenous communities can generate positive, contextually meaningful outcomes, if practiced in a decolonial manner that is alert to the long term. In line with a group of Latin American authors (that I come back to), I see coloniality as constitutive of modernity with its continued imposition of Eurocentric norms and hegemonic globalism (Escobar 2004). In the search for a different logic, an alternative development, we can look to – not cultures untouched by modernity – but practices of difference that remain within the modern world system, albeit at the margins (ibid:221). When referring to modernity in this paper, I think of processes of technification and marketisation of social life, as well as the building of new bureaucratic indigenous institutions.

Coproduction and Agency

In his interpretation of the processes and effects of rural development, noting that development possibilities are coproduced through joint actions by people and their networks, and through external interventions, Bebbington argues for a greater emphasis on local agency. Rather than resisting modernisation efforts and development institutions (e.g. Vincent 2004), indigenous people transform these and turn them to their own purposes in the attempt to build something on their own (Bebbington 2000:513). Bebbington found that rural livelihoods in Andean communities had not only been viable, but that development programs, state interventions and market integration had allowed for accumulation. He shows how, over time, landscapes have been created 'that continue to be distinctive, and indeed alternative to modern capitalist landscapes even as they incorporate ideas, practices and technologies of modernity' (ibid:496). Bebbington's account of coproduction represents a search for narratives that counter the neoliberal narrative of crisis: the idea that maintaining local livelihoods on marginal lands in the face of the global economy and market is a near hopeless project (e.g. López and Valdés 2000). His demonstration of viable, rural livelihoods is important because it offers a practical response to the

¹ Population estimates vary: 8000 (Ávila 2009), 3140 (in territory, Fundación Tierra 2011)

legitimate aspects of the neoliberal critique, such as those concerning production and income. Inherent in the Lifeplan-project lays the hope for a similar 'success'.

My approach differs from Bebbingtons in that I situate and explore coproduction in the actual encounter that takes place between the NGOs and the local people. In my definition, coproduction is traced in the alignment of agendas between complementary agents, which emphasises the intentionality of the coproducing parties, and the activities of the Movima as social and political practice, sustaining their insistence on a different development in Beni.

The assumptions of emancipatory development

Emancipatory development practice in the Amazonian context of an expanding economy, at once globalised and nationally centralised, proceeds on three assumptions. 1) Because development involves access to resources of different kinds (which is power), it is necessarily about more than just livelihoods; it affects the political landscape. Therefore we must try to understand the effects of coproduction on political institutions, just as on livelihoods. 2) While development projects may have limited terms, their effects live on and evolve. Therefore, long-term assessments should reveal whether and how previous coproduced institutions and livelihoods play a role today. 3) If we, as proponents of 'local development', claim to benefit disadvantaged populations and not reproduce hegemonic structures, we must take colonialism into account and implement projects in a consciously decolonial manner.

Genuine co-production in development contexts requires *participation* (Hickey and Mohan 2004). Critics of the participatory approach from the post-structural tradition (see Cooke and Kothari 2001) categorise participation as a development 'buzzword' (Rist 2010), arguing that it fails to acknowledge issues of power and politics. While such critiques are useful for analysing development discourse and understanding how inherently political processes tend to be de-politicised through the methods applied by the 'developers' (Cornwall and Brock 2005), they often fail to acknowledge how agency is also deployed by the local people - sometimes reluctant to commit to development projects (McDaniel 2002; Vincent 2004); sometimes participating actively in all parts of the process; and sometimes, like in this Movima-case, debating the very meaning of 'development'.

Development is always embedded in both global and local politics. Importantly for this paper, Williams (2004) suggests that participation happens when local people see an opportunity to *politicise the development agenda*. A failure to recognise local people's political goals may cause 'critics of participation' to overlook the benefits that participation can have for marginalised people. Prominent examples of moments of participation and coproduction in the Amazon, and generally in Latin America, include the involvement of indigenous peoples in liberation theologians' actions against poverty, beginning in the 1950s (Smith 1991). Through these movements, bottom-up organisation of base communities led to redistribution of land (Aires 2012; French 2009), health reforms and successful avoidance of mega-infrastructures (Müller-Schwarze 2015), and sparked the political culture of resistance (Pace 1992) still underlying the indigenous rights movement. Participation thus scaled up to affect societal structures with direct impact on livelihoods. When assessing the institutional impacts of participatory development, Williams (2004) suggests that we pay greater attention to participation's wider political impact. Do the applied methods and events improve the political capabilities of the poor (ibid:567)? Although they may indeed be sparked by local people's responses to development projects, transformations in local agency

and political capability are complex social phenomena that take time to evolve. To make the assessment, a long-term perspective is needed.

Any ethical development practice should also be consciously *decolonial*. Coloniality refers to the patterns of power that emerged as a result of colonialism. They are longstanding and survive beyond the actual colonial administration itself. The concept of coloniality links the practices and legacies of European colonialism in social orders and forms of knowledge, identifying their living legacy in contemporary societies (Quijano 2000). Decoloniality is a response to this inheritance (Quijano 2007), and thus refers to analytical approaches and socioeconomic and political practices that oppose and seek to eliminate those hegemonic structures. In its less theoretical application, decoloniality means people's practical and political delinking from contemporary legacies of coloniality (Mignolo 2007); it responds to rightist and leftist governments alike, as in the indigenous movements that struggle for autonomy: the radical return of control to the people, over their own daily lives as well as over resources and institutions.

The situation of the Movima and their ability to act flows from colonial relations. Therefore, any analysis of contemporary Movima life must take coloniality and its effects into account. The Movima are well aware of power-relations, politics and the long-term process of social change. Their decades-long struggle for land and political influence, along with other lowland indigenous peoples (Postero 2007), show their understanding of marginalising structures. Therefore, the Movima's eager outreach for support, and their enthusiasm for participation, is best understood in the wider context of decoloniality, in which the Movima strive for greater independence from at least two hegemonic groups: the national government and the local elite.

Research Context

Below, I show how the Movima people (co)produce their own paths to secure livelihoods, and strengthen their political institutions through development encounters. Moreover, and central to my argument, we see how the political struggle and development projects jointly create and affirm Movima identity. The specific case concerns the construction of a 'Lifeplan to Live Well' for the Movima territory, a project carried out by the Movima in collaboration with CEJIS, supported by the Danish organisation FoW with funding and sparring. My study illustrates how coproduction of this plan resulted in the outlining of a vision of development differing from those otherwise offered to marginalised people. Understanding the Movima's approaches to their own development provides a corrective to the developmentalist state's assumptions about the underdeveloped lowland (Achtenberg 2013; Canessa 2014), and its portrayal of lowland peoples who defend their territories as counterrevolutionaries (Linares 2000). These accusations must be seen in the light of the plans of the national government to exploit natural resources from the Beni on a large scale.

I visited the Movima five times during 2015 and 2016. Affiliation with FoW as a researcher provided access to the Lifeplan-workshops as an active participant. When arriving in September 2015, 19 workshops had already been held. I would be present for the remaining, and ended up taking over for a mediator, unable to attend. Subsequently, I travelled the territory with a photographer and later a Bolivian consultant, both hired by FoW. Twice, I travelled on my own. I visited 15 communities. Slow and cumbersome travelling allowed for lengthy conversations with the workshop coordinators, while subsequent stays in the communities enabled good relations with the indigenous families. In my capacity as NGO-representative, I talked with the Mayor of Santa Ana and some of his technical staff.

The Case in Context

Visions of development and constitutional tensions²

Bolivia has a huge, diverse, generally poor indigenous population, and a small, 'white' economic elite. Generally, highland indigenous peoples work small private holdings, while others, especially in the lowland, hold territories collectively. This fundamental difference in land tenure stems from the 1953 land reform, which, in the highland, established the Indians as peasants (Postero 2007), while not immediately affecting the lowland. Later, in the lowland, the land reform favoured wealthy families' appropriation of enormous tracts of land, while the indigenous peoples withdrew to peripheral areas where they were able to preserve their social organisation and communal approach to land-management (Christoffersen 2018; Jones 1990).

Indigenous and peasant organisations have a long tradition of contesting power and suggesting alternative developments for Bolivia (Paz et al. 2012; Postero 2007). Effective mobilisations to frustrate the privatisation of common resources (Fabricant and Hicks 2013) led to the overthrow of the neoliberal government in 2003. In 2005, the first indigenous president, Evo Morales, was elected with a mandate to nationalise industry, and a promise to incorporate the indigenous population into the state. However, the indigenous collectives' aspirations were not prioritised. Their main concern has long been the creation of self-governed entities which they claim is essential to effectively de-colonialize the country and its peoples, whose cultures and political and judicial systems have been marginalised and weakened by the 'western model' (Postero 2015). The MAS³-government aims for a strong state (Postero 2015; Regalsky 2010; Schilling-Vacaflor 2011). This tension is reflected in the Constitution, which clearly endorses indigenous autonomy and the country's plurinational character, while simultaneously establishing a hierarchy of jurisdictions, with the socialist state as the superstructure, keeping exclusive control over natural resource exploitation (CPE 2009:349). While centralising power may put an end to the neoliberal order, it is not an act of delinking from contemporary legacies of coloniality.

'Vivir Bien' (Living Well), adopted by the Movima in their Lifeplan, is a South American concept to describe 'alternatives to development' (Escobar 2010; Gudynas and Acosta 2011), embracing new priorities for determining the best use of land, resources and labour. Bolivian authors broadly agree that reaching Vivir Bien can only happen through the devolution of power to local entities (Medina in Albó 2011; Bedregal 2011; Puente 2011). Both scholars and government frame Vivir bien as a translation of the highland indigenous concepts 'Sumak Kawsay' (Quichua) or 'Suma Qamaña' (Aymara), referring to a communal, harmonious and self-sufficient life. The concept is formalised in the Constitution (CPE 2009:8) prescribing a different relation with nature (ibid:255) and linked with principles of solidarity in its economic model (ibid:306). A major constitutional tension is apparent as *industrialisation of natural resources* (ibid:313) is called for as a precondition for reaching Vivir Bien, which directly contradicts Vivir Bien's insistence on a different relation with nature. The government's core economic strategy focus on extraction of hydrocarbons and large-scale agriculture (Burchardt and Dietz 2014; Pellegrini 2016; Linera 2012); it

² The historical review draws on the work of other scholars in this region, as the literature on the Movima per se is extremely limited, and little scholarship exist about their history and lands.

³ Movimiento Al Socialismo, the coalition of indigenous-peasant organisations, headed by Evo Morales, that gained strength during the epoch of neoliberalism, became a party and successfully ran for government. MAS mainly represent indigenous-peasants with a stronger connection to the market than the indigenous collectives, and urban indigenous peoples and mestizos, benefitting from increased redistribution of returns from gas exports.

promotes material welfare, the 'Living Well' of the citizens (Arkonada 2012). Contradictions are thus both economic and ecological, rooted in tensions at an ontologically deeper level, and 'Vivir Bien' is being used strategically in very different ways by the opposite segments.

The hierarchy is continuously challenged, sometimes in open conflict (McNeish 2013), sometime through law-centred strategies (Schilling-Vacaflor 2017). NGOs and foreign funding have been a catalyst for the indigenous mobilisation (Fundación Tierra 2011), which is now causing tensions between these development sectors and the central government (Gustafson 2013), which maintains that it now represents civil society and the indigenous peoples (Canessa 2014). Vice-president Linera (2012) accuses NGOs, and foreign governments through them, of keeping resources from the Bolivian population, and causing the 'absolute marginality' of Amazonian peoples (ibid:28). While applying a 'resource nationalist rhetoric' (Pellegrini 2016), Linera's argument resembles that of neoliberals, in that it deploys a discourse of 'non-viability' of Amazonian livelihoods, and emphasises the maximisation of economic productivity (Bebbington 2000). Notably, when accusing NGOs of 'political meddling to advance the interests of foreign governments and corporations' (Achtenberg 2015), the government frames its position, and the extractive activities it supports, as acts of decolonisation.

The peoples of the pampas

In the Beni Department, home of the Movima, regional and global economic development has always been entwined with notions of idle landscapes and premodern people, a perception that has been used to legitimise dispossessions (Christoffersen 2018). In fact, local people have long proactively responded to changes by devising hybrid livelihoods and institutions that combine 'modern and traditional' practices (Escobar 1995), and some of the lowland peoples have periodically had substantial regional political influence.

To our knowledge, the first time the Movima joined forces with outsiders was in 1668, acquiescing to the Jesuit presence, and participating in the formation of a prosperous mission society including six peoples of the *pampas*, the natural plains (Block 1994). The society, governed by the 'Cabildo', was maintained almost a century after the expulsion of the Jesuits in 1767, and the Cabildo continues to be the model for community and religious organisation. During the following century, new conceptions of ownership and production restricted the Mission-Indian's access to agricultural land, political leadership and trade (Jones 1990; Van Valen 2013), and rendered their systems of production invisible. To maintain some autonomy, many withdrew to the forests, among them some Movima, where they reintroduced the Cabildo-system.

In the 1980s, a lowland-peoples movement emerged as an active political force in Beni, demanding recognition of rights to land, self-determination and representation (Postero 2007). The ILO Convention 169, known as the Indigenous and Tribal Peoples' Convention, formed an important reference point in their claims. A tangible result of the lowland peoples' first protest march in 1990 was Bolivia's ratification of the Convention along with the recognition of four indigenous territories (Fundación Tierra 2011). When nature conservation became a global issue, lowland peoples took charge of protected areas, often with the assistance of NGOs (Ávila 2009), as did other ethnic groups in the Amazon region (Redford and MacLean 1993). During the last decades of the 21st century, many collective territories were legalised. The Movima's claim to territory was not met until 2009, but some of them live in the mixed indigenous territories created then. The territories built new institutions, and with the help of an increasing number of NGOs (Stocks 2005), indigenous groups gained financial support and political leverage (McDaniel 2002).

Today, almost a quarter of the Bolivian Amazon is under collective title. The inhabitants feel strongly connected to their land, and often express their will to protect it. Escobar (1999) has argued that such movements, along with progressive NGOs, call into question the dominant paradigm of development, because they challenge the legitimacy of official state government and policy.

The resurgence of the Movima

Around 1990, in the Benian province Yacuma, families of indigenous origin began to organise to claim land and establish their own territory on the basis of being Movima. Most lived as labourers, dependent on the area's large land-owners, whose cattle they cared for. With the 1953 land reform allowing for privatising land and cattle, which took speed during the 1960s (Jones 1990), the Movima obtained plots for housing and subsistence crops only at the land-owners' mercy. Tough negotiations went on for 11 years. In 2009, just 67,000 ha of dispersed patches of land (fig 1) were titled to the Movima by the state, much less than the over 2,000,000 ha they had initially demanded.

When the Movima, motivated by difficult access to resources and the landowner's degrading treatment, started to organise, they received the support and encouragement of the recently established regional indigenous organisations⁴, as well as the Bishop of Beni⁵. The Movima organisation and later territorial government, the Subcentral, SPIM, was founded in 1990. A council of Movima-speaking people was formed in 1993, inspired by the visit of a linguist fascinated by their language, which is unique in the region. Another group within the SPIM, dedicated to the organisation of communities, travelled the rivers to identify and map the locations of dispersed families. Griselda (73) remembered the time before any community had been founded: 'Before, there were only ranches; the Movima worked for the rich'. The new communities registered to host schools and resumed the Cabildo system.

About 80% of Movima communities affiliated with the SPIM and initiated the land claims process. These land claims were made possible by the Agrarian Land Reform, the 'INRA-Law', which, in response to a second indigenous people's march in 1996, had established the basis for collective land-titling (Stocks 2005). With the juridical framework established, funding for the demarcation of territories became available. The Danish International Development Assistance, DANIDA, supported the Movima (Fundación Tierra 2011), who laid claims to land with assistance from the Bolivian NGO CEJIS. Other claimants, however, such as the large cattle-farmers, were given priority before indigenous peoples, according to the INRA-Law (Stocks 2005). The ranchers were able to document ownership to enormous land-tracts. The number of cattle was decisive for the amount of land they could hold, and the story goes that the ranchers lent large herds to each other during the field-verification. Negotiations between the Movima, government officials and ranchers went on in every community. The role of CEJIS was to empower the SPIM to negotiate, an almost impossible task given the unequal power-relation between ranchers and indigenous communities, often still in a patron-client relationship. It is widely believed that the extremely powerful ranchers use cattle for laundering money acquired in narcotics trades, and that they 'own' the local government. The Movima negotiators were threatened and lured to give up demands. Maria (42) participated in the process: 'I was offered a small strip of land and some cattle if I would agree to move the boundaries.'

⁴ CIDOB (Confederación de Pueblos Indígenas del Oriente de Bolivia) and CPIB (Central de Pueblos Indígenas del Beni)

⁵ Most probably the auxiliary Bishop of Beni, Manuel Eguiguren, known to defend the Amazonian peoples

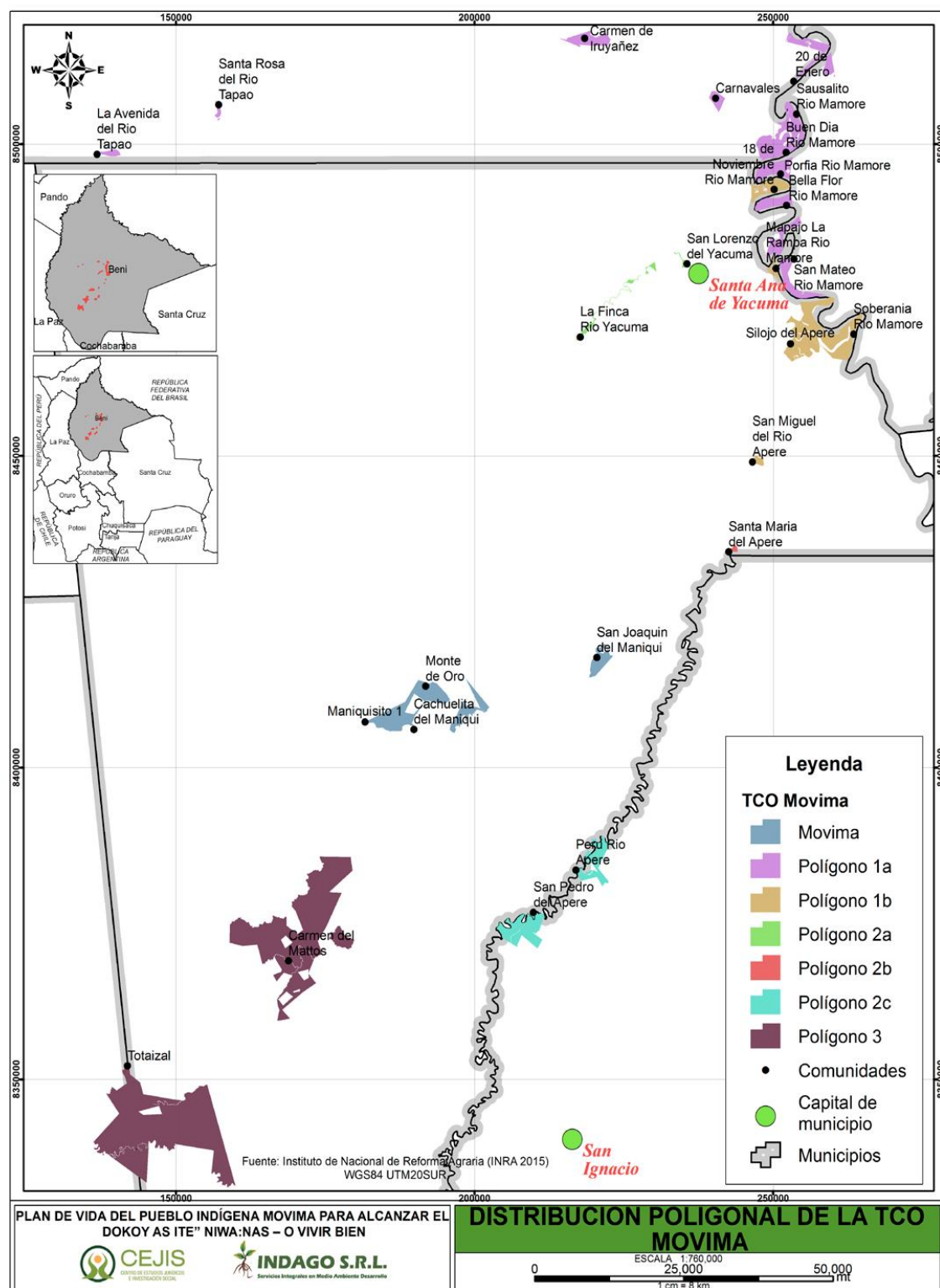


Fig. 1: The Movima territory stretches from north of Santa Ana de Yakuma southwards to San Ignacio and San Borja, a distance of approximately 170 km. It comprises seven 'polygons,' none of which are individually coherent. It includes 27 rural communities, and a group living in Santa Ana. Grazing land is represented in white (PdV 2017).

The SPIM leadership is appointed by the Movima General Assembly (fig. 3), which deliberates on issues of importance for the territory as a whole. Five representatives from each community can vote at the assembly, while others can participate with the right to speak. NGOs and other external parties must address the territory through the SPIM, but major decisions can only be made at the assembly. McDaniel (2002), writing about a similar Chiquitanos institution, notes that while such organisations apparently mirror the style of Western institutions, internally, they tend to be more fluid, with authority dispersed across the organisation. The SPIM does not receive any public funds; all activities depend on the communities' support or funding from external parties, and their trading of alligator skin, an exclusive right of the Movima.

The Movima are entitled to a representative in the municipality of Santa Ana, and lawyers from CEJIS have long assisted in advocating this right. They worry, however, that the Movima are not entirely prepared, their representative having to resist corruption and threats. This attitude on the part of CEJIS reveals the contradictions inherent in CEJIS' position. On the one hand, they want to protect the 'unsuspecting' Movima. On the other, they aim to create a certain type of 'state-citizen' (West 2016): in this case an indigenous territory representative, detached from party politics. This clash between fundamentally different governance systems, the political-party based and the territorial, with representatives appointed by communities, is a general challenge faced by indigenous representatives in conventional politics (McDaniel 2002). Indigenous leaders expressed discomfort about making decisions without consulting with their people, when representing them in municipal, departmental or national governments or councils. These governments and councils, conversely, are not geared to await decision of the indigenous collectives' lengthy governance procedures.

The Lifepan tour

In 2015, SPIM, initiated a comprehensive tour of the territory, approved by the Movima Assembly. They were assisted by CEJIS, who had approached their Danish partner FoW for funding. Their aim was to elaborate a 'Lifepan' that would strengthen the young territory's autonomy, seek to increase its political influence, and attract future project funding by asking what kind of development the Movima want, documenting it, and then devising a plan. The idea had emerged in a conversation between CEJIS and SPIM during the eighth march of the lowland peoples in 2011, inspired by similar processes in other territories. Each community would hold a workshop with the dual purpose of educating people about their rights, history and political situation, while enabling SPIM and CEJIS to collect data to help guide territorial governance. Each workshop would follow the same structure. There would be some lecture-like historical and socio-economic accounts of Movima life, while other sessions would be participatory discussions in groups or plenary.

Four indigenous facilitators were appointed at the Movima Assembly to assist in the tour. The facilitators and the SPIM spent three days in a preparatory workshop organised by CEJIS, which included training in participatory methods. While such structured methods may well have prevented the gaining of 'real local knowledge' (West 2016), and the attempts easily can be criticised (Henkel and Stirrat 2001; Cooke 2004; Williams 2004), the workshops also had other objectives. The agreed-upon goals were to elaborate Movima aspirations for territorial development and then advocate for them in a way that could garner continuous engagement and funding from a broad range of public and private actors. In the NGOs' view, the Movima's

aspirations required a recognisable framing when presented. Therefore, methods of data collection and analysis were modelled on those recognised by NGOs and others.

The Movima invested substantially in the Lifeplan-project with time and efforts. Many felt that without strengthening the territorial organisation, each community alone would be too fragile to resist pressure on their land and resources, primarily from the ranchers, and to undertake new projects. That would spell the territory's dissolution and put an end to the hopes for improved livelihoods that had emerged during the titling process.

The manifest outcome of the workshops was a small, colourful publication that synthesised the results of the community workshops, several leadership gatherings and territorial assemblies. CEJIS translated the collected data into a plan that uses development and government discourses and concepts. With their Lifeplan the Movima express their opposition to both the economic strategy of the government, and the interests of the cattle-ranchers, their patrons, and apply the hegemonic language of state and 'developers' for that.

The NGOs

When CEJIS and Forests of the World engage with the Movima, they do so out of normative concerns that marginalised people(s) should have their equal share of material welfare and political influence, as well as a belief that such engagement can create common ground between the organisations and their 'beneficiaries'. We now turn to the NGOs to outline their approach and goals for the project.

Interactions between different players in development projects are structured by a variety of elements. These elements include conditional funding, restrictions on design and standardised methods of monitoring, often determined by a long chain of donors and intermediary organisations, distant from the operating level. Although challenged and often transcended by both NGOs and indigenous organisations (McDaniel 2002), these stipulations are reflected in the accord when cooperation begins. Project implementation, assessment and reporting tend to reproduce the institutional patterns operating in donor societies, and to focus on technical solutions; these rarely suffice to resolve problems that are inherently political (Ferguson 1990; Cleaver 1999). An examination of the approaches used by CEJIS and FoW reveal the ideological and practical complexity of such situations.

To CEJIS, the Lifeplan-project mostly concerns the process, during which they hope to 'empower' participants: 'the objective is that the Movima reflect on their history in order to position themselves politically' (Director). CEJIS' support is reflected in equal parts legal advocacy and identification of political opportunities to push for changes that will benefit indigenous peoples. An important criterion for the success of CEJIS' engagement is the degree to which they contribute to the mobilisation and political action of the lowland peoples. The organisation was very influential in the 1980s and 1990s. However, since the MAS-party came to power, increasing government co-optation of their discourse has caused many CEJIS members to leave the organisation in favour of government positions. This dynamic has also had a deleterious effect on other civil-society organisations (Regalsky 2010; Webber 2017). Now, in 2018, CEJIS is engaged only with minor projects, often concerning organisational strengthening of indigenous collectives. CEJIS representatives explained how, earlier, they had 'formed lowland leaders', who later independently led their struggle for land. As conceived by CEJIS in consultation with SPIM, the Lifeplan project was intended to support community development and train individuals to advocate for their communities.

Another aim of the Lifeplan was to propose and work toward the adoption of a statute to guide and regulate internal territorial affairs. CEJIS' work is thus overtly political, supporting a vision of multiple self-governing entities within a plurinational frame.

Although FoW's key concern is the sustainable use of forests, their international work is equally devoted to social change, and their transnational network includes juridical, social and environmental organisations and local institutions. In Bolivia, FoW is most interested in supporting projects that concerns productive activities, based on the assumption that careful commercialisation of certain productions is a good way of protecting forest resources while enhancing the livelihoods of indigenous peoples. Establishing fair and lasting value-chains is a core development interest of FoW, who implements projects in cooperation with national partner organisations. To FoW, the building of strong organisations is insufficient: the economic dimension, in their view, is critical to community-managed, sustainable resource use. Thus, after the workshops were concluded, CEJIS, in response to FoW's emphasis on economic projects, generated a 'back catalogue' of more than 160 proposals.

CEJIS and FoW sometimes differ in their understanding of development goals. CEJIS is concerned about the possible destruction of culture and homogenisation of peoples in the modernising process inherent in many project-proposals regarding production. Although FoW tend to focus on productive activities, CEJIS' commitment to cultural survival is attractive to FoW.

The Making of a Lifeplan

The workshops, requiring collaboration between the indigenous organisation, the Bolivian NGO and the Danish donor, provided an excellent opportunity to explore the issue of co-production. I developed three levels of analysis to investigate how coproduction can take place. The first explored the establishment of a common, political understanding of history; the second asked how development aspirations were determined; and the third examined how the priorities in the plan were negotiated by the parties involved. The section is structured accordingly, but first we need to understand the nature of the physical territory, the Movima's main geographical challenge.

Seasonal flooding and droughts pose serious constraints to territorial logistics. The land titled to the Movima is typically low-laying forested land by the river; only 5,000 ha is higher ground (fig. 2, left). Accessing the furthest communities can be impossible. Nine communities were yet to be heard regarding the content of the Lifeplan. One had been completely wiped out by flooding. We reached three communities by car, one by plane, and, from there, one by horse. One community sent representatives by oxen to meet us; two communities were unreachable. This round of consultations was carried out with a reduced team, mainly due to the difficult logistics in the territory; I thus never experienced the indigenous facilitators performing their tasks.

It had rained, so the pampas needed to dry up before we could leave the Subcentral in Santa Ana. The destination was the community San Joaquín de Maniquí (fig. 1). Our group comprised the Movima president, a women's group representative, a coordinator from CEJIS, an agronomist, the driver, me and two passengers. To get to San Joaquín we had to cross the pampas, passing large, private properties. The old truck we used is SPIMs only tangible asset apart from the building and a small boat.



Figure 2. Left: Saving yuca-harvest during flooding (photo: Herlan Rojas 2014). Right: The difficult transport between Movima 'polygons' (photo: author 2015).

Some communities exist like islands between private estates. In some cases, the land demarcation-process had been so conflictual that the Movima cannot cross the private land. They are thus isolated, with the rivers serving as their only connection to the outside world. In the dry season, however, smaller river beds vanish, and only the largest rivers remain navigable. As we crossed the pampas, the vegetation was sometimes higher than the truck; reaching the first gate after four hours seemed like a miracle. Later, we had to cross a strip of land that had not yet dried up (fig. 2, right). The most reliable transport is on horseback, or better, on oxen. It was dark when we reached the forested riverside, from where we had to walk the rest of the way.

Interpreting history

The whole community gathered to welcome us in front of the school where a generator lit up a patch. President Marco introduced the purpose of our visit, the Lifeplan workshop. Marco is half Mojeño, half Guarani, but grew up in the large Movima community, El Peru. He had worked in many different places, among other with petrol companies, when his father encouraged him to do political work. 'Marco senior' had been active himself in the 1990-march, and transformed the Cabildo in El Peru from being concerned merely with religious matters, to become a political institution. Marco reminded the community participants about what CEJIS is, their role in the titling process and their current work documenting and promoting the needs of the Movima and their visions of how to develop the territory. Everyone introduced themselves and agreed to begin a session straight away.

Antonio from CEJIS reviewed Bolivian history from an indigenous angle, telling how history changed after 1990, when the indigenous peoples raised their voices. Instead of one type of citizen, the Spanish-speaking Catholic, 36 different peoples are now recognised. He highlighted the paradox that lowland peoples celebrate independence from Spain, even when for them it made no difference because exploitation and dispossession continued. He explained that without the lowland movement there would not be a Plurinational State⁶, then moved on to other achievements of the movement. He reminded the participants of the big celebrations in 2009, when land-titles were handed over. 'At a certain moment it looked as if indigenous peoples would be included in the state for better or worse, but today the logic of the state remains top-down. They have never asked what development is wanted'. The participants agreed.

⁶ With the MAS-government in 2006, the Bolivian Republic changed name to the Plurinational State of Bolivia

President Marco then took over, explaining in detail the history of the indigenous movement. I withdrew to my tent to leave the community alone with their leadership. Marco would focus on famous indigenous leaders, dates and places of significant events, the structure of the indigenous organisations and their roots in international conventions. His aim was to generate respect for past leaders and motivate the new generation. By focusing on Movimas' history of initiative, opposition and organisation, and by demonstrating his own agency as a leader, Marco offered a vision, or 'performance' (French 2009), of Movima identity. Being, or becoming, Movima implies acting, struggling and identifying with history and land.

In these historical/political sessions, Antonio and Marco did most of the talking, but at one point Antonio asked the participants what 'territory' means. 'A place to raise our children', a woman said, and more suggestions followed: 'a place for agriculture', 'land to raise our cattle,' 'having the freedom to do what we want to do,' 'having the rivers for fishing.' The community-leader finally asserted that the existing land is insufficient: the cattle are skinny, and the fallow period is short. The only hope for acquiring title to more land is the implementation of a land-use revision adopted under the INRA-law. Unused land must return to the state, which will then allocate it to the original claimers. According to the Movima, a lot of *pampas* is un-used, but the revision has never been applied. President Marco took the word and accused the government of sending the *collas* (highlanders) to take over the lowland. 'The state has never helped us. DANIDA financed the land-titling process!' He thus restated a view, commonly held in the lowlands, but also indicated the way forward: continued cooperation with NGOs and foreign donors.

Following Williams, who argues that we must recognise political aspects of development, three questions about the sessions arise (2004:568). First, *did they promote political learning?* Knowledge of rights and rules can provide the bases for political struggle, enhance understanding of strategies, and influence the choice of allies. More than merely informing the participants, both CEJIS and SPIM situated the Movima in the larger context of colonial history, and emphasised the indigenous movement's linkages to international rights policies. This contextualisation might inspire the participants' political interest and vision. Second, *to what degree were political networks (re)shaped through these community workshops?* Linkages beyond the local are fundamental for the longer-term political value of the contact. The sessions provided the participants with information about both historical and current alliances. The visit of SPIM in the communities reinforced the relation between the communities and their leadership, and the NGOs played an important role as mediators engaging in two-way cultural translations. Finally, *did the sessions affect political representation, including changes to the language of political claims?* Both SPIM and CEJIS attempt to influence the existing patterns of political representation by challenging party-politics, and they explained differences between indigenous and liberal political systems. In their experience, political encouragement at community level has spurred activism in the past. It was their hope that the Lifeplan meetings would energise the Movima again. It was later ascertained that the first Assembly held after the Lifeplan-tour attracted more participants than usual, and that a range of new candidates ran for election. While we cannot know for certain, it seems likely that community participants were inspired and encouraged by the discussions that took place during the Lifeplan workshops.

Determining development aspirations

This section provides a description of how information was collected from Movima participants, and summarises some of the challenges of implementing a truly 'participatory' approach, already hampered by

Movima President Marco's initial request to the participants: 'give CEJIS the information they ask for'. His comment, which also reflects his rather patriarchal understanding of leadership, did not exactly encourage engagement with the Lifeplan-elaboration in a typical 'participatory' sense. Personally, I perceived his statement as a signal that CEJIS should be trusted to handle the information strategically in the coproduction of alternatives for the Movima. However, he somehow, frustratingly, endorsed the development-criticism that inequality in knowledge production is inherent in development encounters, when presenting the discussion as a somewhat technical task to be undertaken by 'development experts'.

When we gathered for breakfast next morning, Carlos, the agronomist hired by CEJIS, had already interviewed three families about their productive activities. Antonio from CEJIS had come back from fishing with some community-members; a huge pile of piranhas was prepared. We talked about last year's big floods, when the families had lived on their roofs and in their canoes for months. Then the school-bell, a hammering on a sprocket, called for everyone to continue the Lifeplan-workshops. Throughout the day, the discussions covered a variety of topics, depending on the workshop facilitator as well as the group involved.

Participants separated by gender. Antonio discussed 'organisation', 'participation' and 'identity', while Carlos led the discussion about the different productive activities that Movima engage in, or wish to engage in, starting with the women. From his initial interviews, he could already list a number of activities: Agriculture, fishing/hunting, livestock, processing. He started by disregarding fishing/hunting, which is only allowed for the subsistence of the indigenous inhabitants, and then asked the group to give 1, 2 or 3 votes for each activity, according to its economic importance. Without further discussion, and with some difficulties for the women to understand the ranking system, agriculture was defined as the most important, and prioritised in the talk that followed. Because of cacao's resilience in times of flood, some of the women had experimented with sowing, and Carlos explained how to get better results. When discussing husbandry, he talked about good results with a specific breed of chicken and antibiotics, but also possible improvements for the chicken the women already kept. Carlos mentioned fish-farming and bee-keeping as economic alternatives, but the women said that they would rather eat fish from the river, and would be scared to handle the bees. Other communities, however, had expressed interest in bee-keeping. The families in this community have pigs, but would rather have cattle. Like all Movima women they make *chivé*, fermented and dried yuca, mainly for own consumption, despite a high demand for it from travellers and urban consumers. Most Movima communities do not have access to markets because of difficult logistics, but when rivers are full, traders visit to buy or swap community products for different necessities. Otherwise, the Movima swap their products on the large ranches, mainly for soap, salt, cooking oil and ammunition. Carlos ended the session by listing the priorities for productive initiatives, and thanked the women for their participation.

Carlos' participatory methods may not be impressive, but he quite effectively got an overview of agricultural opportunities in each community. Probably due to his profession, he was not interested in local uses of the forest, despite the fact that far the most of the territory is forested. When after three community-visits, Carlos fell ill, I stood in for him and, because I represented FoW as well as being a researcher, I included forests in our discussions to understand how they can play a role in a sustainable development. This involved discussions based on the existing swidden-fallow agricultural practice, and the possibility of enhancing the variety of crops to diversify risk. One participant suggested visiting other communities to learn about their agricultural practices. An interesting point that emerged in the

discussions was about the appropriate unit for the development efforts to target. The women were determined that projects should be oriented to families, rather than to the communities as a whole. They reminded us that the Movima organise labour along family lines, and argued that projects concerning production take families as the basic unit, to enhance chances of success.

While the extended family forms the basic organisational unit, the community-meeting (*Cabildo* or *Sede*, seat) regulates access to land and other common resources, enabling the planning of common tasks and taking up issues of common interest. At least in principle, all community members can bring up issues at the *Cabildo* and participate in decision-making. The inclusion of women in discussions and decision-making was a condition set by FoW. Antonio put great effort into explaining the importance of women's participation, without which, he said, important ideas may be lost. He had had good experiences with separating focus groups by gender; a method that enabled him to access and include women's opinions in the larger project. However, it is one thing for a woman to speak freely in the context of a women's group, and another to raise her voice at the *Cabildo*, where the women felt their viewpoints were less weighted than the men's, and sometimes even ridiculed. 'The men participate more, because they know more. They know more because they get out [of the community] more', one woman reflected. Another suggested that workshops be held on 'how to speak,' but in the end the women concluded that if knowledgeable, speaking is no problem. Then discussions continued on what kind of knowledge is needed or desirable, and how to gain it, following Antonio's method when discussing community and territorial organisation: how does it work now, how should it be, and how do we get there?

The most important issues emerging from the workshops concerned basic services such as education, health and logistics. People in the most remote communities die from simple diseases, lacking both health-clinics and the means to get to town in an emergency. In such cases, the Movima depend on assistance from the ranches, which have cars and even planes. The children must leave to get educated after the basic years, and elementary school is under-resourced. After the many workshops, it was determined that better services were closely related to the capacity of community-leaders to lay claim to services and negotiate with authorities. A strategy for improving this capacity thus became part of the Lifeplan.

Negotiating solutions

This section exemplifies the NGOs, sometimes divergent, understandings of how to approach 'development'. More importantly, it also shows how the Movima redirected discussions to take the political and socio-economic reality of their everyday life into concern. Rather than exploring divergent understandings of development, the focus is on how decisions on what to put in the Lifeplan was negotiated and coproduced.

To increase community representatives' capacity to negotiate with authorities, CEJIS proposed to hold a series of workshops about public laws and regulations as a project to follow the Lifeplan tour. The proposal was well received: 'Our people need to learn to speak,' people said. There was a common agreement that a group of young people should attend such workshops. They would easily be found, given perhaps that 'indigenous leadership' is one of the rare careers open to youngsters if they want to remain in the territory. One participant complained that activities were always in Santa Ana, a long distance from the southern communities, so it was proposed that two series of workshops be held, one in the north and one in the south. This was put in the Lifeplan. FoW argued that workshops should base their negotiation training on

the proposals concerning productive activities. A project proposal was thus brought forward by CEJIS and adjusted by both community members and the Danish partner before put into the plan.

The pressure put on some communities to sell their timber was also discussed. Some of the young Movima were eager to engage with that business, but were prevented from doing so by the communities' strict control with timber use. I had opened the debate by exploring their use of forest resources. Fearing a destructive market, CEJIS has been reluctant to discuss the possibility of commercialising timber. Now, Antonio became aware that this could be a useful project, as the next generation of leaders might think differently about the commons. In some communities, certain families had benefited from the sale of timber; in others, illegal logging by outsiders had taken place. In this case, the interest of FoW to possibly develop sustainable forestry revealed a discrepancy towards such activities among the Movima, and made CEJIS rethink its position. The potential of forestry, its pitfalls and past experiences ended without conclusion, but the controversial issue was opened and put in writing for the debate to be resumed.

The Movima also adjusted discussions of agricultural production and climate change adaptation to include the question of access to land. When faced with flooding, they worried less for their housing than for their crops. The possibility of establishing seed-banks, an idea originating from FoW, was rejected by the Movima as superfluous; they already share seeds. While both CEJIS and FoW attributed last year's extreme event to climate change, and wanted to discuss adaptation, the Movima maintained that flooding is natural. In their view, the problem is that land in the surrounding area has been privatised. 'Before, if needed, we could move higher up. Today everything is private.' The low-lying areas are not only prone to flooding; they are generally not apt for agriculture. While no small project can resolve such an enormous challenge, it was decided that the political capacity-building workshops' first goal should be advocacy for a rescue plan and some kind of insurance in case of major flooding. Participants agreed that, in the longer term, Movima must prepare for the land-use revision, which is their only chance for securing more land at higher elevations.

Negotiations and adjustments like the above pervaded the tour, often outside the formal frame of the workshops, fed by basic differences between CEJIS and their Danish partner as to how to best strengthen the territory. FoW advocates productive, more technological interventions to base self-determination on what they view as solid economic grounds, while CEJIS emphasises legal and political interventions that, in their view, should be implemented before new decisions about resource-use are made. While welcoming both kinds of projects, the Movima pointed to difficult logistics as the major organisational problem, and market access as the main productive challenge. Logistics are not the only barrier to market access. For instance, cacao is abundant in some parts of the territory, but local markets are rapidly satisfied. Maintaining the old plantations is worthwhile only if chocolate can be exported, they said. The Movima thus steered discussions toward ways of helping them to navigate constraints. Engaging with chocolate export takes specialised expertise, and no organisation in the area is well positioned to undertake this task. Implementation expenses will thus be high. Nonetheless, FoW has allocated funding to proceed with the idea in 2019, to see if a production could feed into an already existing chain. CEJIS' contributions to issues of governance and organisational development are, however, essential and also highly valued by FoW. Currently, FoW is in support of CEJIS addressing these parts of the Lifeplan, as well as the incorporation of the Movima in public politics and development planning. An additional FoW-grant in 2017 supported a two-day workshop for 11 Movima women in the neighbouring territory, TIM1.

As the examples illustrate, the Movima managed to find opportunities to express important views and place debates within structural realities of their everyday life, thus including constraints beyond the local. CEJIS quite obviously set the workshop-agenda, but the community members swiftly guided them as to what to note in the Plan, and the presence of a donor-representative quite obviously also contributed to the result. Once the workshop tour was concluded, the writing up of the Lifeplan was undertaken by CEJIS. Their first tangible product was a 157 pages long document, 'very CEJIS' in the opinion of their Danish partner. In FoW's opinion, the document was a catalogue of socioeconomic facts and findings, rather than a plan. Further, FoW was concerned that the document, dense, long, and technical, would be inaccessible to most of the Movima. Later, a 56-page summary, including pictures, maps, quotes from the workshop participants and graphs was compiled by CEJIS and presented and approved at a Movima assembly, then published. It is written in the first person voice of the Movima.

Understanding development differently

Coproducing alternatives

The Lifeplan-process involved coproduction in different contexts, starting with a co-narration of Movima reality and history, as interpreted and presented by CEJIS and the Movima president. This account involved their land and the transformations it has undergone, and included linkages with the wider world. In the historical narrative, the role of oppressors – from the republican elite to the MAS government – was central. Indigenous resistance was celebrated, and the work of outside organisations in helping Movima to accomplish their goals was acknowledged and highlighted by the president as the main reason that lowland peoples had been able to secure collective land-titles.

The claiming of territory with external assistance had created new institutions. It also privileged a particular performance of leadership and Movima identity. The coproduction of institutions continued during the Lifeplan-process. In discussions about communal and territorial governance, participants reflected on the concept of, and desirable models for, organisation. Mapping of socio-economic conditions in each community showed that the most serious challenges concerned basic state services, and a plan for addressing this was agreed upon. Women helped identify the barriers to their more active participation in debates, which, for newly elected members of the women's organisation, resulted in a visit to the neighbouring territory, where they shared experiences and established new networks with the politically and economically more experienced Mojeño women. The imagining of potential activities was made possible by the combined efforts of SPIM, CEJIS, FoW and the women in the communities.

The Movima succeeded in moving discussions beyond the local and thus emphasise structural constraints, which produced a common understanding of fundamental problems as they materialise locally. Highlighting the Movima's marginal geographic and economic position in Bolivia as a whole, the discussions consistently emphasised their land's characteristic fragility. The renegotiation of land requires preparations to the land-revision, and if still not be implemented, to claiming it. The success of that longer term effort will depend on the Movima having access to juridical and financial support.

It is clear, then, that coproduction can shape political institutions and guide their activities. But what is the effect of coproduction on Movima livelihoods? Productive activities for income-generation were discussed, but have not yet been launched. The Movima territory in its current condition – small, low-lying, dispersed -

may not even be suited to commercial activities. Emigration has been ongoing for decades. Ranchers have put pressure on families to leave; others leave in search of employment, but continue to maintain social and economic ties with the territory. Bush-meat and *chivé* travel along family-lines to urban places and ranches, while goods like clothes and tools flow the other way. In one community, I stayed with a woman and her grandson. She had a refrigerator awaiting electricity to reach the community. Her daughter had bought it, and she looked forward to someday being able to preserve fish easily. After my visit, I contacted the daughter in town, who explained how she worked to provide for her son and her mother, and also how she hoped to build a house in the territory one day, and move back there to live. Being a pilot, she earned well, but wanted her son to grow up in the territory. This exemplifies, I believe, the wish to invest in the land despite its challenges, and also how accumulation, made possible by the floating economy between urban and rural places, becomes a reality in the established territories (see also Bebbington 2000). Thus, for urban and migrated Movima people, the territory constitutes the essential link with rural places, and is becoming the place where surplus is invested, similar to what Bebbington found in the Andes. The land provides a place where the Movima can reproduce their culture; hunting, fishing and making *chivé* - practices that are considered basic to 'Movimanness'. The community participants confirmed this indirectly: when the agronomist suggested *commercial* activities, the Movima seemed to respond as if they were more concerned with own consumption, 'preferring fish from the river.'

If critically assessing the participatory approach, the workshops confirmed the oft-repeated criticism that it tends to reproduce power-structures and western epistemic dominance. The NGOs, albeit along with the SPIM, predetermined the agenda and the methodological approach for identifying and discussing the challenges of the Movima. A better way to promote more equal participation would have been to present the objective of the Lifeplan workshop series and let the communities deliberate for themselves before a next meeting. The project had been presented at an Assembly, but not all community-members seemed prepared for the workshop. However, it is important to note that the programme to implement parts of the Lifeplan will run for at least three years with CEJIS and FoW. The project was not a one-off event, but part of an ongoing dynamic process.

Scholars have identified some of the strategies used by people in developing countries to express their agency in the development arena, mainly as resistance: restricting physical access to project areas, controlling the labour supply, and managing development discourse (Hickey and Mohan 2004; McDaniel 2002). In this case the Movima expressed their agency by facilitating access, providing accommodation, attending the workshops and continuing discussions afterwards. Although they were not obliged or compensated to attend, they believed that the Lifeplan discussions were worth investing in.

For the Movima to use the land and its products, in ways that they value and describe as distinctively Movima, they need permanent access to it. Therefore, they seek support from those who can help them to secure the land that they hold collectively now. The next question is to what extent they will be able to determine its development, and how much their capacity to do so depend on cooperation with NGOs and foreign donors. The Movima accepted the NGOs assistance and trusted CEJIS and FoW to suggest ways of moving forward on the territorial project. Previous and still ongoing coproduction created the territorial government through which development investments can be translated into productive or educational activities, which help the Movima maintain their territory. Their continued efforts to make themselves legible to public and private organisations are clear.

Practicing alternatives

The continued extractivist model of development followed by leftist and liberal governments alike (Bebbington and Bebbington 2011), the repression of civil society, and the application of 'Vivir Bien' as a post-fix to legitimise this development, have promoted increasingly radical calls among scholars for a new paradigm to replace 'development'. Recent scholarships are concerned with the 'ontological turn,' 'transition discourses,' the 'pluriverse' and calls for 'multipolarity' (Escobar 2011, 2017; Rojas 2016; Solón 2018). Multipolarity refers to the non-dual, relational ontology, which Vivir Bien also represents with claims to different relations to work and nature. Plurinationality was part of the new progressive Bolivian government's political project, not just in parallel to Vivir Bien, but entwined with alternative development thoughts and thinkers, like Pablo Solón, who enthusiastically joined the government, but parted with it again, disappointed with the centralistic and extractivist turn.

For the 'territorial' lowland peoples, alternatives to centralised state governance and local elite control exist; they already practice an alternative vision of development. Land cannot be sold as a mere commodity in their communitarian model. Like other resources, land is under collective control, but families can freely make use of both. Although, for the Movima, labour-relations haven't changed much for those working outside the territory, they use and manage land according to their own regulations. Collective land ownership allows for diversifying livelihood strategies without risking being driven off the land. It also provides for a specific Movimaness, spending time observing the environment, connecting to past and parallel times and beings. In the territory they produce an alternative modernity that is distinctively Movima. Decision-making has moved to the legalised communities that, along with SPIM, have become the basic units of collective, rural governance, changing the institutional landscape in the Department. However, without the ability to link up to external actors, the influence of these Movima institutions is limited. Therefore, they aim to develop their institutions with external assistance. In their envisioned future, the Movima maintain and nourish their territories through income-generating activities and better education; as self-governing communities, they participate in regional and national politics; and they maintain multiple worlds by reviving their language and culture, and investing – materially or immaterially – in their territories. Concepts of Movima territory are thus implicated in the creation and maintenance of Movima identity, which is partly formed through 'migration from' and 'return to' the territory.

What opportunities do the Movima have for their continued practice of an alternative vision? The local authorities, largely representing the economic elite, do not encourage the Movima to strengthen their economic or political autonomy as a people; neither do they seem very concerned about their living conditions. Unlike some of the larger ethnic groups, the Movima do not possess much or valuable land; nor do they constitute a political threat. In a province used to sustain cattle, which requires little labour, the Movima are viewed by local government as no more than a 'surplus' population. In our discussions with him about flooding in Movima territory, the Mayor's greatest concern seemed to be that poor Movima might move to town, further impoverishing their relatives, and perhaps never returning to the territory. The Movima are thus considered to be a marginal population, except when certain of their cultural practices are the focus of celebration. The Santa Ana-festival, where the rural Movima come to town wearing traditional clothes and ornamental feathers, is the pride of the town, attended by authorities, elite, non-indigenous residents and tourists alike. The rest of the year, the Movima become invisible servants: petty traders, day labourers, domestic workers, and 'cowboys'. While famous for their skilled handling of cattle, Movima are never imagined as owners. They are referred to as lazy and unorganised, 'always to be

ordered about' (Christoffersen 2018; Canessa 2014), and, without allies like CEJIS, they most probably would remain invisibilised. CEJIS's work helps the Movima vision to become part of local and regional public politics and development planning.

Decoloniality

Can the practices used by indigenous groups in collective territories, including their cooperation with NGOs, be understood as what Mignolo (2007) calls practical and political decoloniality? Escobar (2017) understands territorial defence as an ontological-political practice, through which indigenous peoples proactively resist the neoliberal globalising project, including the ontological occupation of local relational worlds. Decolonial scholars argue convincingly that indigenous movements such as these mark the failure of Western epistemology to fully enfold indigenous peoples and cultures into the discourses and processes of 'modernisation' (Dussel in Andreotti 2011).

The struggle to maintain multiple worlds is expressed politically by the Movima. The performances of Movima identity legitimise this political claim. The local governance model, developed by the Movima with advice from CEJIS and based on collective land ownership, offers an alternative to both national and local governments' visions of development for the region. Yet, the Movima wish to cooperate with other governments when there is a possibility to align interests. The complexity of Movima allegiance and practice is readily apparent in the Subcentral wall-decoration (fig. 3). While insisting that they govern their territory independently, the Movima's use of the national coat of arms and flag next to their own logo featuring the patujú flower, a symbol of lowland peoples, signals their aspiration to formal, legal pluralism within the Bolivian state. With a reference to Sombra Grande, a Guarani-leader on whose initiative the lowland peoples started to unite in 1979, the Movima also situate themselves within a larger indigenous community. Below the painted logo are three flags: the striped Bolivian flag, the white lowland indigenous flag with the *patujú*, and Beni's green flag. With these symbols, the Movima challenge national and local monopoly on governance, but are not exclusionary; quite the opposite, they wilfully suggest the existence of plural jurisdictions.



Figure 3: Assembly, November 2016, where the appointment of new leaders took place (photo by Efrén Barrientos)

Through their territorial practice, the Movima, and other lowland peoples, delink from contemporary legacies of coloniality and present an alternative vision of development with implications for the democratic order of the state. It could be argued that the western epistemology has failed to totally subsume them through modernising processes. However, without the modernising processes guided by progressive allies, local as international, lowland territories would not exist, and their cultural practices, including their languages, would be even more at risk. Despite their energy and enthusiasm for coproduction, and even though the indigenous movements are persistent and moving ahead, they are still marginalised and very vulnerable and dependent on continued alliances with NGOs. Rather than seeing ‘development’ as the invasion of pre-existing ‘authentic’ places or cultural groups, it can be understood as an invitation to the coproduction of places that are crucial to indigenous people’s survival and identity-formation, building on their pre-existing agency, in their already coproduced place. Such coproduction is, furthermore, also crucial to the work and survival of the NGOs.

Concluding remarks

This article has demonstrated that the Movima, despite being politically weak, economically poor, and facing geographic as well as demographic challenges, respond actively to opportunities provided by development projects and agencies. Seeking to develop their own visions of the future and of their cultural and economic survival while expanding their political control of their territory, the Movima mobilise people, resources, and visions of Movima identity. Simultaneously, their NGO-allies provide critical

assistance by translating and transforming discourses, laws, and constitutional concepts to match the Movima's aspirations.

By translating 'Vivir Bien' into Movima and giving it meaning, the Lifeplan states the Movima's right to determine their own development with reference to the project of building the Plurinational State of Bolivia. As French (2009) has suggested, rather than simply confirming pre-existing identities, laws regarding the rights of indigenous groups can themselves produce new categories of personhood. Development interventions likewise provide structures for self-identification and mobilisation, coproducing people and places. Claiming, as some critics do, that the Movima risk their identity as they adapt to change, and that the systems of knowledge that produced the Lifeplan suppress traditional knowledge does not make much sense in this light. Rather, the Movima can be understood as an old category of person that constantly creates new definitions of that category, in this case through legal and development discourse.

The process can best be understood as negotiation by the Movima, about the conditions necessary for securing viable livelihoods. While the Lifeplan project in its implementation and tangible outcome may well reflect an epistemological bias of development practitioners, such development activities, including even the bias, are important, if not essential, for the Movima to reproduce their places, embracing both their ethnicity and the creation viable, alternative modernities. An assumption of cultural destruction seriously underestimates the indigenous actors, who consistently exercise agency. This paper has shown that indigenous communities themselves tend to view the development process as beneficial, as long as they, and their visions of the future, are engaged in discussion and planning. 'Development' was not entirely steered by 'outsiders'.

Not unlike Bebbington (2000), viewing coproduction as a vital element in the generation of meaningful development, Solón (2018) encourages synergy among proponents of alternative models such as Vivir Bien, 'degrowth,' or ecofeminism. Overcoming capitalism by implementing new visions of modernity will require the combined efforts of the whole range of progressive actors and practitioners, both local and international. Social change and emancipation can only be bottom-up processes that include the linking up of the local with complementary agents. The task is to identify and implement the gradual steps that will democratise access to political and economic opportunity.

This paper, engaging with practice and analysing interventions empirically, supports Bebbington's notion of development that is practicable while critical, and modernist while also alternative. I encourage colleagues - development practitioners as academics - to further our understanding of how alternatives to simple landscapes of modernity are continuously coproduced through politicised, practical engagement that can reconfigure both livelihoods and institutions.

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