GOVERNING PLURALITIES IN THE MAKING
INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE AND THE QUESTION OF SOVEREIGNTY IN CONTEMPORARY BOLIVIA

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ABSTRACT

It is a common argument that indigenous movements are not organized to seize state power but rather sovereignty through autonomous arrangements. In Bolivia, however, they evolved rapidly into a governing political instrument. The process of state transformation that followed emphasizes indigenous knowledge as the ideological basis for the construction of a plurinational state, a conglomeration of indigenous autonomies. The article examines dynamics and contestations around the definition of indigenous knowledge in respect to sovereignty claims, as an articulation between local cosmologies, global development encounters, and the power of capital. At the center of analysis is the changing role of the nation-state. It is argued that in Bolivia, the state is a crucial reference point for indigenous peoples; yet the politics of indigenous sovereignty implies a radically altered understanding of the state both as an object and an instrument of change for the sovereignty of governing pluralities.

Keywords: indigenous knowledge, sovereignty, plurinational state, autonomies, state transformation, Bolivia

Introduction[1]

Sovereignty has been a buzzword in indigenous discourses worldwide for decades, along with 'self-determination' and 'autonomy', terms which are utilized taking into account what Henley and Davidson (2008: 819) call 'a skepticism toward the institution of territorial sovereignty' typical of our postmodern era. Within anthropological theory-making of indigenous resurgence, it is, indeed, a common argument that indigenous movements are not organized to seize state powers but rather self-determination and sovereignty through autonomous arrangements. In any case, these concepts mobilize indigenous peoples around the globe into an intertwined web of locally-based mobilizations, marches and grassroots activities, and globally-organized debates, advocacy and policy-making in international forums and global arenas. While discussing our efforts at explaining local-global articulations, Tsing (2007) has noted that anthropological accounts of indigenous peoples often disdainfully discount national political scenes and divergent histories as irrelevant for the understanding of indigeneity. I believe this has to do with both

theoretical and methodological choices of the anthropological toolbox: our research is typically based on either ethnographies of particular indigenous experiences in specific locations or comparative generalizations of indigeneity around the globe (see Tsing 2007: 33). These community studies and praises of unified indigenous experience worldwide tend to make us either privileged experts of local (indigenous) worldviews and traditions, or spokespersons for global (indigenous) rights (de la Cadena & Starn 2007). It makes us strong on thick description of local diversity and global concerns, but weak on understanding political and economic contestations at national levels. While it is true, as Sassen (1996) has noted, that nation-states have been increasingly losing their role as the main vehicles of sovereign power with the increase of decision-making at the level of globally functioning international financial institutions (IFIs), transnational companies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), this does not mean that states have lost their importance altogether (Steinmetz 1999: 11–12). It is, therefore, not acceptable for anthropologists to dismiss the role of the state as an irrelevant reference point for indigenous experience. As our particular localities and global arenas are complex, contested and dynamic, so are the states in comprising more than monolithic and essentialist guardians of sovereign powers. In fact, the question of sovereignty opens up a contested set of articulations between indigenous resurgence and state formation.

This is exactly why the case of contemporary Bolivia is so relevant: it supports anthropological arguments that the state is an irrelevant reference point for indigenous peoples: if not completely wrong then at least lacking. The *Movimiento al Socialismo* (MAS) evolved rapidly from a popular front of social movements, indigenous organizations and peasant unions to a governing political instrument. After over ten years of social conflicts and political instability,[2] it is fair to say that historically marginalized indigenous peoples who constitute the majority of Bolivia's population[3] have, indeed, seized state powers: born Aymara and growing up in Quechua areas, Evo Morales was elected the first indigenous president of the country in December 2005, in addition to which indigenous peoples currently formulate the core of the governing MAS at the executive as well as the legislative level, in which MAS represents a majority. This is a radical shift in state formation in a country historically governed by a narrow, urban, non-indigenous political and economic elite. As a result, a re-negotiation of the role of the Bolivian nation-state has been initiated.

This process of state transformation, or re-founding of the state (*refundación del estado*), emphasizes indigenous knowledge as one of the core ideological elements for the construction of a plurinational state: a conglomeration of autonomous indigenous nations. The objective is a radical decolonization of state structures, institutions and practices (*decolonización del estado*) from their colonial and postcolonial elements of hierarchy, clientelism and domination. The Aymara concept of *suma qamaña* (*vivir bien* in Spanish), long studied by Andean anthropologists (Calestani 2009; Medina 2006; Temple on reciprocity 1997, 2003) and politicized by indigenous intellectuals and organizations alike (Choque 2006; Patzi 2007; Yampara 2001; Yampara and Temple 2008), has been introduced to the core of state policy-making together with other similar indigenous concepts from Bolivia's many indigenous nations.[4] Yet, this notion of 'good life' as harmonious relationships between people, nature and deities is not merely an alternative concept for policy-making but implies a more thorough redefinition of state

formation.[5] Besides a sovereign nation-state, the Bolivian constitution, approved in a referendum in January 2009, defines Bolivia a plurinational state (*estado plurinacional*), a conglomeration of autonomous arrangements and self-determining sovereignties. The introduction of indigenous sovereignties to the process of Bolivia's state transformation is a perfect example of the need for anthropologists to respond theoretically and methodologically to a new situation in which anthropological concepts of indigenous worldviews and traditions, as well as understandings of cosmologies and rituals, start to undertake a life of their own at the level of state policy-making.

This article attempts to take up this challenge by examining the contested construction of indigenous knowledge and the changing nature of sovereignty in the process of Bolivia's state transformation. I start with the description of *suma qamaña* as an alternative concept of development and as a cosmological principle for indigenous sovereignties through the analysis of policy discourses and indigenous intellectual debates over indigenous knowledge. Although I take the Aymara concept as a prime example, I am aware of the highly plural nature of indigenous cosmologies in the country, which makes the defining of indigenous sovereignties a dynamic and heterogeneous effort. Next I argue that the notion of indigenous sovereignties is challenged and contested by two major 'sovereign' forces: the international development apparatus and the power of capital. The changing nature of the nation-state is a theme that transverses all the above forms of sovereignty. It is argued that in Bolivia the state is a crucial reference point for indigenous peoples yet the politics of indigenous knowledge implies a radically altered understanding of the state both as an object and an instrument of change for the sovereignty of governing pluralities.

Aiming at contributing to conceptual understanding of knowledge and sovereignty in the process of Bolivia's state transformation, this article situates itself theoretically in the literature of the anthropology of the state, with a commitment to Tsing's (2007) idea that nation-states do matter for the indigenous cause. State sovereignty as a regulation of the relationship of force, and sovereignty as the power of capital, are discussed through the influence of Foucault (2006), Hardt and Negri (2000), and Hansen and Stepputat (2006). The contested nature of sovereignty in Bolivia's state transformation emerges as an articulation between indigenous cosmological beliefs, global development encounters, and the power of capital. The resemblance to Li's notion of articulations as 'arbitrary and contingent, rather than natural and permanent' (2000: 152) illustrates that I am not searching for a 'pure' indigenous knowledge or the essence of sovereignty as an ontological category; I rather highlight contestations, tensions and negotiations of myriad kinds. The empirical material of this article is a response to the challenge of the changing circumstances of indigenous peoples in contemporary Bolivia: if representatives of indigenous movements and organizations have shifted from rural communities to presidential palace and ministerial cabinets, our methodological choices as anthropologists must respond to this situation. We must follow them to the corridors of power. Classic ethnographies of rural sites and the notion of fixed fields become questioned (Gupta and Ferguson 1997; Marcus 1995) when 'studying up' (Nader 1974). Although part of a larger study based on ethnography of state bureaucracy,[6] this article draws mainly on policy documents and interview materials that offer an entry point to key actors in state policy-making such as indigenous intellectuals, ministers, (opposition) parliamentarians and development donors. Through these materials I aim to shed light on articulations between indigenous resurgence and state formation.

Suma qamaña *as a cosmological principle for indigenous sovereignty*

The evolvement of the *Movimiento al Socialismo* (MAS) from a popular front of social movements, indigenous organizations and peasant unions into a governing political force has radically challenged policy agendas in Bolivia. This plural political formation of indigenous and pro-indigenous intellectuals, activists and former NGO workers is pioneering an introduction of indigenous knowledge to the core of state structures, institutions and practices. The vice-Minister for Planning and Coordination, Noel Aguirre, explained the history of rationales behind the policy change to me in the following way:

> For about twenty years now, we have been undergoing a process of revival of our cultures, cosmologies, our ways of perceiving life and our ways of perceiving 'development'. (…) A number of thinkers, philosophers and sociologists have emerged from Aymara, Quechua and Guarani cultures, who have initiated a series of discussions, in which the term '*vivir bien*' [good life] has appeared. (…) In 2005, when the current government was at the election period, we decided to discuss our principle mission as a political party. Various proposals emerged: it was said that we should talk about national sovereignty; about poverty reduction; about an alternative model of development. Then someone raised his hand and said: 'We cannot think of anything else but good life.'
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> Therefore, MAS accepted 'good life' into its governmental program. When MAS won [the elections] in 2005 (…) the first debate we had was about what should development mean in our development plans? (…) For us, it was clear that the path was already chosen: it had to be 'good life'. (Interview conducted 24.10.2008. All interviews quoted in this article were conducted in Spanish; the translations are the author's own.)

With the election of Evo Morales' government in December 2005, the notion of 'good life' (*vivir bien, suma qamaña*) as indigenous knowledge became the core of policy frameworks, the governmental development plan (*Plan Nacional de Desarrollo: Bolivia digna, soberana, productiva, y democrática para Vivir Bien* 2006–2011), as well as governmental programs and projects. The second page of the plan defines the concept in the following way:

> '*Vivir bien*' is an expression of dialogue between indigenous peoples and communities, and of respect for diversity and cultural identity. Its meaning, 'to live well between ourselves', connotes an intercultural communitarian *convivencia* without asymmetries of power: 'you cannot live well, if others don't'. It is about living as a member of community, protecting it, and living in harmony with nature. It also means 'to live well between you and me', which is different from the Western expression of 'living better', an individualist approach that separates people from each other and from the nature. (author's translation)

The critical stance towards Western development stems from decades of economic and development policy-making guided by IFIs and international development agencies during which Bolivia was considered to have lost its sovereignty in the face of neoliberal globalization. Bringing indigenous knowledge to the fore in policy-making as a particularly Bolivian alternative represents an attempt to restore the power of decision-making from the global to a national scale. Additionally, the new paradigm of *vivir bien* is considered to be categorically opposed to Western development thinking. It is common among indigenous intellectuals to castigate the concept of development as a colonial and postcolonial creation that serves as a vehicle for the promotion of linear,

growth-oriented, individualist worldview in contexts where *cosmovisiones indígenas* have rather been constructed around the principles of cyclical time-space, reciprocity and community values. This is visible in the development critical words of one of Morales' vice-ministers:

> It is not good to translate *vivir bien* as development. The concept of *vivir bien* is an Aymara concept which, although it is not static, is not linear like the Western concept. Development is a linear concept that always moves from bad to good. In contrast, *vivir bien* is about re-establishing equilibrium. Colonialism destroyed equilibrium, which is to be recovered now. And equilibrium is about living well. (Interview conducted 28.1.2009)

Theoretically the concept of 'good life' or 'living well' is based on a long tradition of anthropological research into indigenous cosmologies and worldviews, not only in Bolivia, but more widely in the Andean world and elsewhere. Dominique Temple's work on indigenous reciprocity (Temple 1995, 1997; Temple et al. 2003), strongly influenced by Marcel Mauss' famous *Essai sur le don*, has influenced many Bolivian indigenous scholars. With the 1970s Katarista indigenous movement, the intellectual production of mostly Aymara scholars started to emerge under the influence of *indianista* Fausto Reinaga (1970 [2001]), who opted for an 'Indian revolution'. In many ways the construction of indigenous knowledge is not solely an academic endeavor but also a political project which draws on the imaginary, glorious indigenous past that was brutally destroyed by colonial and state powers. It also serves as a projection towards a better future, based on indigenous elaborations.[7] The works of, for example, Aymara intellectual Simon Yampara reflect this tradition (Yampara 2001; 2008; Yampara et al. 2007). Although perceptions, visions and understandings of indigenous knowledge are multiple and varied among Bolivia's many indigenous groups, I will present here Yampara's version of the elaboration of the Aymara concept of *suma qamaña*—a notion of fundamental importance for the current government's elaborations of 'good life'—that he shared with me in his El Alto city council office of indigenous affairs on a busy January afternoon in 2009:

> I started to think about this term in the mid 1980s. I attended *jaqichaña*, processes of consecration of marriage [in Aymara communities]. Marriage is a kind of a journey; it provides one a passport to *pacha*, which is interminable [cosmological] time and space. The family of the bride and the family of the groom, as well as the whole kin group, give advice on how the couple can live well. They conclude the ceremony with a sort of a paradigm of life by saying *suma qamaña*, that is, a suggestion to live well. (…) You can hear this same saying in almost all [rituals]. This is where I caught the idea that *suma qamaña* is a paradigm of life present in everyday practices. People don't talk about development; they rather talk about *suma qamaña*, wellbeing, harmony. (Interview conducted 5.1.2009)

Yampara's discussion of the origins of the concept *suma qamaña* associates it with the everyday ritual practices of Aymara communities in the Andean highlands. It is a guiding principle, an ideal, for harmonious life with the family, kin and community. Therefore, it regulates one's social relations and social practice. Yet becoming *jaqi*, an adult or a human being (Estermann 2006: 65), a status acquired through marriage in Aymara social structures, is not a purely social affair. Through successful fulfillment of community duties and responsibilities—often based on reciprocal patterns and practices—adulthood opens up a passage to *pacha*, the cosmological principle and organization of the world, mentioned

by Yampara in the above quotation. This observation suggests that *suma qamaña* not only implies that in order to live well one has to maintain harmonious social relations but spiritual relations as well. These social and spiritual aspects radically differentiate the notion of 'good life' as a policy principle from any other policy frameworks promoted by international financial institutions and development agencies in countries such as Bolivia.[8] International development aid tends to provide generic (economic and financial) schemes of conceptual and analytical tools for framing local development problems into globally comparable and, therefore, manageable units; thus development policies tend to be disembedded from specific social, cultural, political and economic processes at the local level. While development is growth-oriented, the notion of 'good life' strives for equilibrium. Transnational policy frameworks differ from this understanding of 'good life' in their claim for universality and universal economic rationales. In contrast, the notion of indigenous knowledge is by definition local, multiple and, therefore, contested.

But *suma qamaña*is not merely about social relations and cosmological principles. This became clear as Simon Yampara continued to explain yet another aspect of the term's meaning, while the busy halls of the city council—crowded with white-collar officials, salespersons of all sorts and indigenous groups from the neighboring countryside—buzzed around us.

> My origin is in the *ayullu* [Aymara territorial arrangement in the rural areas]. Until the seventies, there was a constant conflict with an ex-hacienda, whose expansion attempts affected the *ayullu* lands.[9] One community leader told me: 'We have to defend our lands, the lands of *ayullu*. The *ayullus* are not of contemporary making; for thousands of years we have been born of these lands; it is just recently that our lands have been stolen.'
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> *Ayullu* was [economically and ecologically] self-sufficient. *Ayullu* is a *jathacolca. Jatha* is, in Aymara, a seed.[10] *Colca* is storage, a nest, a stock of natural resources and wealth. We talk daily with the animals, we talk with the land, that is our relationship. Within these are the deities. (…) At that moment I understood the meaning of lands and natural resources. The paradigm of life as *suma qamaña* is both physical and spiritual.
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> When I returned to the countryside after university studies, I could not understand *ayullu* with the tools I was given by the university. Class struggle, Marxism, socialism, capitalism, liberalism—they don't explain anything; people's lives [in Aymara communities] have different paths. *Suma qamaña* is a paradigm of life for Andean peoples. (Interview conducted 5.1.2009)

Thus far we have seen that social and spiritual aspects are central to *suma qamaña*. Yampara's further description of the meaning of the concept, however, brings up the fundamental importance of lands and territories for the achievement of *suma qamaña*. As explained by Prada (1997: 105), for Aymaras territories are 'mythical centers of origins, associated with the centers of lands and centers of cosmos. Territories are sacred spaces; places where you bury the dead ones but also places where the presence and return [of the deceased] is inscribed.' As becomes clear from Yampara's and Prada's descriptions above, lands and territories are both important containers of natural resources and economic assets, but they are also fundamental for cosmological organization of indigenous experience; for human life and death, and for the cyclical time-concept of *pacha*. Therefore, the 'institution of territorial sovereignty', mentioned by Henley and Davidson (2008) earlier, demonstrates

an indigenous claim for self-determination over a conglomeration of social, spiritual and physical dimensions inscribed in the soils of the Andean highlands.

The ongoing state-transformation process draws on these sovereignty claims for the self-government of indigenous territories. The intellectual ideas and ideological formations behind this state transformation are crystallized in the idea that, in the future, the state would be absorbed by various nations such as those structured around the traditional *ayullu* nations of Aymaras, as was explained to me by Raúl Prada, a member of the Constituent Assembly for MAS and a current vice-Minister of Strategic Planning:

> The idea of the plurinational state were that it would cease to be a state; it would be absorbed by [indigenous] nations, (…) social practices, decisions of the society, of social assemblies. The idea of the plurinational state was that it would supersede the dialectic contradictions between state and society. (Interview conducted 29.1.2009)

Prada, also a well-known academic scholar, continued to explain the philosophical thinking behind the notion of a plurinational state:

> The idea of the plurinational state was that if the state was plural, it would no longer be a state, because it would be opened up for a plurality of multitudes. (…) It is not a unity, it is not homogeneous and it is not a general will: it is, rather, various wills, multiple practices.
> The plurinational state was supposed to open gates, to deinstitutionalize (…) politics were not made in bureaucracy or in hierarchical arrangements but fundamentally in social dynamics, in the exercise of direct actions and democratic practices. (Interview conducted 29.1.2009)

Rather than building on Yampara's culturalist approach to indigenous traditions, Prada's explanation echoes post-Marxist social movements' theorizing, and the ideological thinking of the New Left in Latin America which highlights indigenous peoples as examples of new kinds of political activism based on multiple demands and plural political formations. The ideological construction of the plurinational state is based on the idea that these pluralities have a legitimate right to govern through self-determination and autonomous arrangements. It is intellectually supported by studies that criticize the building of the Bolivian nation-state as an artificial creation—or an invented unity as in Anderson's (1983) imagined communities—as presented for example by Bolivian political scientist Luis Tapia (2002). He shows how Bolivia is, in fact, composed of multiple societies, whose political structures, productive relations, cosmological principles and historical formations are multiple and varied; as such, their compatibility with the supposedly homogeneous Bolivian nation-state is under question.

These multiple societies—or forms of sovereignties—have always existed in different forms and varying shapes among Bolivia's many inherently heterogeneous indigenous nationalities,[11] but in comparison to other postcolonial societies—especially in Africa where traditional chiefs and kingdoms have always performed as major local authorities (Hansen and Stepputat 2006)—they have not been previously recognized as legitimate governing bodies equivalent to the legal sovereignty of the Bolivian nation-state. The construction of a plurinational state implies a major transformation for the presumably unified, coherent and monocultural Bolivian state through an ideological conviction according to which multiple sovereignties as governing pluralities successfully challenge the hegemony of the nation-state. Instead of being the subject and agent of change, the

nation-state that matters for indigenous experience is a radically altered state of plural formations: one that is an object and an instrument of change. State instruments, such as policy-making and legislation, as well as corridors of executive and legislative power, are utilized for its transformation.

Yet state transformation through indigenous knowledge is a complicated and contested process. Culturalist approaches that emphasize ancient indigenous traditions and community values—as manifested in the notion of *suma qamaña*—are accompanied by earlier-mentioned left-wing approaches that, rather than concentrating on indigenous worldviews and cosmologies, affirm the political aspects of indigeneity. Indigenous peoples are also internally divided into strands of culturalists such as those represented by Yampara, and traditionally strong peasant unions well represented in MAS, whose main concern in state transformation is to assure the redistribution of lands and territories, as well as other assets and resources, on the basis of equality rather than indigeneity. Additionally, there are historical differences between highland and lowland indigenous groups in their relations with the state. All these approaches are present at the executive level, as well as in the MAS as a political instrument. Although the new constitution strips the Bolivian state of its traditional role as the sole source of legal sovereignty over its territory and population (see Foucault 2006), by declaring the country a plurinational state it restores the power to define its economic and development policies and to control key resources such as oil and natural gas. Both of these were lost to transnational entities during the 1980s and 1990s, as discussed below.

Contents and limits of enhancing dual sovereignty—that of indigenous nations and the Bolivian state vis-à-vis multinational entities—are a political work in process. Conjointly with internal contestations over indigenous knowledge in state transformation, the question of sovereignty for indigenous peoples is a highly politically-charged theme that faces challenges from the international development apparatus and the power of capital. In the following section, I present an analysis of indigenous knowledge as development discourse and the international development apparatus as a new form of sovereignty.

Indigenous knowledge as development discourse and the birth of new sovereignties

Long before the process of constructing the plurinational state started, the nature of sovereignty in Bolivia had changed. Since the 1990s, the increasing role of IFIs, transnational corporations and international NGOs in national decision-making started to mitigate the 'naturalness' of the sovereignty of nation-states worldwide (Hansen and Stepputat 2006: 296). The New Economic Policy (NEP) and Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) commenced in the mid 1980s and, reinforced by the privatizations of the mid-1990s (*capitalizaciones*), initiated a process of restructuring the economy and the state. Decision-making over economic, financial and social matters were increasingly shifted from the centralized commands of the state to transnational agencies, market forces and civil society: a condition of the debt-relief packages of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). This powerful role of transnational entities signified a dislocation of sovereignty from national to global arenas. Until the mid 1980s, the Bolivian nation-state rested strongly on nationalism and state interventions. It was

a so-called 'developmental state': a strong and centralized agent of the planning and control of productive relations, labor and development initiatives built upon a corporatist political system of ruling party/military leaders and the trade unions of, for example, miners and peasants. Indigenous peoples had obtained citizenship rights after the Bolivian revolution of 1952, but their multiplicity was not cherished. As occurred elsewhere,[12] Albó suggests that in Bolivia indigenous peoples were incorporated into the unifying nationalist program as peasants (*campesinos*), in an underlying attempt to erase ethnic differences (cited in Postero 2007: 38). The multiple definitions of indigenous peoples in Bolivia are partly derived from this national history. Although I use the generic term 'indigenous peoples' in this article, they are in practice divided into *indígenas, originarios* and *campesinos*. The notion of indigenous peoples (*indígenas*) tends to refer to minority groups living in the Bolivian lowlands such as Chaco and the Amazon region; *originarios,* on the other hand, reference highlands Aymara and Quechua groups such as those living in traditional *ayullus*; *campesinos* are those indigenous peoples (generally Aymaras and Quechuas) whose communities are organized through trade union activism and/or resettlement arrangements related to migration.

Curiously enough, the introduction of a global free-market economy has coincided with the upsurge of identity concerns worldwide (Appadurai 1996; Comaroff and Comaroff 2000; Trouillot 2003). In Bolivia it has meant that the heterogeneity of the country's many indigenous cultures came to the fore. The spread of neoliberal globalization has been paralleled by so-called neoliberal multiculturalism (Hale 2002), or state-led multiculturalism (Postero 2007): a series of pro-indigenous reforms. IFIs and development agencies have heavily supported reforms that were supposedly pro-indigenous such as land titling, bilingual education and municipal development through decentralization. This pro-indigenous approach is by no means unique to the Bolivian case. On the contrary, indigenous knowledge has become important currency for international development agencies in general during the last decade or so (Yarrow 2008). To take an example, the World Bank, the main promoter of structural reforms of the economy and state in Bolivia, defines indigenous knowledge as 'unique to every culture and society. It is the basis for local decision making in agriculture, health, natural resource management and other activities. It is embedded in community practices, institutions, relationships and rituals, and is part of everyday life.' (Green 1999: 20) Indeed, development agencies in Bolivia today claim that the introduction of indigenous knowledge to the core of policy-making is not unique to the current governing regime but rather articulates with long-term donor input on pro-indigenous reforms—a thesis explained to me by a development expert from a bilateral European donor agency:

> Little has been achieved [by Evo Morales' government] (…) I would not associate the issue of indigenous peoples and the role they are now playing with this change of paradigm [of *suma qamaña*], because development cooperation has long been very closely following the case of indigenous peoples (…) We were one of the pioneers in the country to support intercultural bilingual education. Indigenous movements were gaining more [political] space even before Evo won. It has to do with the earlier laws. For example, the Law of Decentralization and the Law of Popular Participation were important for indigenous peoples, and they were not created by this government. (Interview conducted 31.10.2008)

In his discussion of mid-1990s pro-indigenous reforms, Bolivian anthropologist Xavier Albó (2008: 48) claims that main objectives of land reform (*Ley del Instituto Nacional de Reforma Agraria* INRA 1996) and the above mentioned education reform (*Ley de Reforma Educativa* 1994) and decentralization (*Ley de Participación Popular* 1994) were, on the one hand, to consolidate the New Economic Policy and structural adjustment programs and, on the other, to give these macroeconomic reforms a more socially fair tone in respect of indigenous peoples. In the face of massive unemployment, rises in food prices and cuts in social services, Gustafson (2009: 158) argues that these heavily supported pro-indigenous reforms were undertaken in order to legitimize macroeconomic reforms and to avoid social unrest. Reforms were typical for neoliberal economic restructurings. Land reform was aimed at opening up land to market competition through more established normative standards for land ownership (Albó 2008: 52), while decentralization was aimed at shifting decision-making, service provision and funds from the centralized commands of the state apparatus to municipalities and local politics (*participación popular*) (Postero 2007: 53). Land reform that acknowledged collective land titling for lowlands indigenous groups but never gave them self-governing status was a result of a heavy pressure from indigenous movements and organizations while the process of local participation and decentralization stemmed from regional elites' interests in obtaining more power in political decision-making over economic resources (discussed in more in detail in the next section). Yet the end results were paradoxical: while the implementation of land reform demanded by indigenous peoples in practice seemed to favor the interests of large scale landowners, the process of popular participation so dear to regional elites led to a massive increase of indigenous leaders in municipal political structures, which later escalated to the national level (Albó 2008: 50, 53). The neoliberal weakening of the state through decentralization actually helped to make the state an arena for indigenous struggles. Indigenous peoples did not stay in their localized spaces and grassroots communities—the sphere of 'civil society'—but rather made the state into an object of change.

Why was the promotion of pro-indigenous reforms then so compatible with the emergence of new sovereign powers? First of all, the new sovereigns—transnational institutions, companies and international NGOs—all rested ideologically and practically on the diminishing role of the state. Instead, market forces, civil society and individual initiative were to be activated (Stahler-Sholk et al 2007: 6, 8). The promotion of indigenous knowledge fitted ideologically with the withdrawal of the state by emphasizing civil-society actors and grassroots indigenous communities as subjects of change. As Henley and Davidson note in the case of the revival of *adat* as indigenous custom, the postmodern blurring of nation-states with the increasing transnational powers of globalization diminished radical claims for separate indigenous statehoods in Indonesia (2008: 819). The same de-radicalization was attempted in Bolivia, where development agencies and NGOs helped to shift indigenous concerns into the realm of civil society, a legitimate counterpart to global forces and a partner for transnational entities. Secondly, and in reference to the first result, the promotion of identity politics based on ethnicity or indigeneity shifted the focus of interests from collective concerns such as class position to the promotion of cultural values. The powerful role of trade unions, which had been at the core of Bolivian corporatist politics for centuries, was disarmed with the privatization of state enterprises and the consequent unemployment of tens of thousands of workers

from the mining sector, industries, schools and state administration. The subsequent displacement of class mentioned by the Comaroffs (2000: 327) as a central feature of millennial capitalism resulted in the loss of collective demands for redistribution of productive relations, lands and territories. Along came the making of indigenous peoples as objects of development and indigenous knowledge as development discourse. Many have shown that the concentration on cultural recognition left intact structural causes of marginalization—such as questions of lands, territories and production (Hughes 2005; Tauli-Corpuz 2005). The philosophies and cosmologies behind these rationales were those of development—growth, markets, liberalizations and rational *homo economicus*—rather than those of *suma qamaña*, a cosmological principle of equilibrium between social, spiritual and physical dimensions.

Thirdly, not all functions of the state were outsourced to transnational institutions, companies and NGOs, although the nature of sovereignty changed. As a matter of fact, Gustafson claims that the Bolivian state was 'pro-market, but by no means anti-state' (2009: 161). What Postero (2007: 125) calls 'the Bolivian version of neoliberalism' rested on an attempt to re-establish the authority of the state over conflictive and heterogeneous (indigenous) society. For hundreds of years the Bolivian state had been absent from the lives of most indigenous peoples, especially in Bolivia's rural lowlands, but transnational efforts at the decentralizing and stripping of state powers through land reform and decentralization actually opened up previously self-governing territories—the multiple societies mentioned by Tapia (2002)—to state intervention. Although technocratic, donor-driven reforms stripped some of the traits of the sovereign nation-state by introducing transnational modes of governing, in Foucault's sense,[13] changes did not make the state altogether irrelevant for indigenous experience (Steinmetz 1999: 11). What occurred is what Hale (2002) calls the making of the Indian citizen-subject. Drawing on his study in Guatemala, he suggests that those indigenous peoples that successfully integrated themselves to neoliberal multiculturalism through NGOs were being rewarded by cultural recognition and transnational financial flows, while those indigenous groups that continued to demand structural changes and redistribution were condemned to destitution. Albó (2008: 56-63) hints that this distinction might explain the situation of Bolivia, where violent conflicts between state authorities and indigenous (peasant) groups—such as coca-growers and peasant unions—multiplied, whereas more culturally-oriented indigenous organizations (*indígenas-originarios*) enjoyed advantages from pro-indigenous reforms in the form of governmental support for collective land titling, for example.

While *vivir bien* signifies indigenous knowledge both as a sovereign national alternative allowing grass-roots involvement in development and as a self-governing element for indigenous nations, indigenous knowledge as a development discourse implied the growing decision-making power of global actors such as IFIs and development agencies. It was a part of justifying, and compensating for, economic and financial reform that many indigenous groups resisted fiercely. Rather than restoring sovereignty, what happened was the dislocation of sovereignties from nation-state to global neoliberal governance. In the next section, I will shift from analyzing the transnational development apparatus to global capital and elite adaptation of indigenous discourses of sovereignty.

Elite adaptation of indigenous autonomies and sovereignty as power of capital

On a sunny November afternoon I stood in front of the parliamentary building (*Palacio de Legislación*) opposite Plaza Murillo, the busy central square of La Paz, waiting for a parliamentary assistant to pick me up for a meeting with an opposition parliamentarian from the Bolivian lowlands. Knowing the fierce resistance of Bolivia's wealthy lowlands business sectors, grand scale landowners and the political elite towards MAS's state transformation process, I was anxious to hear his views about the notion of *vivir bien* as a policy concept based on indigenous knowledge. The parliament building was swarming with people both inside and outside: the front of the building was crowded with parliamentarians passing through the doorways, while journalists surrounded them for quick interviews on the latest news from the heated debates over the contents of the new constitution; inside the building a contestative session in the chamber between MAS and PODEMOS, the main opposition party, over the referendum for the approval of the constitution had just started.

A young man in a sleek suit greeted me and guided me through the crowds to the doorways and security checks, after which I followed him through the shabby corridors to PODEMOS's second-floor conference room which was covered with red and white campaign posters. The parliamentary session in the chamber was being transmitted to the room through loudspeakers. A blond, blue-eyed, male parliamentarian entered the room and sighed at having successfully escaped the heated debates to chat with me for a while. Once seated he started to list the achievements that the opposition had made in confronting MAS's state transformation process as inscribed in the new constitution:

> We were successful in introducing Bolivian nationality [to the constitution]; the Bolivian nation was not there, there were solely indigenous nations, Aymara and Quechua nations. The majority of middle classes and *mestizos* were left out, although the majority of Bolivians are *mestizos* no matter what the governmental pro-indigenous propaganda preaches. (Interview conducted 19.11.2008)

This statement demonstrates a major preoccupation with indigenous sovereignty. The aim of MAS's representatives to the Constituent Assembly was to radically redefine the state as a plurinational entity: one that would 'cease to be state; it would be absorbed by [indigenous] nations', as stated by assembly member Raúl Prada earlier in this article. These indigenous sovereignty claims are not new. As early as 1989 lowlands indigenous peoples organized a massive march from the Amazon region to the Andean capital La Paz demanding territorial rights in the face of increasing invasion of their lands by commercial agriculture, especially soya producers, livestock owners and logging industries, as well as peasants migrating from the highlands. In response to increasing indigenous demands, Bolivia was one of the first countries to sign ILO's (International Labor Organization) Convention 169 on indigenous rights. No efforts were made to proceed with territorial claims until the mid-1990s *capitalizaciones*, accompanied by the pro-indigenous reforms such as decentralization and land reform mentioned earlier. Claims for indigenous sovereignty on a national level were facilitated by transnational encounters. Internationally, sovereignty has become the main rhetoric for indigenous movements since the 1970s, when indigenous peoples in Canada and New Zealand started to demand separate nationhood within their respective nation-states. These demands quickly spread to the

United States, Australia and elsewhere through 'travelling voices', as Tsing calls them (2007: 40–45).

In Bolivia, the whole of the 1990s and the first half the following decade were shadowed by indigenous protests and resistance to (neoliberal) economic reforms. Demands for self-determination, autonomy and sovereignty ran high in protesters' agendas. The narrow, non-indigenous political and economic elite was never willing to negotiate on terms that would delimit its own role as sovereign governing agent of the Bolivian nation-state. When negotiations for the new constitution started after the election of Evo Morales, indigenous peoples were accused of disintegrating the nation-state through autonomy claims, although the whole process of obtaining change through state instruments such as constitutional reform confirms otherwise. Confrontational parliamentary negotiations over the content of the constitution led to compromises between MAS and PODEMOS. In addition to establishing the plurinational state, the constitution defines Bolivia as Unitarian and as a republic. Thus, as a result of oppositional concern for national unity, the constitution now represents two contradictory notions of the state. Some light is cast on this phenomenon by the PODEMOS parliamentarian's explanation of their political achievements:

> The second element that we achieved while in opposition were regional bonuses from the selling of hydrocarbons. The third fundamental element that we achieved is the inclusion of regional autonomies to the constitutional project; this recognition of regional autonomies has arisen from the parliament, it was not there before [in the previous versions of constitution elaborated by the Constituent Assembly and the MAS]. (Interview conducted 19.11.2008)

Two aspects feature here: economic interests and regional autonomies. In respect of the first, from the 1980s the Bolivian lowlands, especially the area surrounding the city of Santa Cruz, had grown into an economic hub due to intensive, capitalized agriculture, livestock production, hydrocarbons and the cocaine trade. This stood in stark contrast to the impoverished Andean highlands that in the aftermath of neoliberal restructurings suffered from chronic land shortage and unemployment among tens of thousands of miners who were left bereft in the process of privatizations. The Bolivian lowlands, instead, enjoyed advantages from increased transnational encounters in the form of economic relations and global capital. One of the main assets was the abundance of land: during the late 1980s large scale land owners, who comprised 1.8 per cent of all land owners, owned 85.3 per cent of lands in Bolivia, while small scale producers or *campesinos*—80 per cent of all land owners—held only 2.5 per cent (Flores 1999: 1). Commercial agriculture, cattle rearing and large-scale land ownership concentrated on the lowlands with an increasing economic input from the US government and international financial institutions. During the 1970s, military governments had distributed large shares of lowland and capital to like-minded regional elites in return for political support for right-wing authoritarian regimes (Crabtree 2005: 48–49). The 1952 land reform that divided former ex-hacienda lands among peasants in the Bolivian highlands was never realized in the lowlands. Furthermore, in addition to land development and the 1980s cocaine boom, oil and natural gas became a key source of income for regional development.

When Evo Morales' regime initiated nationalization of hydrocarbons (2006) and organized a referendum over land ownership (2009), the conflict between lowlands

economic elites and the governing political instrument was established. The objective of nationalization was to return national sovereignty over natural resources from IFIs and multinational companies to the Bolivian state in the form of increasing tax returns. The introduction of indigenous knowledge to policy-making was, at the same time, a critique of global capital and neoliberal governance, as suggested by one of the government's vice-ministers in a personal interview: '[*Vivir bien*] questions the whole Western concept of development and models of development created by capitalism. (…) We think that capitalism on a global level is reaching its limits.' (Interview conducted 28.1.2009)

In the face of this threat to capitalism, the political opposition quickly arose as a defender of the economic interests of private entrepreneurs, large scale land owners and the (mainly lowland) economic elite. What was peculiar was the framing of elite interests and transnational concerns in discourses of autonomy. Bolivian lowlands had long developed fairly independently at the margins of the Bolivian nation-state, because the centralized control and authority of the state had, since Spanish colonial times, been concentrated in the Andean mountain regions. By the 1980s, wealthy land owners, entrepreneurs and business sectors that had developed into an influential regional political elite were able to make the most out of the neoliberal withdrawal of the state, and increased transnational and local connections, in the form of economic exchange and empowerment of their organizations. The latter included groups such as regional civic committees, lobbying organizations and pro-autonomy associations. The birth of new sovereigns such as multinational companies brought together local elites and foreign (especially US) economic interests in an attempt to increase local political decision-making control over economic resources and regional affairs. Adapted from indigenous struggles for self-determination and sovereignty, discourses of secession emerged each time state interests conflicted with regional interests (which were particularly common during left-wing governments): due to their enormous economic importance (one-third of the national economy), central governments were often forced to obey regional demands (Crabtree 2005: 51–53).

As a response to regional interests, a notion of a *camba* nation has emerged in Santa Cruz. Promoted by pro-autonomy associations such as *Comité Pro Santa Cruz* and *Unión Juvenil Cruceña* and backed by business sectors, the name of this nationhood derives from original indigenous settlers of the Santa Cruz region who are counterpoised to *collas*, a term associated with the highlands Aymaras and Quechuas as descendants of *Collasuyo,* one of the four Inca empires (Crabtree 2005: 52). Yet it is clear that the indigenous element is merely symbolic: autonomy claims do not refer to indigenous sovereignties but to sovereignty as a power of capital. Hardt and Negri (2000: 86), for example, outline sovereignty as a Western concept that arose to global prominence because it was supported by the power of capital. They argue that sovereignty as a capitalist construction emerged with the evolution of modernity itself, closely linked to the relationship between Europe and its 'other': the colonial world (ibid.: 70). With neoliberal globalization and the withering away of the sovereign powers of nation-states, the powers of capital have moved outside their nation-state boundaries to become more transnational.

As the PODEMOS representative stated (quoted above), heavy pressure from lowlands economic elites and parliamentarians in the process of negotiating the contents of the constitution have resulted in the inclusion of regional autonomies in the constitutional

text.[14] Therefore, the Bolivian state may now be described as a Unitarian plurinational state with indigenous *and* regional autonomies. Indigenous sovereignty claims have been complemented with increasing regional decision-making. Yet there is a discrepancy between a unified Bolivian nationality and regional autonomies, centralization and decentralization—both promoted by lowlands elites. It is clear that what has occurred is what Hansen and Stepputat (2006: 304) consider a typical feature of many postcolonial states: 'many different forms of sovereignty coexisted within (…) territories, [where] local elites (…) often enjoyed effective autonomy'. Yet this effective and practical autonomy had been tied to the nation-state in ways that facilitated the use of the state by elite interests. This situation changed dramatically with the indigenous resurgence that brought previously marginalized social movements, indigenous organizations and peasant unions to the center of the state. No longer able to use state mechanisms for the promotion of local-elite political and economic interests, claims for a regional autonomy protecting land ownership, corporate interests and transnational capital came to the fore.

Indigenous peoples interpreted regional autonomy claims as an adaptation—or outright theft—of their own demands for self-determination and autonomy, prevalent both in local indigenous struggles and global indigenous agendas. Disappointment and disagreement with elite autonomy claims are reflected in the following words by an indigenous leader of the peasant organization CSCB (*Confederación Sindical de Colonizadores de Bolivia*) that he shared with me in the CSCB's office:

> In the early days our grandfathers used to live in peace and harmony. During those days [indigenous] autonomy existed; it is just that they did not have a proper concept to describe it. Now the right-wing [opposition] pretends that they invented autonomy. Yet our autonomy continues to exist because each of us as a person is an autonomous human being, not dependent on anyone. (Interview conducted 27.10.2008)

This somewhat romanticized statement represents indigenous peoples as the only legitimate claimants of autonomy. The opposition's demand for regional autonomy is described as an invention, while indigenous peoples' autonomy appears somehow 'natural', based on an ancient past and their indigeneity. A reference to harmonious community life reflects the idea that for many indigenous peoples the use and control of lands and territories represent, in the words of de la Cadena and Starn (2007: 14), 'the dream of revitalization, homeland, and restored dignity'. Through indigenous sovereignty indigenous dependency on landowners, multinational companies, development donors and the state would be re-evaluated to result in increasing decision-making over their own lives, assets and resources. In comparison to regional autonomies, indigenous sovereignty implies more than mere economic gain or interests: it is tied to cosmological stories of the past, in which lands and territories are locales of spiritual, social and physical life.

Of course, there are various interpretations and perceptions among the multiple indigenous groups and indigenous organizations in Bolivia. The above-quoted indigenous leader represents a core group of pro-MAS peasant organizations with strong influence in the Bolivian highlands and valleys whose *campesino* orientation towards land reforms and policy-making differ from more culturally-oriented indigenous organizations. Moreover, many lowlands indigenous groups, who have enjoyed multicultural reforms such as collective land titling since the 1990s, find themselves in a difficult position

between lowlands elites—to whom they are intimately tied through land and labor—and the governing regime, whose indigenous orientation has been accused of being centered on the priorities of Andean peoples and of being Aymara-centric (see Gustafson 2009: 276–278). All in all, the claims for autonomy constitute a complicated and contested set of articulations between elite interests, transnational capital, local indigenous demands and the processes of state transformation. The adoptation of autonomy discourses by the regional elite is a counterforce to the process of constructing a plurinational state of indigenous nations: it is an attempt to retain economic and political privileges in the hands of those few who enjoy the benefits of transnational capital: new sovereign in the era of neoliberal globalization.

Conclusions: multiple sovereignties, governing pluralities

In response to Geertz's (2004) suggestion that anthropologists have been so keen to characterize states as monolithic and essentialist guardians of sovereign powers that they have failed to understand their dynamic and complex nature (cited in Hansen and Stepputat 2006: 300), I have tried to shed light on the changing nature of the Bolivian nation-state in a political situation of indigenous resurgence. The construction of a plurinational state, initiated by Evo Morales' political instrument MAS—a conglomeration of social movements, indigenous organizations and peasant unions—takes as its core policy principle the notion of *vivir bien*, or *suma qamaña*, drawn from an indigenous knowledge of social organization, cosmological principles and lands and territories crucial to indigenous experience. Indigenous knowledge promoting harmonious relations between people, spirits and nature; reciprocal community duties and responsibilities; and equilibrium rather than growth, all serve as radical counter-discourses to both international economic/development policy-making—promoted by IFIs, international development agencies, NGOs and multinational corporations—and the traditional role of the nation-state. The linkage between indigenous knowledge and sovereignty derives from this dual role: on the one hand, indigenous knowledge as a particularly Bolivian policy alternative posits the state as an instrument of change by restoring its sovereignty vis-à-vis transnational entities while, on the other, it makes the state an object of change by emphasizing the multiplicity of indigenous nations and the plurality of political formations. Multiple sovereignties and governing pluralities make up the plurinational state.

Yet the process of state transformation is a contested battlefield between multiple notions of sovereignty. Dual restoration of sovereignty, from global to national spheres and from the state as a sole sovereign power to indigenous nations, articulates with other forms of sovereignty typical of the era of neoliberal globalization. In regards to the dislocation of sovereignty through transnational development encounters and global capital, Li (2007: 16–17) observes that, in comparison to nation-states, transnational companies are just differently dressed sovereigns that in equal manner use force because they can, while development agencies use the more subtle tactics of reforming the practices of the governed individuals and nations. Therefore, she continues, these 'powers associated with sovereignty are not subsumed within government; they coexist

in awkward articulations, presenting contradictions' (ibid.: 17). And contradictions there are. An introduction of indigenous knowledge as a development discourse attached to the rollback of the state and promotion of the free market economy (supported by IFIS, international development agencies and NGOs in the 1980s and 1990s), did enhance cultural recognition of indigenous peoples, but left questions of redistribution and indigenous sovereignty intact. Rather than dispersing the 'power to decide' to indigenous peoples, as the concept of the plurinational state claims to do, sovereignty was further dislocated and distributed to markets, transnational institutions and multinational companies. In the Bolivian lowlands, the dual process of centralizing the powers of economic and development policy-making in the plurinational state, and decentralizing governing powers to plural indigenous nations, has been fiercely attacked by traditional economic elites, landowners and business sectors whose response represents the coming together of international capital, multinational companies and local elites in search of sovereignty through the power of capital.

In conclusion, various forms of sovereignty—that of indigenous nations, the plurinational state, IFIs, international development agencies and global capital—mingle with each other in the process of introducing indigenous knowledge to Bolivia's state transformation. Complex articulations between local, global and national histories and discourses are occurring. De la Cadena and Starn (2007: 18) have pithily noted that 'the debate about sovereignty is linked to social context and political dynamics, and there is no "disinterested" position about its content and limits'. Sovereignty claims by indigenous nations and the modern state apparatus with its transnational dimensions cannot be categorized as separate entities, as shown by Lounela (2009) in the case of Java, but as intertwined processes. In Bolivia, this is the contested process of constructing the plurinational state, one that represents a crucial reference point for the country's many indigenous peoples. Yet as a democratizing potential for indigenous peoples and a de-legitimizing danger to traditional elites it is a radically new kind of a state: one that is both an object and an instrument of change for the sovereignty of governing pluralities.

NOTES

[1] This paper was first presented at the conference titled *Ideas of Value: Inquiries in Anthropology*, organized by the Finnish Anthropological Society in May 2010. I thank the chair of the panel 'Vernacularization of Law on Indigenous Peoples' Reetta Toivanen, as well as other panelists Pirjo Virtanen and Irja Seurujärvi-Kari, for their valuable comments. The active discussion that followed the presentations provided considerable input for deepening some of my arguments—gratitude goes to fellow anthropologists and students present at the workshop.

[2] Social conflicts and political instability were related to a US-pressured process of coca eradication, the World Bank-supported process of water privatization in the city of Cochabamba resulting in the so-called 'Cochabamba water war', and attempts to export natural gas through Chilean harbors to the US which led to the so-called 'gas war'.

[3] Approximately 63 per cent of the Bolivian population consists of indigenous peoples. This makes Bolivia a country with the largest number of indigenous peoples in Latin America. Indigenous groups include the Quechua 31 per cent, the Aymara 25.23 per cent, and minor groups such as the Guarani, Chiquitano, Mojeño, and others (6.10 per cent) (IDH 2004: 104). The new constitution recognizes thirty-six indigenous nationalities (Nueva constitución política del estado 2008).

[4] The new constitution, passed in 2009, defines the various forms of indigenous knowledge as guiding ethical and moral principles of plural society (Nueva constitución política del estado 2008). In addition to the Aymara concept of *suma qamaña*, these include Quechua and Guarani concepts of *ñandereko* (harmonious life), *teko kavi* (good life), *ivi maraei* (land without evil), and *qhapaj ñan* (noble path or life), as well as the principle of *ama qhilla, ama llulla, ama suwa* (don't be lazy, don't be a liar, don't be a thief).

[5] In political sciences, it is typical to differentiate between policy-making and state formation. As Steinmetz (1999: 9) puts it, 'state-formation is understood as a mythic initial moment in which centralized, coercion-wielding, hegemonic organizations are created within a given territory. All activities that follow this original era are then described as policymaking rather than state-formation.' Yet he suggests that it is more fruitful to understand state formation as 'an ongoing process of structural change and not as a one-time event' (ibid.: 9).

[6] This article is part of a larger Ph.D. study during which I conducted anthropological fieldwork among Bolivian political actors (ministers, vice-ministers, parliamentarians), public servants and development donors in the capital La Paz from September 2008 until February 2009. In addition to a number of interviews (55 individual interviews and 6 group interviews), I observed the internal functioning of the state bureaucracy at the vice-Ministry of Planning and Coordination, and participated in and observed governmental events, meetings and workshops related to the introduction of *vivir bien* to policy-making. My entrance was facilitated by a previous 13-months of work experience in development cooperation: both in rural Aymara and Quechua communities at the Andean highlands and in a transnational development agency in La Paz.

[7] Nevertheless, the term also represents dangers as its political use in policy-making tends to search for a pure indigeneity: a harmonious indigenous knowledge devoid of the polluting Western influences of neoliberal governance and globalization. It is hardly necessary to state that this essentialist image of indigenous experience as harmonious, communitarian equilibrium rarely corresponds with the empirical cases that are dynamic, perplexing and multiple. According to Brown (2007) 'native sovereignty' might even allow and legitimate discriminatory policies.

[8] Bolivia has been an experimental ground for economic and development policies for decades. It was one of the first countries to adopt Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) (1985). Bolivia was also one of the first countries to undertake Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) (2001).

[9] This refers to land conflicts that resulted from agrarian reforms (1953), initiated by the Bolivian national revolution of 1952 during which large estates and haciendas inherited from Spanish colonial times were distributed to peasants, that is, all indigenous peoples laboring on the land. Traditional Aymara and Quechua leaders were closely linked to hacienda politics and land ownership which led to many serious and long-lasting land disputes and conflicts between communities and *ayullus* over the correct borders of community lands that have still not been completely resolved.

[10] According to Aymara dictionaries, *jatha* refers to seeds, but also to caste, familiar group of people and *ayullu*. It can even be translated as the 'caste of kings'.

[11] See, for example, a description of pre-colonial historical formation of seven major Aymara nations in Klein (2006: 13–16). Gustafson (2009: 45), in turn, describes autonomous arrangements of Guarani peoples during colonial and republican period as 'subservient autonomy': traditional leaders called 'captains' served as intermediaries and labor contractors between indigenous communities and Franciscan missions and hacienda owners, thereby transforming the social structures of indigenous communities into 'hierarchical structures of indirect rule'.

[12] See the case of Mexico in Tsing (2007: 45–48). Despite national differences, Tsing notes that the creation of nation-state as an alliance between elites and peasants also had similar traits in Indonesia, Malaysia, and India (2007: 54).

[13] Foucault (2006: 135–136) argues that modern forms of governance imply a shift from the emphasis on sovereignty towards the notion of governmentality: 'Sovereignty is not exercised on things, but above all on territories and consequently on the subjects who inhabit it. (…) What government has to do with is not territory but rather a sort of complex of men and things. (…) To govern, then, means to govern things.' In Foucault's sense, then, sovereignty becomes a mere legal technique, or technical factor, in

a larger process of governmentality: a conglomeration of techniques and tactics of discipline. Hardt and Negri (2000), instead, perceive Foucauldian governmentality as a passage within the notion of sovereignty.

[14] In 2006, prior to the parliamentary battles, Bolivians voted both to elect members for the constituent assembly and to decide whether regional autonomies should be accepted. Those departments located in the Bolivian eastern lowlands voted 'yes' for autonomy, although the national average rejected this proposition. It was widely interpreted that those in favor of regional autonomies were anti-government, whereas those who were not were supporting the governing MAS.

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