

Decolonization and Plurinationality

Oscar Vega Camacho

Democracy, Citizenship, and Constitutionalism Program
University of Pennsylvania
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My final prayer:

O my body, make of me always a man who questions!

Franz Fanon.¹

I have decided the title of *Decolonization and Plurinationality* for this presentation because both terms could help us grasp what kind of problematizations take place in social and indigenous movements, institutional practices and constitutional challenges in Latin America or, as I prefer to call it, South American thinking. The reason is that it is more a geopolitical daring than a linguistic option. Remember that talking about Latin Americans is mostly a way of resembling the legacies of the Spanish and Portuguese colonial empires and what is being disputed here is the division of the North and South as a global system and a civilizing project. But all this, will be the reason to bring up decolonization as a central problematization for politics today.

In view of the vast amount of literature on decolonization, I will not try to define it here nor would I pretend to close the debate about this topic. On the contrary, the invitation will be to keep the debate reopened and to further extend the discussion of what could be the implications of reworking the subjects of decolonization. In a certain way, we will try to understand what kind of thought this poses and try to argue when social and indigenous movements demand decolonization as a cultural and social challenge for the democratization of society.

So we are starting to acknowledge that the demands for decolonization of social and indigenous movement's are diverse and different even though they will be using the same term. However, we also know that this is no surprise in political

¹ [*Black Skin, White Mask*. 1952. P. 181](#)

confrontations because the battleground is about their use and meaning and the object of the struggle will be the appropriation of names. Terms such as democracy or legitimacy or dignity, very much used in the movements mentioned, *are in themselves*, not only the political battleground but these terms are the principle tools for demanding and opening an expanding spaces of struggle.²

So we are more interested in how these terms work rather than give them a definition. It is more an exploration of conditions of possibilities rather than the definition of a possible condition. This may sound as if we were avoiding the debate or as not having a position in the debate, but it is necessary first to think what kind of debate is going on, what is at stake, why is it being risked. To try to think why we think that way or what makes it possible to think that way. Let's begin by trying to understand the ways in which we think about politics or political terms and political struggles and in talking about decolonization we could introduce a way of reframing our categories and narratives: the frameworks of understanding and acting. Or at least, we could begin to question and inquire about why we think that way, under what assumptions we establish the known, knowledge and understanding, why take for granted certain situations and behaviors, since this is the legacy of colonial power. Not only can we trace it also as part of economic, political and social systems, but also this legacy still works as a dispositive of power in the partition of social, cultural and gender divisions in our societies. Even though, supposedly, there are no more colonial states or settlements in our recent world interstate system, but that is another matter.

Let's just start with decolonization as the struggle and resistance to colonial power relations in multiple scales in a historical process for emancipation and liberation. Of course, this struggle is within a modern world system as Wallerstein and others constantly have been researching and developing, and always understanding modernity and colonialism as two sides of the same coin.³ This could help for

² See: Jacques Ranciere p 99 in: [Democracia](#)

["I think the proper in political notions is not to be or not polysemic: is proper that are the subject of a struggle. The political struggle is also the struggle for the appropriation of words."](#)

³ For example, see: [World-Systems Analysis. An Introduction. Duke University Press. 2004](#)

understanding why anti colonial demands are usually anti modernist, or, at least, against a certain modernity and modernism that we have to comprehend historically. In Franz Fanon's words:

Decolonization, which sets out to change the order of the world, is, obviously, a program of complete disorder. However, it cannot come as a result of magical practices, or of a natural shock, nor of a friendly understanding. Decolonization, as we know, is a historical process: that is to say it cannot be understood, it cannot become intelligible nor clear to itself except in the exact measure that we can discern the movements which give it historical form and content. Decolonization is the meeting of two forces, opposed to each other by their very nature, which in fact owe their originality to that sort of substantification which results from and is nourished by the situation in the colonies.⁴

Quoting Fanon is a strategic approach for the discussion of decolonization because his work is a hinge between philosophy and history, capitalism and racism, but mostly of Marxism and psychoanalysis, opening a possibility to flee from essentialism and substantialism that are so dear to monism's and theological thinking. To grasp Fanon's words is for to seize the violence involved in the colonial situation and to overcome and defeat the difficulties in the struggle for decolonization, not surprisingly will be presented as a violent event or one which triggers violent acts. "Violence" would be the key word for misunderstanding and condemning any attempt to challenge and confront a colonial situation, and tame the emancipatory initiatives. Fanon will say: "National liberation, national renaissance, the restoration of nationhood to the people, commonwealth: whatever may be the headings used or the new formulas introduced, decolonization is always a violent phenomenon."⁵ So it will depend in what position you're confronted and how one reacts to it or not, it's always a political and historical decision.

But let's return to Fanon's first quote and underline this "program of complete disorder", because the order they confront and destroy is lived as normal and it is naturalized by society. That is, how to behave, to act, to say or to think has to be

⁴ [*The Wretched of the Earth*. Black Cat Edition/ Grove Press. 1968. p 35](#)

⁵ [*Ibid.* p 30](#)

invented, it has to inaugurate a new beginning, be reborn socially. In a way, it's like a monster or a monstrous challenge because the confronted (pos)colonial order is normality and it is presented as natural. Therefore, other ways, other possibilities or alternatives, will be seen as unnatural, as disorder, of course, a specter of monstrosity, fury and violence. There is quite a vast literature about the latent and unpredictable movements of anti colonial attempts and battles, bringing out the deepest fears and what is feared.

And Fanon shall specify: "it cannot be understood, it cannot become intelligible nor clear to itself", so he is very carefully they need "the exact measure that we can discern the movements which give it historical form and content", that is historical contextualization in power relations, for Fanon's time was during the Cold War and national liberation of the people and the state. He was thinking beyond third world states or underdeveloped societies, as they were called, and even thought was read as part or product of these tendencies. But maybe that's why his work is so actual and contemporary for social movements in the 21st century.

In the Bolivian process during 2006, when the Constituent Assembly was officially installed the main social and indigenous organizations, through a Pact of Unity, present a document as their proposal to re-found Bolivia. It says in its Preamble:

"We understand that the Plurinational State is a model of political organization for the decolonization of our nations and peoples, reaffirming, restoring and strengthening our territorial autonomy to achieve full life, to live well, with a solidarity vision; thus be the motors of the unity and welfare of all Bolivians, ensuring full exercise of all rights."⁶

This document was central for the debates and for the formulation of our actual version of the Constitution, and it was created and defended by those who were silenced and invisible publicly and politically, those who were designated as incompetent, ignorant and illiterate according to Western standards in the past centuries, even in democratic republican states, since the creation of Bolivia in 1825, the universal rights of citizenship are very recent. They were recognized as

⁶ *El Pacto de Unidad y el Proceso de Construcción de una Propuesta de Constitución Política del Estado*, p. 145 [\[translation of the author\]](#)

Bolivians and paid a tribute, but they had no citizenship or civilian rights, until 1952, as a result of the National Revolution. And it took 42 years until the constitutional reform of 1994 for the nation to be recognized as a multicultural and multi-lingual society in a neoliberal framework, and it would be 54 years until the Constituent Assembly in order for community and collective rights to be formulated in a pluralistic framework.

So we can begin to understand why they say that it is a demand that had a very long duration and their memory as remembered past are pathways to understanding. In the Andes, there is a saying that if you want to find the road, you have to look at the walked path and not turn your back. As if the future could only shine lights from the past without denying or ignoring it. This will be the main point of this paper, as it will be developed below.

But we must open a parenthesis, for some warnings along the way. Retaking a recent publication by Sandro Mezzadra and Bret Neilson, titled *Border as Method, or, The Multiplication of Labor*, their intention is to build conceptual tools for a changing world and an unstable or mutant system lived as migrating, precarious and impoverished on a daily basis. They will argue:

“[...] we can say that method for us is as much about acting on the world as it is about knowing it. More accurately, it is about the relation of action to knowledge in a situation where many different knowledge regimes and practices come into conflict. Border as a method involves negotiating the boundaries between different kinds of knowledge that come to bear on the border and, in doing so, aims to throw light on the subjectivities that come into being through such conflicts.”⁷

This will introduce us to border thinking as a method for negotiating the boundaries and creating or inventing new kinds of unity, such as the Pact of Unity in Bolivia as was mentioned before. Or it could lead us to work for commons in our lives or to understand life forms and life organizations as negotiating within a commonality. In the Bolivian Constitution, this thinking was called “Vivir Bien”,

⁷ *Border as Method, or, the Multiplication of Labor*. [Duke University Press. 2013. Pag. 17-18](#)

which translates as: Good living or Living well. This will be our second main point in this paper.

But first, it's necessary to make explicit the other term in the title that of Plurinationality, and its importance is related to the kind of State that is reflected in the Bolivian Constitution. And as we have said, it has a close relationship with how decolonization is formulated, at least in the Pact of Unity document. What kind of State are they trying to establish? It's not an easy question; because they are not thinking just to reform or reformulate a State where different cultural identities and forms of organization could fit or find State recognition for their cultural practices and institutions. The wager was much more profound and disorderly for what we understand as state organization and institutions, at least different from what we know and from what our culture informs us about the form of the state and nation state. Moreover, it (the Pact of Unity) was formulated by people who don't have any training or experience of working within the state, they are illiterate about state affairs. And what is worse, they have always been apart from the life of the state and were continually plotting and stalking against state demands, when they were not fighting against the state itself.

Maybe this sketch will sound as one of exaggeration and Manichaeism, but it should be an illustration of how our fears are expressed when the people that had no importance begin to have an impact, politically. It is when those who did not have relevance in political affairs become political subjects. This fact will change not only political affairs but also mostly the state of politics and what it is that we understand about political matters and new political subjects. In Bolivia we have called it the indigenous irruption or plebeian subversion, because the major political protagonists were the people left behind, not taken into account or not being part, of the public space and state institutions, a colonial order in the 21st century.⁸

⁸ See: [Alvaro García Linera, Raquel Gutiérrez, Raúl Prada y Luis Tapia. *El retorno de la Bolivia plebeya*. Comuna/ Muela del Diablo Editores. 2000](#)

Plurinationality is to be understood by the 2nd article of the Constitution. This article affects the form of State and how we will work in terms of State structure and organization, because this State is not the beginning of the nation and culture in a territory with a population, as all the republican and liberal constitutions declare the birth of the national State form. On the contrary, in this constitution, the State form will be where they meet, confronting and negotiating with the preexisting nations and peoples, with their “own ways” and practices, languages and traditions, institutions and authorities. This new perspective of a State form changes the role and function in the relation of society with the State, the public and the private, the law and its practices, authority and social responsibilities, for example. This constitution calls for a new understanding and practice of building up the State form, maybe because there are no existing models it will take up an experimental form, with continuous tests and errors.

The key concept in this constitutional article is self-determination in the frame of the unity of the State, that the rights for autonomy, self-government, one’s own culture, recognition of self-institutions and consolidation of indigenous territory. So, plurinationality will be the objective for rebuilding nations and peoples (as “pueblos”) after the oblivion and destruction of the post-colonial order, after the attempts to impose a mono-cultural and unique State form, as the national State form, following the pattern preconceived in Western societies or, more precise, in Eurocentric modern history. This is what I mean by the decolonization of State form, plurinationality is the right of preexisting indigenous nations and peoples to leave their imprint and it is their way to make the State a more flexible form to meet their needs.

How is plurinationality related to the form of the State or State formation? It means above all to find a way of building a new form of State that responds to a pluralistic society that assumes that within this new State condition, it will be able to politically negotiate and settle their differences and disagreements. But with an understanding that these State conditions are constantly and repeatedly being rearranged and reordered by the changes and transformations of society, as a perpetual movement of creation of pluralist forms of living and life organizations.

In a certain way, the aim is to transform the State conditions as needed, at least we form part of a world interstate system.

Of course, to accept this supposition of the transformation of the conditions of the State, we need to question our beliefs and knowledge about politics, law and history, or how we have learned to think for centuries, at least since we started to consider ourselves as moderns and began to divide how, where or who wasn't modern. Try to imagine how collectivities and “pueblos” (peoples) for centuries have been characterized and designated as non-modern, that is, wild, barbaric, ignorant and idiotic. It is not that they don't know about politics, law and history, but their experience brings another perspective of the order of things; they have to deal with it every day, they are constituted by these institutions, norms and language but it does not mean that they don't know it, that they don't understand what is going on. So when they begin to talk, to express and formulate what kind of politics, law and history they are referring to, it is not necessarily the same thing, the same order of things. We are changing perspectives, changing the meaning of order and what we are calling things. This is a way to approach decolonization, to accept the possibility of other lives, other worlds.

So they are proposing a new State form, the Plurinational State, perceiving that institutions, norms and authorities have a plastic, flexible, moldable condition in order to be more responsive to a pluralistic society, a complex and transforming society; so they are thinking in a persistent transformation of State conditions. This challenges many approaches and opens many questions, but it promises to rethink globalization and the new forms of capitalism.

Plurinationality is closely related to autonomy, self-government and territoriality. It asks how, under what conditions, is it possible to have self-determination as “pueblo” and nation for the constitution and reproduction of a collective decision and to strengthen and cultivate the common aim through the new State form. It is not a simple matter and they will understand as the decolonization of State, the opportunity for rearranging and building political conditions from their perspectives, as a possible space of negotiation and agreements, as possible time for learning and experiencing other lives, other worlds.

In other terms, we can trace in Arturo Escobar's new book, *Sentipensar con la tierra*, something like "Feel-think with the Earth." In the preface he writes:

"The essay proposes that the rights of indigenous peoples, peasants and afro-descendent to their territories can be seen in terms of two interlocking processes: the problematization of "national" identities, with the concomitant emergence of indigenous knowledge and identities, afro-descendants and peasants; and the problematization of life, in relation to a biodiversity crisis, climate change and the increasing rate of environmental devastation by extractive industries."⁹

Even though he is not arguing directly about the State as a form, both of the problematizations have to do with the State, or how the State will handle this demands through the dispute of the rights of indigenous peoples, peasants and afro-descendants to their territories. And it makes us see more visible conflicts and demands that are struggling in a multidimensional scale. And it allows a glimpse of the new configuration of conflicts and demands for the Plurinational State of Bolivia and how they are managed and driven, because the problematization of life, as quoted by Escobar, is a geopolitical and global issue. Even though Plurinationality tries to answer or experiment with the problematizing of "national" identities, both are, as he points out, interlocking processes. But the State conditions are far different for the political conflict and the dispute of rights even though the challenge they face is the same, it's a global issue and needs a geopolitical quest.

Pluralism is at the core of this political proposal and it's necessary to try to raise it, to understand how the formulation of a Plurinational State came up. In politics there is no pluralism per se or, to put it more explicit, in politics we have working social relations within power diagrams. Politics arise as a way to stir, manage or negotiate these relations, but politics does not replace the conflict, disagreement or dispute but it does affect the social partition I will even try to suppress it, transform it or, at least, modified it. So social relations could be changed if they are able to modify the correlations of power, this could happen –is not so simple, it's never so abstract– politically or as a violent armed confrontation. As we

⁹ Medellín, Ediciones UNAULA, 2014. P 19

mentioned, violence will arise as a way to neutralize, denounce or disqualify the opponent; violence is latent because of social divisions and it will continue as long as this social partition exists. What is at stake is not violence in general or in an abstract way. It is the social conditions that confront it politically or through armed struggle to suppress the opposition: disappearances, killings, or complete elimination. The past centuries of modern history, as we are taught to call it, have being a gallery of massacres in the name of religion, reason, state and politics. Creating and building political ways to confront these perilous times is not an individual decision but it will compromise authorities and institutions and put into question social capacities and legitimization processes.

These are the kind of events that brought about changes in Bolivia since 2000. The “Water Wars” in Cochabamba, against water privatization, unleashed it. By blocking roads, the principal peasant and indigenous organization, CTSUB, were demanding diverse collective rights. From 2000 to January 22, 2006 when Evo Morales was elected by a resounding electoral victory, Bolivia was living in perilous and uncertain times. But depending on your point of view, it was an opportunity or a danger for the status quo of things in Bolivia; it meant either the possible destruction of the political institutional order or the emergence of a “deep Bolivia”; to strive in maintaining the success of neoliberal democracy or to accept the need of a constituent assembly to re-found Bolivia or establish a new Bolivia. In those long and intensive years there emerged numerous alternatives or possibilities to redirect the political crisis, but it was a national State crisis that required rethinking and reframing a new State form. By 2003, after the uprising of the “Gas Wars”, the “October Agenda” emerged, synthesizing the social and cultural demands under three points: 1) the nationalization of hydrocarbons, 2) a call for a constituent assembly, and 3) bring to trial responsible national authorities.¹⁰

The overwhelming victory of Evo Morales in the political elections of December 2005 cannot be understood if he had not assumed entirely the “October Agenda” as the political proposal of his candidacy rather than his political party program. So the “Democratic and Cultural Revolution”, as the government named their

¹⁰ See: [Alvaro García Linera, Raul Prada y Luis Tapia. *Memorias de octubre*. Comuna/Muela del Diablo Editores, 2004](#)

leadership is the result of the polls; but to be fair, the political elections took place at a time of a political crises, of a national State crisis, that could not necessarily be resolved by polls because the electoral system was part of the problem. But it was the institutional policy that was to produce a social discontent and it will meet new challenges in the first months, after the new government of Morales made their first move: the call for election of representatives to the constituent assembly in 2006.

The indigenous and peasant organizations didn't approve this method of election of representatives to the constituent assembly, justly because the system of election ignored their "own ways" or "traditional ways" for electing authorities. The dilemma was that if this call were ignored, it would threaten the future of the Morales government or they had to create enough political power in order to have some effect in the constituent assembly and to induce the support of the Morales government. That is how for the first time in Bolivian history different indigenous and peasant organizations were brought together to create a single political program with a common aim and goal. For the first time they had the opportunity to meet, learn and discuss their political objectives, to try to produce a unified meaning, language and strategy. Pluralism was brought into play, the political opportunity and necessity, and that is briefly how the Pact of Unity began.

It should be emphasized, that these were not recent experiences in the social and indigenous movements in building consensus from pluralism, for example, the "Water Wars" that brought together multiple social and cultural sectors in the city of Cochabamba and the nearby rural areas, so the visible head of the movement was called "Coordination for water and life" (an entity that would administer and coordinate this social movement), making clear that they were asking for new types of organizations and new structures that could take in diverse forms of organization and participation.¹¹ Or the "Gas Wars" in El Alto, where the confluence of neighborhood organizations, local unions, immigrants and peasants

¹¹ See: [*¡Cochabamba! Water War in Bolivia*. Oscar Olivera in collaboration with Tom Lewis. South End Press. 2004.](#)

organizations took over the reins and decisions of the youngest city of Bolivia.¹² In a certain form, the creation of the political party of Evo Morales, the MAS-IPSP, is also a convergence of different sectors: the emergent platform of “cocaleros”, migrant farmworkers and indigenous organizations in the low lands of Bolivia in the ‘90s.¹³ And we could keep the trace it to the march for life in the 90s of the low land indigenous organizations, that for the first time in Bolivia’s history gave visibility and presence to the diverse nations and peoples, and coined plurality, cultural and politically, as their demand.¹⁴

We can note the different opportunities for bringing pluralism as political platform, but with the Pact of Unity these were challenged to propose a new State form, this was unprecedented, and they had only a few months to build the proposal, to create the chance for common goals and needs. It does mean that each organization was producing their own proposal, some of them had been proposing for decades, the core of this moment was to build one among the different organizations as a Pact of Unity, that was an unprecedented political experience, and to the extent that it could be implemented or be made concrete, it could become a social mandate for the government and the country as a whole.

Both terms decolonization and plurinationality in the Bolivian process are intimately associated in relation to State transformation, to seek a new State form through a constitutional process. We have to admit that is was a very difficult and long process during the Constitutional Assembly and the negotiations with diverse sectors in the State and society, with the Parliament or the Executive negotiators and the traditional empowerment strata. It took from August of 2006 to February of 2008 for its official promulgation, and it was approved by referendum, something unprecedented in Bolivia’s constitutional history.

For the first time there was a feeling of pride in this new constitution and, at the same time, there was also awe and fear for what might transpire. Socially there

¹² See: [Luis A. Gómez. *El Alto de pie. Una insurrección aymara en Bolivia. Comuna, 2004.* And: \[Alvaro García Linera, Raúl Prada y Luis Tapia. *Memorias de octubre. Comuna, 2004.*\]\(#\)](#)

¹³ [Pablo Stefanoni. *La revolución de Evo Morales. De la coca al palacio. Capital Intelectual Editores. 2006*](#)

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was a tense situation and high expectations of how this constitutional text will be used and put into practice, but the new plurinational polls of December of 2008 had reached again an unprecedented total voting result of 64% for Evo Morales. It was a strong political support for Evo Morales and the new constitutional text, and the political configuration of the power correlations in Bolivia started to change again, to modified its alliances and oppositions, not only as political parties or organizations but mostly by holding strategic political posts and representatives from the different states and regions. So it would not be long before intense social conflicts appeared in the next years, especially from indigenous sectors that were supposedly supporting the transformation of the Bolivian State, for example, the TIPNIS conflict that exposed the internal debates as a geopolitical issue and a conflict of interests. And few months before, there was a very strong opposition of the main social organizations against the surprising government decision during the holiday season in the month of December 2009 to elevate the prices of oil fuels. The government in a matter of a few days had to rescind its decision and forget about any attempt to do so in the future. These two examples illustrates the tendencies of new social struggles in Bolivia, but most of all, how they took hold of the State or, at least at the beginning of the Plurinational State. From then on, the disjunctives were wider and mutually accusing each other of treason and regression; for now, there is a wound that is difficult to heal.

Another way to approach this political process is by accepting democracy as a permanent conflict that needs or it is nourished by these differences, and the political action is the capacities to negotiated and agree upon possible solutions or modifications of the parts. We could say that it is the institutional way or, at least, when it's possible, or just to enforce an institutional agreement; I think I gave several Bolivian illustrations of this understanding of democracy, some might call it, a radical democracy, but in Bolivia it is certainly a process of decolonization.

So this point gets us back to the debate on decolonization, at least, to try to understand the thinking that picks up decolonization as a gesture of rupture and affirmation of nations and peoples in the global South, and in this way, I will try to introduce the importance of pluralism in all dimensions of life.

In this second part of the paper I would like to introduce three topics that I think are not sufficiently considered in actual discussion of the Bolivian process and they have consequences in the decolonization debate: social movements, constitutional politics, and social economy efforts. It doesn't mean that those notions are not in the debate but are insufficiently problematized in consideration of the profound changes occurred during the past fifteen years and the ten years of Evo Morales's government. I think we have to see it not as a straight road but as multiple roads and branches that makes political orientation and demands tougher, creating other political debates, not viewed or categorized as pro or against governments policies and decisions. It calls for a political debate in social scales of decisions and without the pressure from government or opposition that monopolizes the public sphere. A possible alternative could be to approach with strategic positions in the turbulent times of transformation of State and a very fast social and economic enlargement. In a certain way, I think the relation between time and politics is central for the Bolivian process and for the potential of decolonization in our societies.

First, understanding social movements understanding that also include indigenous movements. They were not considered political subjects, I mean it took several political events to start regarding old-new ways of organization and participation in our changing societies, and allowed us to begin to grasp the tendencies in our changing societies. In our experience in Bolivia, only after the victories of the social movements in 2000 was the decisive political presence and demands of these groups started being discussed, even if people were opposed to them. For the indigenous view, this was a big opportunity to stamp their different capacities and memories as modes of resisting power and of proposing other alternatives and possibilities, assuming that indigenous identity is not a uniform and homogeneous, and unique identity

At least, it is not until the 90s that the strong movements from the low lands of Bolivia begin, with several marches by regional organizations demanding their collective rights and they will start to connect and build a strategic relation with Andean indigenous organizations. What I would like to point out is that it is in those movements that pluralistic politics and organizations begin to be produced, because their particular circumstances made them very vulnerable and

dispossessed. Just imagine, if in today's Constitution we recognized 32 official languages, it gives you an idea of the existing cultural diversity, only three of those are used in the Andean region, the other 29 are in the low lands of Bolivia –and they occupied three thirds of Bolivian territory. So decolonization is also a challenge for Andean indigenous organizations. Most of the time, this is not explicit. In other contexts of South America they maintain this kind cultural and linguistic hierarchy within the so-called indigenous organizations and movements, and there is an enormous population of Afro-Americans who are struggling for their collective rights.¹⁵ And there were not always connections and collaborative roles within political and social movements.

And the importance of the of woman's rights and gender demands are present crosswise in most of the social movements of the region, caused by the fast and intense modification in domestic structure and their roles in economic production and reproduction. More women occupied the labor force -in situations of disadvantage, and more women are head of households in the mono-parental domestic unit, assuming all responsibilities for subsistence. In the past decades we have incorporated women in the economic and social cycle but in ways that were uneven and hierarchical. In Bolivia, this is part of being against a patriarchal system and according to government declarations, this also forms part of the movement for decolonization; it was also one of the demands during the Constituent Assembly, to make a statement against certain political positions about sexuality, body politics and marriage. Though some legislation was passed in favor of women's rights, its implementation has been very slow getting entangled in bureaucracy. Though the demands remain, their latent explosiveness seems imminent.

Generation issues are also about to explode, just consider that more than a half of the population in South America are underage, and we are talking of a population estimated at half a billion. The next years will be challenging in terms of education, labor and communication taking into account this large percentage of young

¹⁵ See: Catherine Walsh. "[Interculturalidad y \(de\)colonialidad: diferencia y nación de otro modo](#)"

people. Are we prepared? Are we taking this into account? I'm not sure; we're already too much absorbed with present problems and dilemmas.

But mostly for the Bolivian experience, it's important to take note, that the capabilities of an indigenous presence in State quarters and their participation in State decisions have modified their own organizational structures and forms. In short, how much have the social and indigenous organizations changed in the past years in their capabilities to move toward, and to even occupy positions of leaderships in state offices? Obviously, it was their political objective, but once that is reached, how will it affect their organization? What changes will take place inside their organization. The relations with the leaders and the organization structure could start to be tightened and becoming an ambiguous relationship. How will the organizations deal with it? Perhaps it's time to examine the discussions and conflicts inside the organizations to see what its tendencies and configurations might be. This is a fast moving panorama of social and cultural affirmations, of social mobility and identity pride, in Bolivia; but it could turn out as a riddle if the point of view is from some indigenous minority, women's position or children's perspectives.

These are the challenges of constitutional politics and the transformation of the State in its form, and I put it this way, because it is a challenge concerning constitutional power, in its political sense. Because to think that the effort to discuss and change a constitutional text is done once the text is promulgated, is to think that the text is the new reality. If it says, like in Bolivia, we have a constitutional Plurinational State then there is a new State, and forgetting or, at least, underestimating the process of transformation that implies to be working in a changing State form. And how this transformation is achievable and what kind of process will help this transition? To answer these questions, a new, time or temporalities and politics will be decisive here.

The social debates around the transition are not as relevant for the media as the diverse consultations and elections of state authorities that we have had in the past ten years. The media is more concentrated in scandals and victories in the political arena. Even though, we could affirm that there are strong debates in the organizations and every day spaces. The difficulty lies in the capacity to impact and

enforce these issues at the institutional level. If we had to evaluate recent legislation after the approved Constitution, we will find that most of the laws are called into question, not necessary because they could be unconstitutional, as some declared, but because they are incomplete or improperly treated. We can try to explain these odd situations by the continuous change in the correlation of power relations in Bolivia, but it will not be satisfactory if we do not take note of the new points of conflict, and how they affect social organizations and even determine state entities and authorities.

The image of the State as a battlefield could help understand the kind of political conditions that are displayed in the discussions of the transformation and transition of the State as mentioned. The acceptance of this image is necessary to understand the State not as single and homogeneous entity, but as a decentralized configuration of power, authority and law. It is to comprehend the State as a historical form of a dynamic assemblage of institutions, norms, and authorities co-existing in a struggle that is inscribed by the correlations of power relations. This brief characterization is highly debatable, but it is quite effective for discussing the State conditions and constitutional issues in our pos-neoliberal politics. And, in Bolivia's case, rework the potentials and limits of the aims of the Plurinational State.

To try to make an evaluation of constitutional politics from 2009 –the year of promulgation of the Constitution- to today will be difficult, not only in terms of the short time, because it's true that institutional changes can take much more time. However, in terms of new laws and the so-called, organic laws, they have been considered more conservative with the established order or less propitious to collective and indigenous rights. Even though, there is an important indigenous presence in state offices, this doesn't necessarily mean that indigenous demands are given priority, remember that there is an enormous heterogeneity within indigenous organizations.

This panorama brings skepticism in different social sectors or to opponents of government initiatives and attempts, and because of the short life of this constitution, there is not enough time and space to pose active and critical actions. But this doesn't mean that there is no political discussion or constitutional politics

in the organizations and social movements. Part of the changes in their structure and role, as we mentioned, are rooted in these issues. And the strategies have, once again, in a more subterranean way or low voice activity; these strategies have a long history of resisting colonial orders. Another way of channeling this increasing discontent is the formation of new movements with certain demands related to new urban rights and necessities, for example, gas or water services, public transportation, and public safety.

Finally, social economy efforts, maybe this is not an appropriate term, but it could allowed us to visualized the biggest transformation in social economic criteria. I mean, that if there is a successful change in the role of State it is in its economic policies by the democratization of economic access to the population. Some will call this the creation of a “middle class”, because of the decrease of extreme poverty and an expansion of the market and money increasing consumption and savings, something important for the national economic policies. But, “middle class” might be helpful as self-definition of social mobility, but it makes invisible the complex ensemble of markets and economies that are made viable by a diversity of producers and traders, services and “immaterial work” that compose this new urban labor.

That is why, I choose the term “social economy” that allows to gather different efforts to respond to social necessities and urgencies, and I qualify as efforts, because they could be state initiatives or other types of social actions that arise from community bonds or social initiatives. This economic prospect as social economics has not been object of much research,¹⁶ as have state policies over bonuses and other economic support to certain sectors of the population; for example, nursing mothers, school children and senior citizens.¹⁷

The combination of economic growth, the democratization of access to markets and money and the strong state role have repercussions in the discussions of the plural economy that posit the constitution and its interpretations. This is a strong

¹⁶ See: Verónica Gago. *La razón neoliberal. Economías barrocas y pragmática popular*. Tinta Limón, 2014.

¹⁷ Gabriel Loza Tellería. *Bolivia. El modelo de economía plural*. Editorial Vínculos, 2013; Fernanda Wanderley. *Crecimiento, empleo y bienestar. ¿Por qué Bolivia es tan desigual?* CIDES-UMSA, 2009.

argument for the government together with the social feeling of being at last out of the poorest country list. But indeed, for the first time in Bolivia there is democratization in having access to opportunities. On the other hand, there is an intensive dynamics of accumulation and dispossession creating new inequalities that are challenging the capabilities of social policies, organization and forms of life, in building alternatives.

These three topics, the changing social movements, constitutional politics, and social economic efforts allow us to glimpse at the challenging times in Bolivia and it is not necessarily a negative or skeptical view, because there's a growing tendency to discredit the aim for a Plurinational State. The public media only projects one or the other side, as black or white, very convenient for electoral polls, and for overwhelming political debate and discussion. So the impression of the Bolivian process will only reproduce those options, newly again as a problem of the two Bolivia's as it was done before in terms of nationalistic ideals for seeking a racial mixture (mestizaje) or in terms of proposing an only Indian republic. This was something that was surpassed when indigenous organizations assumed their plurality and differences and proposed a new State form, the Plurinational State. Their political participation was to stand up for a Plurinational State as the strategic place to negotiate and settle the indifference that colonial order and liberal-republican norms imposed on them.

The relationship between time and politics could enable us to broaden the problematization of the political process in Bolivia and the geopolitical region, allowing us to understand the multi-scale levels of politics and to have an strategic approach to experiment alternatives in a geopolitical sense and in building connections where social movements are the triggers for State transformations to support the germinating pluralism and common social spaces (commonalities).

As I open this inquiry with Fanon's words of 1952 as a final prayer for keeping his body as a man who questions, I would like in closing, to bring up this remark by Ranciere, in a intervention during the Venice Biennial in 2012:

“I would like to oppose to those analysis about the reign of the present and entirely different view: our time is not framed by the sole speed of the development of capital. It is framed by the institutions, which make the coincidence and non-coincidence of times their own affair. Our world does not function according to a homogeneous process of presentification and acceleration. It functions according to a regulation of the convergence and divergence of times.”¹⁸

¹⁸ “In What Time Do We Live? In: *The State of Things*. Marta Kuzma, Pablo Lafuente, Peter Osborne, editors. London: Koenig Books Ltda. 2012. Pag. 23