

**REIMAGINING POLITICS:
VIDEO AND INDIGENOUS STRUGGLES IN CONTEMPORARY BOLIVIA**

by

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Abstract

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by

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This dissertation examines indigenous video production and circulation as a means by which indigenous organizations and mobilizations articulate new claims on national politics. Specifically in the current efforts for refounding the Bolivian state with the participation of indigenous peoples, videos produced by native people contribute to recounting stories that build upon social reality in order to bring attention to what indigenous media makers see as necessary, possible, imaginable, or desirable.

The uniqueness of Bolivian indigenous video production is most evident in the remarkable alliance between the non-governmental “National Plan of Indigenous Communication” (*Plan Nacional Indígena Originario de Comunicación Audiovisual*), and the powerful peasant and indigenous confederations. My argument is that indigenous communication constitutes a central feature of new political practices of struggle in Bolivia. In order to understand how this happens I examine two aspects related to indigenous communication. One is its definition as a site of *politics*, namely, a space which generates debate, negotiation, and disagreement about reality in order to envision alternative national futures. The second one is about understanding the Plan Nacional as part of a major engagement of civil society -organized into powerful social movements- with the national project and with the contentious Bolivian state. By making reference to

the political past, challenging the present, and imagining possible futures, fictional and documentary videos reenact the continuities and ruptures of national political projects in particular ways. Such representations constitute political uses of history that are central to the claims that indigenous mobilizations make on the state.

Five central questions guide the research (1) How are political language, traditions and practices recreated, challenged or imagined in both documentary and fictional videos? (2) How do indigenous media makers situate themselves in relation to dominant cultures and the state? (3) How do training, funding, and circulation influence both the production process and the narrative structure of videos? (4) How are images of the Indian depicted in videos built upon other forms of representing indigeneity and contribute to challenging or reproducing the dominant ideologies? And (5) how do the history, goals, and strategies of video production relate to the recent history of indigenous movements?

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Introduction

Before going to Bolivia for the first time I had seen quite a few Bolivian films produced by indigenous videomakers. Often, these fictions included documentary images of real situations, such as political demonstrations, ritual ceremonies and community celebrations. My vision of the real Bolivia was, in many ways, colored by the images of these films. When I first visited the country in 2004, one of my highest expectations was to see with my own eyes the landscapes, villages and peoples that I had seen in Bolivian films. As Augé says, the ways in which travelers experience unknown places are filtered by all the photographs, postcards, movies and stories that were available to them before actually visiting the place (1998). My eyes saw the first Andean landscape through a large bus window: intense blue skies contrasted calmly with small mud houses over empty brownish highland plateau. Numerous llamas completed the Andean scape. I felt overwhelmed by the crushing newness that this picture brought to my eyes and, at the same time, by the strange familiarity it produced in my memory. "Bienvenida a Bolivia!," I thought.

It was then, as it is now, a time of intense political confrontations and struggles. Inspired by the dynamic relationship between these films and the political reality of Bolivia, my dissertation analyzes indigenous video production and circulation as one medium through which indigenous mobilizations articulate new claims on national politics. This study is temporally situated in a complex transitional moment. In less than four years, but of course through longer historical struggles, indigenous people from Bolivia, together with strong worker and peasant movements, managed to topple presidents Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada in 2003 and Carlos Mesa in 2005. They were also crucial for the electoral triumph of President Evo Morales in December 2005. Morales,

together with the Movement Toward Socialism, MAS (Movimiento al Socialismo) government, has installed a Constituent Assembly to re-write the National Constitution according to indigenous demands and has proclaimed the nationalization of natural resources, among other steps, in order to "decolonize" state structures and to constitute itself as a "social movements' government."

With this background, early conversations with indigenous communicators and leaders affirmed an extraordinary sense of political possibility and hope. Most people with whom I spoke in Bolivia were not only convinced that important historical changes were taking place, but also that they, from their daily actions, were key participants in building the political future of the nation. This dissertation focuses on how indigenous media makers have experienced and taken part, from their own communicational work, in these larger transformations. It examines the process by which the non-governmental "National Plan of Indigenous Communication" (Plan Nacional Indígena Originario de Comunicación Audiovisual) works since 1997 with indigenous communities and with the powerful peasant and indigenous confederations in order to produce and disseminate videos that build upon their social and political reality.

Through this analysis, I discuss how the imaginative quality of videos contributes to the generation of political imaginaries and oppositional practices in the current efforts for "refounding" the state.¹ This question involves examining two aspects related to indigenous communication. One is its definition as a site of *politics*, namely, a space which generates debate, negotiation, and disagreement about reality in order to envision

¹ Social organizations, journalists and intellectuals often refer to the historical transition from 2005, and particularly since the opening of the Constituent Assembly in August 2006, as a process of state "refoundation."

alternative national futures. The second one is about understanding the Plan Nacional as part of a major engagement of civil society -organized into powerful social movements- with the national project and with the contentious Bolivian society.

Indigenous communication does more than documenting culture and recovering indigenous elements to reinforce cultural identities. My argument is that it is a crucial medium for articulating alternative forms of political imagination. Most importantly, it constitutes an innovating feature of new political practices of struggle in Bolivia. By making reference to the political past, challenging the present, and imagining possible futures, fictional and documentary videos reenact the continuities and ruptures of national political projects in particular ways. Such reenactments constitute political uses of history and ongoing realities which are central to the indigenous movements' claims.

Rethinking indigenous communication politics beyond "identity" and "culture"

Literature on indigenous media has raised interesting questions about how indigenous video challenges the history of ethnographic film in relation to issues such as ethnographic authority and self-representation (Ginsburg 1995a); and about the implications of indigenous appropriation of video technologies (Ginsburg 1992; Salazar 2004). Most of this literature assertively proposes to move beyond "textual" analysis of indigenous media to understand their "mediating" function in relation to the context in which they are produced and circulated (Martín-Barbero 1993; Ginsburg 1995, Ginsburg et al. 2002; Himpele 2008; Turner 2002). Despite their pioneering and undeniable contributions to the study of indigenous media, they generally propose an understanding of politics as "politics of representation" and "identity politics," namely, as a series of

"cultural struggles" over symbols and meanings that represent indigenous peoples' culture, ethnic identity, and tradition. Based on this perspective, scholars analyze the role of indigenous media for "cultural activism" (Ginsburg 1992; Ginsburg et al. 2002) by studying their political significance when interacting "with state and global systems" (Turner 2002); their uses for claiming national belonging (Ginsburg et al. 2002); their importance for "ethnic affirmation" processes (Aufderheide 1995); the "cultural geography" of indigenous video (Smith 2006); and the means through which the "poetics of media" (Salazar 2004) and "narratives of location" (Wortham 2002) allow for "making culture visible" (Salazar 2004; Wortham 2002). These attempts to define the political role of indigenous video as "cultural activism" emphasize video as a tool of "empowerment." This view often depicts subjects as self-conscious agents who, by appropriating media technologies, are able to construct their cultural identities.

I suggest that this emphasis on identity politics and "cultural activism" risks detaching indigenous media from the historical and economic processes in which they take place, as well as rendering invisible the internal and external power relations through which indigenous media are constructed, negotiated, and transformed. This dissertation proposes to shift the focus on indigenous media away from identity politics. An important insight to move beyond this perspective is Deborah Poole's concept of "visual economies," which responds to the prevailing idea of "visual culture" by emphasizing the need to situate the production and circulation of visual representations in contexts of unequal social and economic relations (1997). I explain the Plan Nacional as a process that responds to a common "commitment" to work against a concrete history of oppression, economic inequality, and discrimination that indigenous peoples from

Bolivia have experienced rather than to a common cultural identity. This understanding implies that Plan Nacional members have heterogeneous and contending understandings and proposals about what indigenous media should be according to the many regional and historical processes that they live through, as well as to their personal trajectories and circumstances. This form of disagreement through which people with diverse ideas produce collective messages is an example to explain indigenous communication as a site of politics, namely, a space in which collective political practices are generated.

Some communication studies scholars and media activists focus on the political "commitment" and "transformative processes" of media activism among their producers, communities, and in regional and national contexts (Rodríguez 2001). Clemencia Rodríguez proposes the term "citizen media" as a way to understand the role of alternative media to engage producers and audiences -or civil society- in common political practices (Rodríguez 2001; Atton and Couldry 2003). Other authors examine concrete examples that illustrate the role of community radio for creating a "public sphere," for instance, in the context of violence and conflict in Colombia (Murillo 2003); the role of popular radio "reporteros" in Bolivia (Huesca 1996) and El Salvador (Agosta 2004); and the political work of popular correspondents in Nicaragua (Rodríguez 1994).

Building on these studies of community media as motors for animating collective political practices, I study the transformative processes that the Plan Nacional brings about through different aspects of its work, such as its conception as a nation-wide process, its emphasis on political commitment and collectivity, the union-based selection and training of communicators, the involvement of community members during the shooting and distribution processes, and its ingenuous distribution strategies. By

examining these elements, I propose to explain the ways in which indigenous communication constitutes a peculiar site for understanding new political practices of struggle in Bolivia.

Audiovisual technologies

A question present throughout this dissertation is how the Plan Nacional has made use of audiovisual technological qualities for its political and educational goals. I build on Walter Benjamin's insightful essay on photography and film reproduction features (1968) to explain the ways in which camera-work, mise-en-scène, editing, and projection technologies are deployed to render personal and collective experiences political. I argue that these uses of audiovisual technology confer on video imaginative and emotional qualities that allow heterogeneous audiences to relate to particular historical narratives, and to imagine possible futures in which indigenous peoples have a stronger presence in national politics.

I refer to film theory (e.g., Hockins and Omori 1988; Marks 2000; Nichols 1991; Stam 2000); and experimental video analyses (González and Lerner 1998; Hall and Jo Fifer 1986) to discuss the ways in which Plan Nacional videos formally challenge or reproduce existing narratives and aesthetic tendencies in industrial and independent film and video. Political and theoretical statements by Latin American "revolutionary" filmmakers such as Jorge Sanjinés from Bolivia (1997) and Julio García Espinosa from Cuba (1979) provide insightful observations about film technology and its potential uses for social change and collaborative projects (Burton 1986; Salazar 2004). García Espinosa's idea of an "imperfect cinema" as a formal resource to challenge industrial

quality and aesthetics standards through producing films with cheap technologies and collaborative methodologies is particularly useful to discuss the tensions among videomakers for producing "quality" and "professional" videos.

Finally, studies about images of indigenous peoples in Bolivia (Rivera-Cusicanqui 2004 and 2005; Vargas 2007 and 2007a); Peru (De la Cadena 2000; Poole 1997); and Mexico (Poole 2004, Vélez-Storey 1999) are useful to analyze the Plan Nacional as a communication process that contests a history of racial and discriminatory images of indigeneness.

Politics, civil society, and the state

The central question of this dissertation is how Plan Nacional video production and circulation constitute a medium for indigenous mobilizations to articulate new claims on national politics. This question implies an understanding of the historical transformations of the relationship between indigenous struggles, which take part in a larger civil society, and the state. Such a relationship is rather complex because, as civil society analysts have demonstrated, the "logic of power" is what "binds [civil society and the state] together" (Chandhoke 2002). On the one hand, the Plan Nacional is not a state project. On the other hand, it does not fit conventional models of civil society as something apart from the state because indigenous peoples and other subaltern groups in Bolivia have appropriated and deployed the state's figure in order to situate their demands at the core of the national political agenda. This appropriation includes the attempts of indigenous peoples to install a Constituent Assembly as a mechanism for taking part in the redefinition of the Bolivian state.

This appropriation relates to a long history in which: (1) the state has maintained and reproduced dominant practices over indigenous peoples; (2) at different historical moments, indigenous struggles have envisioned political projects in which the Indians should play a more central, or even a leading role, in national politics; (3) the neoliberal democratic state has suffered an economic decay and a crisis of legitimacy; and (4) the current transition from a "pluricultural" state into a plurinational one raises enormous expectations to effectively "represent social movements" and to break with colonial and neoliberal legacies.

In terms of the dominant relationship of the state with indigenous peoples, Bolivian scholars have developed key ideas to understand the internal tensions and contradictions of the colonial, liberal and neoliberal legacies within the Bolivian state project (Rivera-Cusicanqui 1993; Zavaleta Mercado 1990). In terms of indigenous struggles' historical engagement with the national project and with the Bolivian state after its consolidation, Thomson (2002) and Hylton and Thomson (2007) provide a detailed analysis of how Indian insurrections led by Tupac Katari in 1781 and Zárata Willka in 1898-99 envisioned "proto-national" and national projects ruled by indigenous peoples which have strongly influenced resistance tactics and struggle practices, discourses, and imaginaries among contemporary movements. On their front, since the 1980s contemporary indigenous organizations have clearly expressed that a key aspect to modify indigenous peoples' subordinate role in national politics is to transform the state model, for example, through the currently influential idea of building a "plurinational state that develops our cultures and authentic forms of self-government" (CSUTCB 1983:196). Based on these and other ideas, since the 1980s indigenous and peasant organizations have consolidated

their claims around the installation of a Constituent Assembly through which Bolivians can build together –this time with the active participation of indigenous and other subordinate groups- the bases for a new plurinational state. The key aspects to negotiate within the Constituent Assembly include indigenous people's right to territory, self-determination and political autonomy.² Social organizations' engagement in the state has deepened during the preparation and development of the Constituent Assembly.

In light of this porous and ever-changing relationship between civil society and the Bolivian state, the Plan Nacional plays an active role in shaping national imaginaries, which includes ideas about a possible and desirable "plurinational" state. In this regard, the work of the Plan Nacional is an active site of politics, namely, a space in which individuals "transcend individual beliefs into socially responsive and responsible political projects through dialogue as well as through contention" (Chandhoke 2002: 46).

Insurrectional political culture and indigenous struggles

The current centrality of indigenous peoples in Bolivia's political life is deeper than a mere momentary conjuncture. It constitutes a "revolutionary moment" built by an insurrectional political culture in which indigenous mobilizations link the past to the present by remembering past uprisings against economic inequality and other forms of colonial domination, and by incorporating these memories in their practical experience (Albó 1987; Hylton et al. 2005; Hylton and Thomson 2007; Rivera-Cusicanqui 2003). Such mobilizations are strongly supported by an extraordinary process of "cross-class,

² The concept of "territory" refers not only to the use of land, but implies a cultural, spiritual, and economic relationship to the environment and to natural resources in addition to the ground, such as minerals, water, and oil (Stavenhagen 2004).

multi-ethnic alliances" (Hylton and Thomson 2007: 11). Alliances include an interesting, although not always acknowledged dialogue that indigenous struggles have developed with anthropological and ethnohistorical academic debates especially since the late 1960s (Barragán 2008). Moreover, indigenous insurrections are related to the changing dynamics of social movements, especially in their interaction with specific state politics and political parties, as well as with international policies and movements (Albó 2002).

Insurrections led by Tupac Amaru and Tupac Katari during the second half of the eighteenth century imagined possibilities for implementing political projects headed by, or with a stronger participation of indigenous peoples, for example, through "the restoration of the Inca dynasty," or through a communal Indian rule which would permit the co-existence of Indians and Spaniards (Hylton and Thomson 2007: 39). Amaru and Katari, as well as their political projects, became emblematic for twentieth-century indigenous movements (Thomson 2002).

During the nineteenth century, after the proclamation of Bolivia as an independent state in 1825, indigenous mobilizations found a way to make themselves present during the Federal Civil War from 1898 to 1899 through an alliance with the Liberal party to fight the Conservative forces. Aymara leader Pablo Zárate Willka led an Indian Army in the Department of La Paz, which soon marshaled the support of indigenous mobilizations from other regions organized since the 1880s to fight oppressive working conditions in the haciendas and mines.

In the first half of the twentieth century there were numerous rebellions in the Altiplano region such as the one in Jesús de Machaca in 1921 and the Chayanta rebellion in 1927 (Hylton and Thomson 2007; Klein 2003). These rebellions, together with the

devastating Chaco war against Paraguay in the early 1930s, intensified the internal class and ethnic tensions and culminated in the National Revolution of 1952 (Arce Aguirre 1987; Lagos 1994). The main achievements of the Revolution were the agrarian reform, the nationalization of mines owned by the Tin Barons, universal suffrage, as well as a series of policies to develop the eastern region of Bolivia. Yet the triumph of the Revolution also resulted into coopting practices by the National Revolutionary Movement MNR (Movimiento Nacionalista Revolucionario) government. Such was the case of the attempt to use the model of peasant unions, inspired in the first peasant union organized in 1935 in Ucureña, as an intermediary governing entity in the entire country, a strategy that was only partially effective (Lagos 1994; Ticona et al. 1995).

The revolutionary period finished with the military coup of René Barrientos in 1964, which was followed by many other military dictatorships until 1982. This period marked a new, obviously repressive, relationship between the state and peasant, workers and indigenous organizations, which included the creation of the Military-Peasant Pact (Pacto Militar-Campesino) in 1964 in order for the state to control peasant unions. This pact was weakened after the "Valley Massacre" (La Masacre del Valle) that Dictator Hugo Banzer (1971-1978) ordered against Cochabamba peasants in 1974, and the subsequent organization of peasant unions in an independent block (Bloque Independiente Campesino) (Lagos 1994). Around the same time, inspired by katarista and indianista ideologies, Aymara intellectuals and rural teachers promoted the acknowledgment of indigenous peoples' common history of discrimination and struggle through vindicating the insurrections of 1781 led by Aymara leader Tupac Katari. In 1978, a fraction of Katarismo affiliated with the Bolivian Workers Central COB (Central Obrera Boliviana).

Bringing together the force of workers and peasant movements independently from the state, the Bolivian Workers Central (COB) became the most important organization in civil society since the revolution.

This confederation strengthened ongoing struggles such as the powerful miners' movement led by the Trade Union Federation of Bolivian Mine Workers FSTMB (Federación Sindical de Trabajadores Mineros de Bolivia). The military coup of Luis García Meza in July 1980 defeated a series of victories achieved by peasant, workers and left movements between 1978 and 1980. Nevertheless, these movements remained active and achieved the return to democracy in 1982 through supporting the broad coalition of parties Democratic and Popular Unity UDP (Unidad Democrática y Popular), which had to give up power in 1985 after it failed to manage the deep economic crisis.

In that year, the new government of President Víctor Paz Estenssoro (1985-1989) approved the decree 21060 for devaluing currency, unifying and floating the exchange rate, reducing salaries and other tough economic measures. This government also closed the mines, defeated the miners' federation FSTMB, and consequently weakened the Bolivian Workers Central (COB) by giving more weight to political parties as state mediators with civil society. This political strategy soon favored clientelism and increased the political power of the dominant groups (Tapia 2006).

This period gave rise to a new relationship between the state and indigenous peoples in which democratic governments pretended to implement a "multiethnic democracy." For example, in 1990, after growing pressure by indigenous peoples from the Amazonian and lowland territories, such as the March for Land and Dignity, President Jaime Paz Zamora (1989-1993) ratified Article 169 of the International Labor Organization in favor

of indigenous rights (Albó 2002). Later on, the presidential campaign of neoliberal candidate Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada strategically invited a Katarista Aymara intellectual, Víctor Hugo Cárdenas, to run for Vice President in his campaign. After they won the 1993 elections, this controversial strategy led to official actions in favor of indigenous peoples, such as the acknowledgment of Bolivia as a multiethnic and pluricultural country in the National Constitution, and the right of indigenous peoples to “maintain their resources and way of life,” acknowledging the right to their own language, political organization and internal justice procedures. In 1994, this government (1993-1997) reformed the constitution and passed a series of laws to “modernize” Bolivia such as the Law of Popular Participation (Ley de Participación Popular), the Law of Educational Reform, the Capitalization Law, and the Decentralization Law (Albó 2002).

Although these measures responded to neoliberal policies, indigenous and peasant movements appropriated them to make progress in their demands (Albó 2007). Such was the case of the coca leaf producers in the Chapare region of Cochabamba who used the Law of Popular Participation to have access to municipal governments in their region by borrowing the name of a registered political party, the United Left, IU (Izquierda Unida). This successful strategy was the beginning of a “political instrument” for indigenous and peasant organizations to gain presence and representation in national politics, which in 1997 became the Political Instrument for People's Sovereignty IPSP (Instrumento Político por la Soberanía de los Pueblos), the political motor of the Movement Toward Socialism (MAS) (Do Alto and Stefanoni 2008).

From 1985 to 2000, neoliberal government initiatives were permanently contested by subaltern struggles. In terms of indigenous mobilizations, the Indigenous March for

Territory and Dignity organized in 1990 by numerous lowland indigenous organizations from eastern Bolivia to La Paz was a historical event that called attention to key indigenous claims such as territory, indigenous autonomy, self-determination, and Constituent Assembly. One decade later, after the government of ex-dictator Hugo Banzer (1997-2001) approved a law that allowed for private management of water distribution systems in late 1999, a series of protests took place mainly in the city of Cochabamba but with larger impacts in other mobilizations in the country. Although protests were repressed, this movement, known as the "Water War," proved that the government was weakening and set a new effective precedent for subaltern resistance within Bolivia, as well as a referent for anti-globalization struggles at the international level (Hylton and Thomson 2007; Lewis and Olivera 2003).

By this time, peasant and indigenous confederations had achieved a central role in national politics.³ Simultaneously, social movements and organizations worked more concretely toward the consolidation of political parties. On the one hand, the Movement Toward Socialism (MAS), headed by Evo Morales managed to bring together numerous left rural and urban groups that had been active in previous struggles. On the other hand, the Pachakuti Indigenous Movement MIP (Movimiento Indígena Pachakuti), led by influential Aymara leader Felipe Quispe "Mallku," was created around an ethnic

³ The national peasant and indigenous confederations are the Trade Union Confederation of Bolivian Peasant Workers CSUTCB (Confederación Sindical Única de Trabajadores Campesinos de Bolivia); the Union Confederation of Migrant Settlers of Bolivia CSCB (Confederación Sindical de Colonizadores de Bolivia); the Bolivian Indigenous Peoples' Confederation CIDOB (Confederación de Pueblos Indígenas de Bolivia); the National Council of Ayllus and Markas of Qullasuyo CONAMAQ (Consejo Nacional de Ayllus y Markas del Qollasuyo); and the Bartolina Sisa National Federation of Indigenous and Peasant Women of Bolivia FNMCIQB-BS (Federación Nacional de Mujeres Campesinas Indígenas y Originarias de Bolivia Bartolina Sisa).

discourse against colonial discrimination, that despite its strong political bases in the highland Aymara region, did not manage to include non-indigenous subaltern sectors in its demands.⁴ These two parties demonstrated a strong presence during the 2002 presidential elections, in which Evo Morales achieved a close number of votes in relation to the elected candidate Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada, and in which both the MAS and MIP obtained a significant number of congressional seats.

Finally, a new series of mobilizations during 2003 resulted in the overthrow of President Sánchez de Lozada. First, in February social protest was organized in La Paz against "El Impuestazo," a new tax to balance the government budget deficit, which was one of the structural adjustment policies dictated by the International Monetary Fund. In September 2003, the government took steps for the approval of Supreme Decree 24806, which gave transnational companies the right to own natural gas sources and to exploit and commercialize gas. This measure led to a new social uprising, known as the "Gas War" which finally achieved the resignation of President Sánchez de Lozada. Protests included road blockades near La Paz led by El Alto Neighborhood Organizations FEJUVE (Federación de Juntas Vecinales) and other organizations.⁵ After several confrontations and deaths, mobilizations gained national support: miners and peasants traveled from Oruro, and there were marches and blockades in all cities to ask for the President's resignation (Hylton and Thomson 2007; Hylton et al., 2005; Gómez 2004). As a response, the government attempted to revise the hydrocarbon law and to call for a Constituent Assembly. These measures were rejected and mobilizations grew bigger,

⁴ Mallku means condor, as well as chief or leader in Aymara.

⁵ El Alto is a neighboring city of La Paz, and is mainly populated by indigenous migrants from the Highlands. This was one of the most active areas of protest during the 2000-2003/2005 mobilizations.

paralyzing all possible activity in the cities, and organizing an effective siege in La Paz which evoked Katari's insurrection of the eighteenth century. Finally, the mobilization put forth a strong national demand for the resignation of the President, who shamelessly escaped on October 17 to the United States, where he had strong political ties.

Carlos Mesa, Sánchez de Lozada's Vice President, took the presidency temporarily. In order to "reestablish order," Mesa attempted to respond to social demands through a call for a popular referendum in 2004 on the uses and property of gas resources, which resulted in the repeal of the gas privatization law. But he was unable to fulfill the many demands that social movements raised for a deeper transformation of the state, and resigned in June 2005. Although Hormando Vaca Díez (Senate President) and Mario Cossío Cortéz (president of lower House of Congress) were the next in line to replace Mesa, protesters refused to continue with previous government representatives and only relented when Eduardo Rodríguez, President of the Supreme Court, temporarily assumed the presidency while elections were prepared.

By election time in December 2005, two electoral poles were clearly defined: the coalition of the right in Social Democratic Power PODEMOS, (Poder Democrático Social) and the Movement Toward Socialism (MAS), which had represented the heterogeneous demands of social movements, and which obtained an electoral triumph with over 54 percent of the votes. This triumph led to a radical shift of state politics in favor of nationalizing key industries, the installation of a Constituent Assembly strongly focused on an indigenous agenda, and toward transforming state and governing institutions.

This process has also posed numerous challenges. First, the right-wing opposition, politically represented by Social Democratic Power PODEMOS (Poder Democrático Social), and by the National Democratic Council CONALDE (Consejo Nacional Democrático) coalition, employed all kinds of mechanisms to obstruct the work of Morales' government.⁶ Oppositional strategies led by CONALDE included pressuring the government to call for Bolivians' vote for or against departmental autonomy in the elections of representatives to the Assembly; bringing back to the Constituent Assembly negotiations the old debate about moving the nation's capital, which is now in La Paz, to the capital city of Sucre, in order to divide forces within the highland region; as well as organizing violent confrontations to interrupt the Assembly in the city of Sucre in late 2007.⁷

Once the conclusion of the Assembly was imminent, CONALDE, in a new attempt to destabilize the government, proposed to call for a "revocatory referendum" in order for Bolivians to vote the permanence or change of the president, vice-president and departmental governors or prefectos before voting the new constitution. Contrarily to

⁶ In February 2003, some months before indigenous and popular social movements toppled President Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada, the Civic Committee of Santa Cruz, together with those of the eastern departments of Beni, and Pando formed the "half moon" (media luna) as a regional right wing coalition which has since then claimed for "autonomy" and threatened to "separate" from Bolivia. In 2007 the department of Chuquisaca, host of the Constituent Assembly, joined this coalition which constituted itself as CONALDE in that same year. PODEMOS, instead, is a right-wing political group led by presidential candidate Jorge "Tuto" Quiroga in the 2005 election, and other conservative politicians affiliated to the former political party Nationalist Democratic Action, ADN (Acción Democrática Nacionalista). Although these two political groups work together, they have different perspectives and strategies.

⁷ The claim for "Departmental Autonomies," was mobilized by the governing elites of Santa Cruz based on a nineteenth-century demand for a federal form of state. Through this claim, regional elites, organized in the Civic Committee of Santa Cruz (Comité Cívico de Santa Cruz), demanded management of profits resulting out of departmental resources such as oil and gas.

their expectations, president Morales took the challenge and immediately called for the referendum, in which his party won by 64% of the national vote, losing only in Beni and Santa Cruz. This event strengthened and proved the current legitimacy of Morales' government, and provoked a new violent response from "Civic Committees" and armed youth groups like the Santa Cruz Youth Union (UJC) in Santa Cruz, Beni, Tarija and Pando in September 2008 against neighborhoods and communities supporting the Morales government. After the MAS government dialogued with CONALDE representatives in order to stop violence and to discuss their demands for departmental autonomies and the redistribution of regional earnings on natural resources, the Congress called for the referendum to vote the new Constitution in January 2009. The racially motivated violence organized by right-wing groups demonstrates the urgency and importance of the Plan Nacional as a site in which indigenous images and voices generate alternative ideas about Indians' presence in national politics.

In addition to right wing pressures, Morales' government faced a second challenge. While proclaiming itself as "the government that belongs to social movements" (*el gobierno de los movimientos sociales*), there are a number of tensions and contradictions in the government's attempts to fulfill the expectations and demands of the highly heterogeneous movement sectors. For example, there have been conflicts with the teachers' union after the government tried to implement the "plurinational education law" in July 2006; and with independent cooperativist miners or cooperativistas. In addition, the new government has failed to eradicate political clientelism or to promote political debate and effective grassroots participation mechanisms. As discussed in the previous section, this new relationship between the state and social movements, which remains

ambiguous, raises a question that many analysts are now debating in Bolivia: How much the government's claim of "belonging to social movements" will eventually result in cooptation of the movements? Or, how much should the government remain apart, in order for social mobilizations to maintain their autonomy to criticize and question, while also contributing to the construction of a different state? (Chávez M. 2006; Do Alto and Stefanoni 2007; Hylton and Thomson 2007; García-Linera, Tapia and Prada 2007). These open questions remain as a challenging debate that will surely inform the direction of the highly expected national project and the "social movements' state."

Methods

One year before my arrival in Bolivia to start my fieldwork in September 2005, I had discussed with some indigenous communicators and project coordinators the possibility of developing my dissertation research on the Plan Nacional. I had met and befriended them at various indigenous film and video festivals during my part-time job at the Film and Video Center of the National Museum of the American Indian in New York City.

Although all my hosts were welcoming and aware of the reasons for my visit, I was not immediately given access to their work immediately. While they asked me with curiosity about the focus of my project, they also made straightforward questions about the use of my research and its potential risks for their own process. They mentioned previous experiences with anthropologists and researchers who meet with organizations and communities to get people's information in order to "take it away" and publish it in other languages. They also talked about cases of "well intentioned" anthropologists who

end up damaging the organizations' internal political processes by manipulating their data without being aware of possible political consequences.

In the midst of this thought, I remembered that the Plan Nacional emerged as a response to the work of anthropologists and filmmakers who authoritatively portrayed the life of indigenous peoples for the sake of science, without considering the possible impacts that such works could have on them, and without considering them as interlocutors. Their questions about the possible use of my research for their own process also helped me situate my questions and goals in relation to their political work. After explaining the research goals and questions, I offered to collaborate with specific tasks during my observation of their activities as a "participant observer." I also offered to write in Spanish my preliminary research findings, which would include a history of the Plan Nacional, as well as the main points of the conversations that came out in interviews with indigenous communicators, trainers and leaders.⁸ Finally, I offered to organize a series of workshops with indigenous communicators in order to reflect about the different ways in which indigenous peoples have been represented in ethnographic, tourist, commercial, film, and popular images during the twentieth century.⁹ An aspect that contributed to their agreeing to my research project was that Plan Nacional members were interested in my previous work on indigenous communication in Oaxaca, Mexico. I acknowledge that these attempts to develop a more collaborative research process do not necessarily guarantee an accurate or comprehensive representation of the Plan Nacional's

⁸ I gave them the document in November 2007, before leaving Bolivia. Until November 2008, they were preparing it for publication for their own use (Zamorano-Villarreal 2008).

⁹ These workshops took place in May 2007 with young communicators from lowland Bolivia in Santa Cruz and in August 2007 with Plan Nacional communicators and leaders in Sucre.

work. Yet, this frank questioning at the beginning of my field research, and the process of collaboration that ensued contributed to building a nourishing dialogue with my informants, which provided key insights and questions for this dissertation.

My research methodology combined participant observation of the work of the Plan Nacional and numerous political and cultural events in Bolivia, with interviews and visual analysis of videos. I observed and documented the production of two videos in the departments of Potosí and Beni. During shooting I participated in activities such as documenting events in audio or photo; and assisting with basic sound, illumination or production tasks during video shootings. I observed at least five political meetings and video workshops with communicators, organization leaders, and, sometimes, government representatives in Cochabamba, Sucre, Trinidad, and Northern La Paz. During these events I collaborated by writing the minutes or "relatorías," a task that gave me the possibility of being present in debates and documenting in detail discussions without having to participate with my own opinions.

With a group of communicators I visited various indigenous villages in the Bolivian lowland region in a video campaign to promote the idea of a Constituent Assembly in May and June 2006. During a three-month stay in Potosí, I also observed the political, economic and social tensions that videomakers experience on a daily basis in a particular region of Bolivia. In addition to participant observation, I conducted interviews with five national organization leaders, ten Plan Nacional video and political trainers, and ten community members involved with Plan Nacional activities in the regions of La Paz, Northern La Paz, Cochabamba, Potosí, Tarija, Santa Cruz and Beni. Since in most cases involvement in video production is related to political leadership at the community or

organization level, I collected activist biographies from twenty-five indigenous communicators from all the regions covered by the Plan Nacional. I also conducted informal interviews with community, urban and international audiences.

Besides my continuous exposure to videos during the research, I selected eight videos (two documentaries, one television program, and five fictional videos) in order to analyze their specific features. The selection aimed at representing the variety of topics, narrative genres, ethnic groups, audience impact, and times of production.

Finally, although they were not part of my field research, three previous collaboration experiences with indigenous videomakers from Latin America also contributed to my analysis. I worked in Latin American Projects at the Film and Video Center of the National Museum of the American Indian, Smithsonian Institution, from 2002 to 2005 and continued collaborating with its Native American Film and Video Festival until 2007. In addition, since 2006 I have been a "fraternal member" of the Latin American Council of Indigenous Peoples' Film and Communication (Consejo Latinoamericano de Cine y Comunicación de Pueblos Indígenas, CLACPI). I also coordinated video production activities with an indigenous women's organization in southern Oaxaca from 1998 to 2000. Conversations and activities during this time have provided important insights to situate my research in relation to both community-based and international contexts of indigenous video production and circulation.

A methodological note on translation

Most of my field research activities were in Spanish, although I received support from indigenous communicators from different regions when I requested their help in

understanding a comment, most often in Guaraní, Aymara, or Quechua, during a community video screening, a communication workshop or a political event. I also sought their help when I had doubts about the Spanish subtitling of specific jokes or dialogues in Plan Nacional videos.

I conducted all my interviews in Spanish. All translations from Spanish are my own, unless otherwise indicated.

I have used concepts with no clear English translation in the original Spanish version between quotation marks and in italics, sometimes indicating an approximate, but not exact, English translation. Such was the case for "originario," which could be translated as "autochthonous." The term "originario" in Bolivia has been appropriated by Andean indigenous peoples to differentiate themselves from the "indígena" adscription used among lowland indigenous peoples, and implies an original belonging to the territory where they live. Whenever people refer to all indigenous peoples in Bolivia, they have to include both terms: pueblos indígenas originarios.

In Bolivia, Quechua is a linguistic category, not an ethnic one. Nevertheless, after recent indigenous mobilizations this category is also used for ethnic identification. I use both "Quechua" and "Quechua-speaking person" to refer to communicators or people who present themselves as "Quechua."

Finally, there are a number of racial terms with complex meanings that relate to specific regional histories and class relationships (De la Cadena 2000; Rivera-Cusicanqui 1996). Such is the case with terms like "Blanco," Q'ara (Aymara) and Karay (Guaraní) for "White." "Mestizo" refers to racial "mixture." "Chola," depending on the context, refers to mestiza or indigenous women. In La Paz, "birlocha" refers to women with

indigenous roots dressing in Western clothes and implies upward class mobility. "Indio" is used both as a derogatory term for an "Indian" or indigenous person. "Camba" was originally a dismissive term for lowland Indian. In recent times, "Camba" is also both used as a dismissive term against rich people from the lowland region, and as a sort of common white ethnic identity in Eastern Bolivia. "Colla," a Quechua word for people from the Qollasullo Inca region in the Andes is a term among indigenous people from the highlands and a word that refers to any person from that region, although some people in the Eastern region also use it in a discriminatory way to refer to highland people. "Chunchu" is a Quechua word for people living in the forest or Bolivian Lowlands, although it also has a pejorative meaning of "forest savage." When I employ these terms in the text I provide a brief explanation of their uses.

Chapter organization

Building on the emphasis that indigenous videomakers make on the Plan Nacional as a political process of indigenous communication, this dissertation is organized into seven chapters that, together, attempt to portray the different aspects of such a process.

By describing the history and main features of the Plan Nacional, Chapter 1 analyzes how its members have appropriated the concept of "indigenous communication" to define their work as a collective political process. Chapter 2 situates the National Plan in a particular political and artistic context, as well as within the wider movement of indigenous communication in Latin America. In order to learn more about the political character of the Plan Nacional, Chapter 3 analyzes the relationship between the work of communicators and their background as community leaders and cultural promoters. It

discusses how access to video production and distribution has contributed to their sense of personal and political possibility. It also examines the internal power relations and tensions among indigenous communicators.

Chapter 4 looks at the involvement of indigenous communities in reenacting and reproducing political situations in fiction videos scripted collectively, and at the significance of life experience to confer videos with particular political meanings. Chapter 5 analyzes indigenous communicators' concerns on issues such as narrative structure, authorship, the possibilities for translating their stories into an audiovisual language, and the significance of collectiveness and negotiation for their work. Chapter 6 discusses visual consumption practices among indigenous communicators themselves, and the ways in which these inform their own depictions of indigeneity.

Chapter 7 discusses the Plan Nacional strategies and impacts on tremendously heterogeneous groups of audiences. It discusses the technological possibilities of video for presenting "simultaneous collective experiences" as political messages. It also analyzes the tensions involved in the distribution process, such as commitment to expectations of funding providers, and the election of technological and narrative elements to meet specific industry standards that in many ways "discipline" the production and circulation. Finally, the conclusions discuss the challenges of indigenous communication for constituting a site of politics in light of the new configuration of political relations and the state.

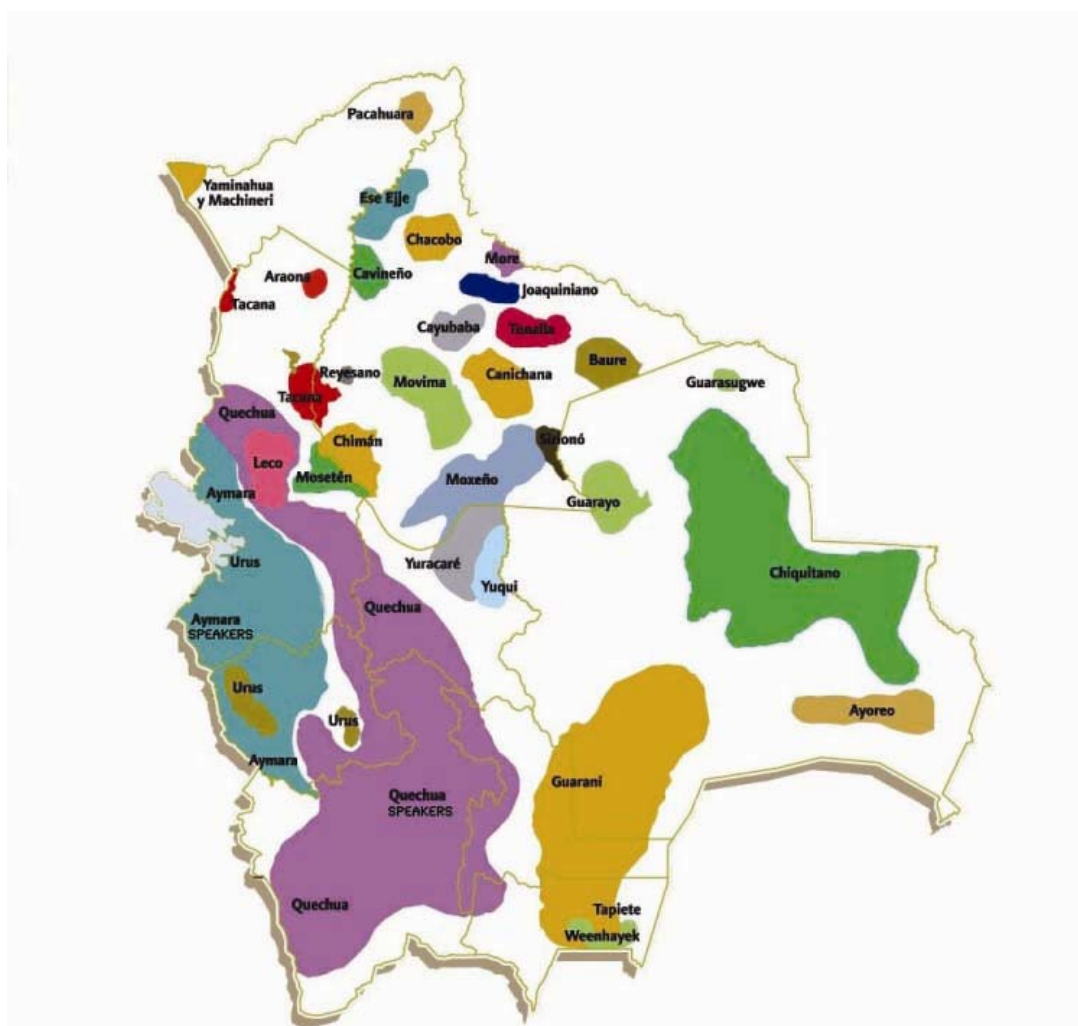


Figure 1. Map of indigenous populations in Bolivia
(Courtesy CEFREC-CAIB).

Chapter 1. The Plan Nacional: a process of indigenous communication



Figure 2. CAIB communicators shooting indigenous march in the highlands, 2003. (Courtesy CEFREC-CAIB).

The Plan Nacional

In order to explain the particular ways in which the Plan Nacional has used the idea of communication as a collective political process, this first Chapter introduces the history, main features, and political actors of the National Plan of Indigenous Audiovisual Communication, the most notorious attempt to represent indigenous people in the media and, specifically, in video production in Bolivia.

The Plan Nacional was founded in 1997, after a one-year process of diagnosis and consultation, taking as a base communication work and needs of indigenous and peasant organizations. It is a non-governmental initiative coordinated by the Film Training and Production Center CEFREC (Centro de Estudios, Formación y Realización Cinematográfica) and the Indigenous Audiovisual Coordinating Body from Bolivia CAIB (Coordinadora Audiovisual Indígena Originaria de Bolivia). The Plan organizes video production as part of the activities of the five indigenous and peasant confederations in Bolivia: Bolivian Indigenous Peoples' Confederation CIDOB (Confederación de Pueblos Indígenas de Bolivia), Union Confederation of Migrant Settlers of Bolivia CSCB (Confederación Sindical de Colonizadores de Bolivia), Trade Union Confederation of Bolivian Peasant Workers CSUTCB (Confederación Sindical Única de Trabajadores Campesinos de Bolivia), National Council of Ayllus and Markas of Qullasuyo CONAMAQ (Consejo Nacional de Ayllus y Markas del Qollasuyo) and the Bartolina Sisa National Federation of Indigenous and Peasant Women of Bolivia FNMCIQB-BS (Federación Nacional de Mujeres Campesinas Indígenas y Originarias de Bolivia Bartolina Sisa) (Figure 3). Each national confederation groups together local and regional

peasant and indigenous organizations which, since the 1980s, have become key actors in national politics.¹⁰



Figure 3. Meeting of Plan Nacional members with national peasant and indigenous organizations' leaders, Cochabamba, 2006.
(Courtesy CEFREC-CAIB).

The Plan Nacional is aligned with the goals of the confederations, particularly in their defense of indigenous rights and their call for establishing an indigenous-based agenda since the 2005 demands for a Constituent Assembly. Most indigenous video producers are members of confederations appointed by their organizations to serve as “communicators” (See Chapter 3). The work of the Plan Nacional provides training in

¹⁰ Agrarian confederations took a prominent role in national politics after the first ones, such as the CSUTCB, became independent from the government, and after the weakening of workers' unions and of the national organization that brought them together, the Bolivian Workers Central COB (Central Obrera Boliviana). This history is explained more in detail in the Introduction.

video production and distribution to indigenous communicators from different regions of Bolivia. During and after training workshops, participants suggest stories, topics and ideas, some of which are later developed into fictional and documentary films. Most films center on documenting political, historical or traditional aspects of life in indigenous communities.

Specific political moments have strongly influenced the direction and themes of video production. For instance, when the Plan Nacional started, most films were built upon *cuentitos* or oral stories that communicators remembered from their regions about all kinds of topics. Oral stories often served as a pedagogical or moral tool to warn people against issues like ambition or disobedience in videos such as *Qulqi Chaliku* (Vest Made of Money, 1998) and *Oro Maldito* (Cursed Gold, 1999). Later, the Plan Nacional produced a great number of local documentaries. But beginning in 2005, productions addressed issues considered relevant to the political situation, such as land and territory, traditional law, or bilingual education. In the same year, the Plan Nacional added to its activities radio training and production. The political centrality of indigenous peoples has also inspired productions recreating historical events (See Chapter 5).

The Plan Nacional also has ambitious distribution strategies for its growing production of audiovisual and radio materials, as Chapter 7 explains in detail. These include campaigns or video tours around indigenous communities in most regions of Bolivia; organization of video screenings and debates in cities; and participation in regional, national and international video festivals and communication conferences.

Distribution also occurs through the transmission of television and radio programs, such as *Entre Culturas*.¹¹

In summary, the Plan Nacional functions through the ongoing collaboration between: (1) the five national indigenous and peasant confederations (CIDOB, CONAMAQ, CSCB, CSTUCB and FMCBBS); (2) indigenous communities related to communicators or confederations; (3) an indigenous communicators' grassroots organization that describes itself as the "national organizations' technical communication arm" (CAIB); and (4) an organization in charge of counseling, training, and management (CEFREC). The following table presents the functions of the organizations that conform the Plan Nacional [Figure 4].

Organizations	Functions
<i>National Confederations:</i> - Confederation of Indigenous Peoples from Bolivia, CIDOB. - National Council of Ayllus and Markas of Qullasuyo, CONAMAQ. - Union Confederation of Migrant Settlers of Bolivia, CSCB. - Trade Union Confederation of Bolivian Peasant Workers, CSTUCB. - Bartolina Sisa National Federation of Indigenous and Peasant Women of Bolivia, FMCBBS.	- Supervision of political content of communication products such as video, and radio and television programs. (Focused since 2005 on the Constituent Assembly.) - Organizational and institutional support in production and distribution activities.

¹¹ The television program *Entre Culturas* broadcasts three times a week on the National State Channel, Canal 7; and radio programs with the same name are transmitted in various community and national radio stations. One of the TV programs, *Bolivia Constituyente* is a special program with interviews, debates and informative notes about the Asamblea Constituyente.

Indigenous communities: (These are involved at various levels according to their participation in national confederations and to their relationship with indigenous communicators.)	- Collaboration in script writing. - Support in pre-production and production activities. - Collaboration in acting and scene recreation. - Support with distribution activities.
Indigenous Audiovisual Coordinating Body from Bolivia, CAIB.	Audiovisual Production: - script writing - developing communicational contents - video, TV and radio production. Distribution work in urban and rural areas.
Film Training and Production Center, CEFREC	- Technical and thematic consulting and training. - Management. - Fundraising.

Figure 4. Organizations and functions of the Plan Nacional

The Plan Nacional origins: CEFREC, CLACPI and CAIB

In Bolivia, the Film Training and Production Center CEFREC (Centro de Estudios, Formación y Realización Cinematográfica) was founded in 1989 with the goal to support, by means of audiovisual communication, subordinate groups' political, educational and cultural initiatives (Plan Nacional 2006:84).¹² CEFREC started to support communication projects of neighborhood organizations from El Alto such as the Centro de Promoción de

¹² Specifically, CEFREC's goal is to: "Take care of the communication aspects for the development of organization, educative and cultural projects that, for many reasons, social institutions do not accomplish [...] One of its priority tasks is to motivate and coordinate actions related to indigenous communication, and indigenous video and film production and distribution in Bolivia."

la Mujer Gregoria Apaza and the Centro Cultural Villa Santiago Segundo. These organizations found video technologies helpful to analyze their realities. "We created the Santiago Segundo Cultural Center," said Franklin Gutiérrez, an active member of this Center constituted by young people belonging to displaced miners' families, and one of the CEFREC founders.

And we used that space to discuss, organize debates, talk about our problems. That space served as an alternative space. And there we discovered video as a useful tool for our objectives.

Like this Center, other urban and popular organizations started to find political possibilities in video technologies. CEFREC, in collaboration with members of the New Bolivian Film and Video Movement, worked in video production and circulation with coca growers' organizations from the Yungas region in the defense of coca leaf production, with milk producers' organizations from the Chapare region, as well as with political and cultural organizations in the lowlands, such as the Bolivian Indigenous Peoples' Confederation CIDOB (Confederación de Pueblos Indígenas de Bolivia) and Cruceño Handicrafts from the Countryside ARTECAMPO (Artesanía Cruceña del Campo).

Besides working with political communication initiatives within Bolivia, CEFREC also participated in international events to screen videos and to exchange experiences with similar initiatives, particularly in other Latin American countries. This is how CEFREC participated in the Fourth Indigenous Film and Video Festival organized by the Latin American Indigenous Film and Video Council CLACPI (Consejo Latinoamericano

de Cine y Comunicación de Pueblos Indígenas) in the cities of Lima and Cuzco in Peru in 1992. CLACPI was created in 1985 in Mexico by a group of ethnographic filmmakers with the idea of having a space to screen and discuss films about indigenous peoples. Nevertheless, in the Fourth Festival in Peru, CLACPI suffered a crisis due to ideological differences between a group of ethnographic filmmakers who proposed to continue doing films about indigenous peoples, and a group of filmmakers and organizations that sought to do films by indigenous peoples. "CLACPI had its own value from its foundation in 1985, it was the first festival, there was no other space to see films of indigenous peoples," Iván Sanjinés affirmed.

Even when films were not produced by indigenous people themselves, there were interesting people in that group who wanted to change things. But there was also a group that wanted to continue doing their films, their research. They wanted to continue doing anthropological and ethnographic film. And we hooked up more with the people who had a more committed vision, more political. Then CLACPI changed and became a space for building processes. I think we are part of a broader energy that gets together and grows bigger.

Iván Sanjinés underlined the significance of CLACPI for the Bolivian process:

Then in 1992, as we got closer to CLACPI, we participated in the Lima and Cuzco Festival. We arrived in the most interesting moment, at the time for definitions. And we were also going through a reflection process because it was more a matter of commitment, about how this could be useful to transform things, than an issue about

skin, about being indigenous people, miners, or urban people. We arrived in Peru and there was all that crisis at the Festival. And we obviously joined the group that wanted to change things.

This account reflects a crisis within ethnographic film and within anthropology in general. In anthropology, this "crisis of representation" questioned the issue of "ethnographic authority," which referred to all kinds of ethnographic representations, including ethnographic writing and film (Marcus and Fischer 1986). The debate that Iván Sanjinés describes within CLACPI relates to these kinds of discussions: should the ethnographic voice in film remain in charge of an observing author or ethnographer? Or, should film work as a tool to "build processes" and contribute to transforming political realities through training subaltern subjects—who most of the time serve as ethnographic "informants"—so they use video technologies to express "their own voices," and to "depict their own realities?" This debate also questioned the limits and possibilities of academic research for political action.

As Iván Sanjinés explained, the idea of using film for "building political processes" did not mean to work with indigenous peoples per se. He argues that beyond being "an issue about skin" or about being "indigenous peoples, miners, or urban," their concern was to diversify the possibilities of expressing different voices as a political "commitment," to "transform things." This interesting reflection emphasizes indigenous communication not so much as an ethnic or cultural issue, but as a political "commitment" to contribute to transformation processes that are taking place in different Latin American countries with the participation of indigenous peoples.

The involvement of CEFREC with CLACPI was crucial for Bolivia, especially when this country was selected to organize the Fifth Latin American Indigenous Film and Video Festival in 1996. Through its contacts with national peasant and indigenous organizations and with popular communication initiatives, CEFREC invited community promoters, communicators and leaders to a first communication training workshop in the locality of Yotala, department of Chuquisaca, in May of 1996. Even though CEFREC had already developed a working relationship with many organizations, it was not easy to gain the leaders and representatives' trust. "There was distrust, there were problems, people didn't trust," Iván Sanjinés explained. Many leaders felt that it was one of the many external projects that arrived to record their images.

People thought that we were once again those who came to lie or to take away their images. And they said: 'no, no, we don't want to know.' I remember for instance Guaraní people, they distrusted a lot at the beginning because there was a film called The Blue Jaguar that was never brought back. And it won prizes in various festivals. Then Guaraní people were furious, filmmakers had interviewed their leaders. And the film was nice, full of mythology, everything, but obviously with an outside vision. And it was never given back. There were a lot of people who came with their film equipment to communities and people remained very frustrated because they always took away things, they published their books, films that were never seen, they were in English, in French.

In this account Sanjinés pointed at a very common phenomenon. Ethnographic subjects are starting to question more in depth the fact that social scientists and filmmakers take away information, images, music, and knowledge from researched

populations without giving them back the processed information or research findings. On the one hand, these accounts demonstrate that communication struggles not only seek to appropriate representational technologies for indigenous people's own use, but also to question conventional research practices that reproduce hierarchical relationships between the "researcher" and his "subjects" or "informants." This important question will be discussed in detail in Chapter 2 in relation to the history and crises of anthropology and ethnographic film. On the other hand, this phenomenon is not a mere concern about how indigenous peoples are "represented" but, most importantly, it demonstrates that indigenous communicators and their collaborators are aware of the significance of video and media for communication processes and, therefore, for building, recreating and contesting political imaginaries.

Despite these difficulties, the response to the invitation to participate in the festival's preparatory workshop was positive; first, because the organizers were clear on the idea of creating a collective process as opposed to extracting information from participants. And second, because the possibility of screening materials about indigenous peoples in Bolivia at an international level was attractive to the participating organizations.

This was how, under precarious economic conditions but with the broad participation of representatives from national organizations and from different regions of Bolivia and other Latin American countries, the first video production workshop took place as part of the Festival activities. The workshop was developed with the support of filmmakers and organizations that promoted similar processes in other Latin American countries.¹³ The

¹³ Organizations participating from other countries included the Indigenous Video Center of Oaxaca, México; Televisión Serrana from Cuba; Lulul Mawidha from Chile; and Video in the Villages from Brazil.

discussion within this first workshop led to the founding of the CAIB, as Nicolás Ipamo, an active Chiquitano videomaker in his mid thirties who was coordinator from 2005 to 2008, remembered.

We have decided to found CAIB because we said: 'Well, you come from El Alto, I come from the Chiquitanía region, the other from San Miguel, the other from Potosí, the other from the Chaco area. Then, if we don't found it now, how are we going to keep in touch? Each of us gets back home, then our efforts would be in vain.' Then we created the board of directors. As we have gone forward we realized that it had to be a Coordinating Body at a national level where all videomakers working with indigenous peoples participate with the support of the national organizations. Then we also started writing the rules and statutes. Now we will have legal status as the communication arm of national confederations.

This account explains the emergence of CAIB as a response to the need to coordinate activities and ideas among indigenous communicators from different regions. It is interesting to note the growing need for social movement organizations to have statutes, rules, legal status; and to fulfill other bureaucratic procedures. These respond to a practical requirement to be able to operate as a legal entity in order to open bank accounts, and to relate to funding institutions and to collaborating organizations (such as the National Confederations). At the same time, this kind of bureaucratic process also provides symbolic weight or legitimacy to the social organization. Through the eleven-year history of the Plan Nacional, CAIB has functioned as the space in which indigenous

communicators from different regions organize, discuss, make decisions, and establish mechanisms of collaboration with CEFREC and the national confederations.

The brief history of the Plan Nacional as a communication initiative that resulted out of a one-year process of diagnosis and discussion between a communication organization (CEFREC), a coordinating body of indigenous communicators which emerged at the same time as the Plan (CAIB), and a group of social movement organizations, explains the nature of the Plan Nacional as an unfinished and ongoing process rather than as a preconceived project.

Since its creation, the Plan Nacional produces films within indigenous peoples from different regions of Bolivia in order to bring forward their own experience and to learn about each other. Most communicators assume that by making indigenous peoples visible and known, they will be better understood and respected. Of course, some videomakers themselves question this general belief. On the one hand, communicators like Marcelina Cárdenas strongly affirm that the very production process is already a way to learn about other indigenous cultures.

We learn and we get to know each other, we share. In each production, before shooting, we organize video screenings that help us to get familiar. And people in communities are very welcoming. When they introduce us as Quechua, Guaraní or Trinitario people, they welcome us with all their heart. And when we go to the highlands and bring over a Chiquitano or Guaraní or Guarayo videomaker arriving to our communities, then people welcome them the same.

On the other hand, communicators like Miguel Angel Yalauma, a Movima communicator in his early twenties, show more skepticism. For instance, he doubts that films produced in the highlands produce better understanding or break prejudices when shown among indigenous people from the lowlands. He also doubts that films can really transform people's political consciousness in his region:

In the Beni region people are that way, they see a video and get impressed only about images, but don't pay attention to contents. We would need to do a huge amount of work for people to raise consciousness and change.

These two positions acknowledge the limitations that Plan Nacional members face in their work. In general, they agree with the idea that their work is a long-term process of transformation, inserted within the political process of Bolivia itself. For this reason, communicators do not conceive of the Plan Nacional as one or various isolated projects, or only to produce videos. Instead, there is a great concern to develop communication and distribution strategies at various levels. The major goal is to build a national communications system that brings together different initiatives and media in order to strengthen the voices of indigenous peoples from throughout Bolivia. "When one is acting as leader we always have different views," experienced Quechua-speaking communicator and leader Ana Vilacama remarked.

Then you see a political use for communication, it's not only about producing video or disseminating it. When we started, leaders said: 'if these videos are made by other people, they come to shoot communities, but where would footage go?' we said.

'Then let's organize'. Then we started on a political struggle also from images, about identity from communication.

By questioning "where footage goes," leaders and communicators explained cultural property as a "political struggle also over images." Once again, this issue questions not only who should own images about indigenous peoples, but also how to make a "political use of communication" to express their own voices through "organizing" into a communicational plan.

Communication, Indigenous Rights and Constituent Assembly Strategy

In 2002, the Plan Nacional organized a series of four international seminars on communication and indigenous rights, and continued with regional workshops during 2006 and 2007 to prepare for the Constituent Assembly.¹⁴ This opened a new process within the Plan Nacional for a stronger collaboration with the national confederations, and with clearer political objectives: the Communication, Indigenous Rights and Constituent Assembly Strategy (Estrategia de Comunicación, Derechos Indígenas Originarios y Asamblea Constituyente) which started formally in 2005. While before

¹⁴ These Seminar-Workshops were: the First Seminar-Workshop on indigenous peoples' rights and their participation in international agreements (2002); a second Workshop on the 169 agreement of the IWO: "*Convenio 169: Conociendo nuestros Derechos, reforzamos nuestra identidad*" (2004); a third workshop on Land and Territory: "*Tierra y Territorio: Comunicando nuestros Derechos*" (2005); and a workshop on gender equity: "*Derechos de los Pueblos Indígenas, Género y Comunicación*" (2006). There were also two regional workshops on gender, one in the Lowlands and one in the Highlands. Finally, in the context of the Constituent Assembly there was a National Encounter: "*Construyendo el Futuro*" (2006) in which there was an important debate between leaders, Assembly representatives and indigenous communicators on the proposal of Indigenous, Peasant and Migrant Settler Organizations for the New State Constitution.

2005 the Plan Nacional focused on specific projects with the national confederations, from the communication strategy and its significant work to prepare for the Constituent Assembly, the confederations recognize more clearly the importance of communication as a key aspect of their work.

Besides opening a training space on indigenous peoples' rights and communication, the Communication Strategy has developed other educational, information and distribution activities on these topics both in indigenous communities and regions, as well as with a wider public. From 2005 on, the Communication Strategy has designed communication packages that include radio and video programs about specific topics so communicators themselves can disseminate information in their regions. The Communication Strategy aims to stimulate debate and to make visible the needs and proposals of indigenous organizations, particularly in relation to the Constituent Assembly.

The work of the Communication Strategy, through initiatives such as the TV program Bolivia Constituyente, strengthens the collaboration that the Plan Nacional has maintained with the national confederations for more than ten years. This collaboration provides the Plan with a unique, nationwide political experience in comparison with other projects of indigenous video in Latin America, such as the ones mentioned in Mexico (Instituto Nacional Indigenista INI's Media Transference) and Brazil (Video in the Villages). Although these other indigenous video projects have achieved wide, original, and excellent quality productions, their regional developments in much larger countries limit their possibilities for achieving nationwide alliances and coverage.

Most communicators agree that the technological possibilities of video for making visible and circulating knowledge about indigenous struggles has been an extremely valuable contribution to the political engagement of indigenous peoples in Bolivia. This belief has become stronger during the late 1990s, and since 2003 has grown due to the achievements of indigenous movements and the December 2005 electoral triumph of president Evo Morales.

The history of the Plan Nacional shows that this process is also built under heterogeneous understandings of the uses and functions of "communication" which have allowed for a particular appropriation of this concept, for example, by referring to videomakers as "communicators" who work collectively, and by explaining their work as a "process" and not as a project. Defining the Plan Nacional as a "process" underscores its unfinished, transforming, and long term character. It also implies an understanding of communication as a site of politics, namely, a process of relationships based on disagreement, negotiation, and debate between numerous political subjects such as indigenous communicators, community members, union leaders, video trainers, and diverse audiences. The Plan Nacional strategically makes use of video technological qualities such as easy reproduction, transportability and temporal immediacy, to engage a great variety of audiences (see Chapter 7). Furthermore, the coordination of the Plan Nacional with national peasant and indigenous organizations and its presence in Bolivia's political life have permitted this communication initiative to define and work toward concrete political goals.

As the following Chapter explains, other elements that contribute to the particular appropriation that the Plan Nacional has made of "communication" are related to the political and artistic context in which it emerged.

Chapter 2. Politics and indigenous communication



Figure 5. Plan Nacional radio production in Tarija, 2005.
(Courtesy CEFREC-CAIB).

This Chapter sets the historical and political background that precedes a complex struggle over media representations about indigenous peoples in Bolivia. It situates the emergence of the Plan Nacional within a historical context characterized by two momentous developments for indigenous peoples. First, although ethnic identities have been present in social movements throughout history, during the mid to late twentieth century they have gained significance as loci of struggles (e.g., Edelman 2001; Hale 1994 and 1997; Ramos 1998; Tapia 2006; Warren and Jackson 2002). Second, through academic debates such as the Barbados meetings in 1971 and 1977 (Brisk 2000; Varese et al. 2008), there was an academic and social upsurge questioning the authority of those who up to that moment had written history and analyzed social reality (i.e., Behar and Gordon 1995; Beverley 1999; Clifford and Marcus 1986; Rappaport 1990; Spivak 1988). By situating the emergence of the Plan Nacional in relation to these phenomena, this Chapter discusses how indigenous communicators explain and have experienced issues addressed in anthropology debates such as "indigenous identity," "voice," and "authority."

Ethnic claims and indigenous struggles

Like other artistic and political experiences from the 1990s, the Plan Nacional's attempts to express alternative voices were often related to a stronger presence of "ethnic" or indigenous rights-based claims in political struggles. Although indigenous peoples in Latin America have a strong history of fighting against colonial oppression, local indigenous groups started to organize in the 1970s around ethnic discrimination in Bolivia and around territory in Amazonian Ecuador. During the 1980s, indigenous

movements started to organize regionally and internationally into associations such as the World Council of Indigenous Peoples in 1984 and the Coordinating Body of Indigenous Communities of the Amazon Basin, COICA (Coordinadora Indígena de la Cuenca Amazónica) in 1984 (Brysk 2000). But "ethnic" claims such as self-determination, cultural rights, access to land and territory and political participation gained more significance among social movements and organizations since the 1990s. Some anthropologists explain the growing presence of indigenous demands as related to the "repercussions of internationalization and state liberalism for the restyling of ethnic politics" and the consequent transformation in the relationship between indigenous groups and the state, for example, through constituent reform processes in order to include indigenous rights (Ramos 1998). Pan American discourses from the commemoration of "500 years of Indigenous and Popular Resistance" in 1991 during the quintecenary anniversary of Columbus arrival to America in 1492 also strengthened indigenous claims, many of which included demands for constituent reforms in favor of indigenous peoples (Brysk 2000; Hale 1994). Moreover, the weakening and repression of labor organizations (Warren and Jackson 2002) as well as to the inclusion of an indigenous rights-based agenda in international institutions such as the United Nations and the International Labor Organization, which focused on issues such as "collective rights and cultural diversity" (Warren and Jackson 2002:13), also brought more indigenous participation in politics.

Despite the growing presence of indigenous and ethnic-based claims in Latin American social movements from the 1990s, it is worth remarking that this is not a new

phenomenon, but part of a complex relationship between class and ethnic-based ideologies through colonial history (Albó 1987; Hylton and Thomson 2007).

As discussed in the Introduction through a historical overview of indigenous struggles in Bolivia, these are not at all a new phenomenon or a "temporal juncture," but constitute a continuous history of oppression against indigenous peoples since colonial times. Nevertheless it is possible to identify a period in the late twentieth century, approximately from the strengthening of indianista Andean ideologies during the 1970s, in which indigenous claims started to gain presence in national politics in dialogue with other Latin American processes just mentioned.

In this context, initial debates within the Plan Nacional implied defining why their approach to media communication was proposed from an indigenous perspective. Communicators and leaders who founded the Plan Nacional saw it as a possibility for strengthening a collective identity as indigenous peoples, a concern that most national indigenous and peasant organizations had been discussing since the 1970s. "The issue of indigenous identity has progressed slowly," affirmed Jesús Tapia, an experienced Aymara migrant leader and communicator around fifty years old.

At least from the 80's there have been meetings even within Latin America. But they were meetings of some groups, like NGOs. And also other people willing to defend themselves, to reaffirm themselves as indigenous peoples through indianista tendencies. And that's how these groups emerged as political parties, such as the Tupac Katari Revolutionary Indian Movement, MITKA. On the other hand, here in the Aymara and Quechua regions we have been talking about our ancestors: we want to recover that knowledge, that wisdom, their Ayllu and Markas organizational

forms. And we have been able to discuss these issues through popular education in communities. We are working on that to strengthen, not to change unions, but to settle better, to learn about our cultures, languages, identities, all that. And perhaps Evo [Morales] himself is recovering these issues as well.

This account notes how debates about indigenous identities have gained space at various levels: from community organizing to political parties, from peasant unions to NGOs, and from international meetings to Morales' government. Most debates centered on acknowledging the colonial history or ethnic discrimination in Bolivia and on adding ethnic claims to the already active class struggles. Conversely, some indianista sectors such as the Tupac Katari Revolutionary Indian Movement, MITKA (Movimiento Indio Tupac Katari) argued against left "white" ideologies that, in their opinion, obscured the history of discrimination that indigenous peoples had experienced in Bolivia (Rivera-Cuisanqui 2003: 170). The following account by Jesús Tapia summarizes the kind of tensions that indigenous organizations and peasant unions have gone through:

Before, communities used to live as traditional communities. But with the 1952 Revolution, unions emerged under the influence of workers, especially miners and industry workers. Then they searched to avoid more working hours, exploitation. Some indigenous organizations learned from those movements, because they were quite oppressed by patrones, so the union became a new space of struggle. This is how the first peasant unions emerged in Cochabamba to struggle for land.

Organizing into unions to struggle, but in that moment the [National Revolutionary Movement] MNR government was also very involved with unions. Then, at the same time, organizing meant to build groups led by the government. But I think that in

Bolivia workers and peasants unions have been of great importance. Union struggles led to what's going on now in the country, and built a relationship with other Latin American countries. It's been important to make progress with ideological debates and to help people to have more knowledge: training based on an ideology. And of course, now they [indigenous organizations] say: 'the union is not ours, it's not from here, we have to be with our ancestral organizations and authorities,' that's the new tendency.

Tapia's testimony periodizes the twentieth century as a series of transitions from "traditional communities" to peasant unions created by workers and miners' movements and then appropriated by the Nationalist Revolutionary Movement MNR (Movimiento Nacionalista Revolucionario) government in Bolivia, and the transition from peasant unions to indigenous organizations since the early 1980s.¹⁵ By doing so, Tapia acknowledges the crucial contributions that workers and miners made to the history of political struggles in Bolivia through the constitution of unions that were later coopted by the MNR revolutionary state. He suggests that the tensions today between peasant unions and indigenous organizations do not do justice to the historical significance of unions for Bolivia's social transformation. This interesting argument points at an essentialist tendency of some indigenous-based claims for recovering and returning to traditional forms of organization without acknowledging the historical transformations that "traditional communities" have suffered not only from the Revolutionary government, but from colonial times.

¹⁵ Anthropologist Xavier Albó also analyzes these transitions, looking at the historical dialogue between class and ethnic struggles from indigenous insurrections in the eighteenth century to the ones in the late twentieth century (1987).

Nevertheless, tensions between peasant unions and groups claiming indigenous identities are also informed by how specific indigenous regions related historically to peasant unions: "As a leader I had visited my entire region in Tinquipaya [North Potosí] and other areas. Then I started to review history... where did unions start? When?" recalled Ana Vilacama, a Quechua-speaking leader, one of the few indigenous communicators with a college degree.¹⁶

I found out that my region was totally traditional, it was not an hacienda where unions organized. Unions arrived to my region in 1982 after a drought in Bolivia. That was a time when we received a lot of humanitarian help and in order to get it we had to organize into unions, bring leaders, lists. And I also found out that in Northern Potosí there were still communities organized into Ayllus.

This testimony suggests that the lack of haciendas and unions allowed for maintaining "traditional" political structures and social organization, such as the Ayllu.¹⁷ Considering the role that unions played, especially during the revolutionary period, as state intermediaries, the reference to "traditional communities" also implies a weaker presence of the state in such regions. As Ana explains, communities in her region had to join unions as a bureaucratic procedure in order to interact with the state to receive the

¹⁶ In Bolivia, Quechua is a linguistic category, not an ethnic one. Nevertheless, in recent indigenous mobilizations this category is also used for ethnic identification. Throughout this dissertation I will refer to Quechua-speaking people only as "Quechua" people.

¹⁷ "Ayllus are not simple conglomerations of families gathered in disperse settlements, known in the region also as "communities." They are rather complex organizations with three, four or even more levels. The so-called maximum ayllu (...) can extend to more than 100 linear kilometers and discontinuous areas which imply several days of walk in hills and valleys." ["Los ayllus no son simples conglomerados de familias, reunidas en los caseríos dispersos, que en la región se conocen también como 'comunidades'. Son más bien organizaciones complejas con tres, cuatro o incluso más niveles. El llamado ayllu máximo (...) puede abarcar más de 100 kms. lineales y áreas discontinuas a varios días de camino en puna y valles" (Ticona et al., 1995:49)].

humanitarian help. Like Ana's region in North Potosí, other areas in the highlands maintained certain features of indigenous political organization which served as a base for constituting indigenous organizations like the National Council of Ayllus and Markas of Qullasuyo CONAMAQ, which defined themselves in opposition to peasant unions. "CONAMAQ already existed as traditional authorities: the Jilanku, Kuraka, Jilakata, and Mallku were in the Ayllu," Anselmo Martínez, a national leader of CONAMAQ in his early forties, proudly explained.¹⁸

But they were not organized legally. Why? Because our law system in Bolivia, our Political Constitution did not acknowledge Indigenous Peoples, no article mentioned the word indigenous, consuetudinary law, traditional authorities were not mentioned. Those words were only incorporated in the Constitution after a march organized in 1992 in the Lowlands. Then in 1997 CONAMAQ got consolidated.

When CONAMAQ got reconstituted I felt proud. I was part of the process in my region. For example, I'm proud of having formed an Ayllu called Terena, and another called Qollana Maxi in Potosí. I had the opportunity to put the poncho on a well known union leader. What does that mean? When he was working as a Union General Secretary, I had to turn him into a different person, into a traditional authority. He had to keep his official book, his union seal, everything, and he had to raise the authority staff, the poncho, and now he, Don Atanasio Quispe, is Mallku of the Council of Originary Ayllus of Potosí CAOP.

¹⁸ Jilanku, Kuraka, Jilakata and Mallku are different kinds of authorities among Aymara and Quechua-speaking peoples.

Anselmo explains CONAMAQ as an effort to bring together communities that maintained "traditional" features, to fully reconstitute them into indigenous political structures (such as Ayllus), and to obtain legitimacy within state politics. Anselmo's example of how they substituted typical union artifacts such as the "official book and union seal" for indigenous symbolic elements such as an authority poncho and staff in order to reconstitute Ayllu Terena provides a fascinating example of the weight of symbolic elements in the process of ethnic recognition.

Anselmo also makes reference to the contribution that indigenous peoples from the lowlands, regionally organized in the Bolivian Indigenous Peoples' Confederation CIDOB (Confederación de Pueblos Indígenas de Bolivia) made for putting forward indigenous claims, for example, through their national marches in the 1990s. "And Amazonian peoples also made a big contribution to that process with their March in 1990 for Identity and Territory," Ana Vilacama, also a CONAMAQ leader, added:

Much earlier people in the highlands thought, for instance, that in the lowlands there were settlements, but they were seen as 'savages' living in the forest. People talked more about Quechua and Aymara people. But after the march in 1990 people said: 'our brothers.' Then the connection started, we even organized some meetings with CIDOB, we were not yet consolidated into CONAMAQ, we were dispersed movements then. And it took longer for constituting CONAMAQ in 1997. [...] I think they [indigenous peoples from the lowlands] also started to value us, because sometime they told us: 'If you in the Andean region had not fought, we would've been exterminated.' Then the struggle of both of us has been important: 'If you need us, we also need you.' That's why when we met as indigenous

communicators it was also nice to see that we came from different peoples, to get to know each other, and to work together too.

As Ana points out, CONAMAQ was very influenced by CIDOB, which from its emergence in 1982 had been the only national organization that self-identified as "indigenous." In her account she mentions the importance of the encounter and mutual acknowledgement between indigenous peoples from the highlands and the lowlands for strengthening indigenous identities in Bolivia. Such encounters between indigenous peoples became frequent in the 1990s, which also coincided with the gathering of different indigenous groups from throughout Latin America to commemorate "500 years of resistance to colonialism." "The topic became more important because of the 500 years of resistance to colonialism," Ana went on:

The Union also functioned as a transition to indigenous people's reconstitution. People talked a lot about identity, self organization, all that. In many regions self organization was maintained, but in a very isolated way. Even traditional authorities appointed by governors almost lost their power. That's how people started talking about identity: 'We are Quechua people, we have a language, a culture.' People discussed these issues in other departments, nationwide. There were movements. For example, in 1992 there was a big meeting here in La Paz where all groups from the Aymara region almost took the National Palace. There was a lot of work then, people talked about the Assembly of Nationalities before talking about the Constituent Assembly. Those were very important moments to raise consciousness as Indigenous Peoples.

As in the previous testimony of Jesús Tapia, Ana also acknowledges the importance of unions as sites of debate about ethnic identities. She points at how such debates took place simultaneously in different regions, and at the role of mobilizations to bring them together as national claims. As she notes, the demand for a Constituent Assembly was initially discussed in such a context.

These testimonies explain indigenous demands not as a new movement that substituted ethnic for class struggles, but rather as an element that has been present throughout the colonial and contemporary history of Bolivia. While indigenous claims are sometimes in tension with class-based organizations such as workers and peasants' unions, they also constitute ideologies that build upon past struggles to make evident the history of discrimination that indigenous peoples have experienced.

These testimonies also allow us to understand the many elements that have contributed to strengthening indigenous demands from the 1980s. For example, they narrate the complex and heterogeneous relationships that indigenous peoples from different regions have had with the Bolivian state either as Ayllu members, migrant settlers, peasant union affiliates, or Amazonian peoples; and the significance of their encounter, mutual acknowledgement, and collective mobilization. Another aspect related to the growing significance of ethnic identities since the 1980s was the creation of national organizations that defined themselves as indigenous, such as CIDOB, founded in 1982 by representatives of indigenous peoples from the lowlands, and CONAMAQ,

created in 1997 by indigenous peoples from the highlands.¹⁹ Testimonies also underline the crucial contributions of workers, miners, and peasant unions to Bolivia's history of social transformation.

Finally, Anselmo's explanation of how he "turned a Union secretary" into a "traditional Ayllu authority" by putting the poncho on him and giving him the authority staff, exemplifies the weight of symbolic elements in social struggles. This example permits explaining the display and contestation of symbols and meanings as processes of self-affirmation that are embedded in historical struggles, and not as random expressions of a particular ethnic identity. In the following section I discuss how communicators themselves relate differently to the issue of indigenous identities and to social mobilizations, and how these debates have informed the work and objectives of the Plan Nacional.

Defining "indigenous communication"

Like other projects of indigenous communication, the Plan Nacional included in its workshops not only technical training on the use of equipment, but also ample spaces for debating and reflecting about the meaning and implications of producing indigenous media. These debates included identifying indigenous peoples' communication needs and the possible ways of satisfying them. On the one hand, although there was a strong history of community radio in Bolivia, indigenous leaders and communicators explained

¹⁹ Indigenous territories in Bolivia are generally addressed as Altiplano or Highlands, where indigenous peoples, mainly Aymaras and Quechua speakers, define themselves as "originarios" and the Oriente or Lowlands, where more than 25 different indigenous cultures define themselves as "indígenas". For this reason, when talking about all indigenous peoples of Bolivia it is necessary to use both terms: *Pueblos Indígenas Originarios*.

the difficulties for accessing media technologies. This happened both because many indigenous communities did not have the infrastructure conditions --for example, many communities lack electricity or have little or no radio and television reception; and because they had limited access to owning and learning how to operate media technologies. On the other hand, even if some indigenous communities had access to media technologies, another problem was that conventional media did not produce quality information about the political reality of Bolivia, and that their few representations of indigenous peoples were most of the times folkloric or ridicule (CEFREC-CLACPI-Bolivia 2000).

When defining the kind of communication they needed, communicators discussed how they could create it from indigenous peoples' experiences and problems. Many communicators already identified themselves as indigenous people before attending the Plan Nacional workshops through their previous participation in their communities and organizations. "All that movement, talking about identity, about justice, was discussed in radio," remembered Patricio Luna, an Aymara videomaker in his late forties.

Even during military coups, there was always the presence of indigenous peoples in radio. That was around 1982 or earlier. But before, in the 1970s, 1974, they talked about indianismo, for instance Constantino Lima.²⁰ I used to hear about indianismo, for example German Choquehuanca, an ex-deputy, he was a young student and used to go to the 16 de Julio Square in El Alto to speak with no wiphala flag or anything: 'Identity, we should mobilize, they are dismissing us, the government...' all those

²⁰ Constantino Lima was one of the main representatives of *indianismo* and member of the Tupac Katari Revolutionary Indian Movement, MITKA (Movimiento Indio Tupac Katari.)

things. I was very young. He had his Che Guevara hat, and when he finished his talks, he used to ask for a little coin with his hat. And people used to give him [coins] [laughter].

We also talked about identity in radio programs, when we started out with [the community media organization] Qhana. Then also with video production with Chichizo [Eduardo López]. We used to screen our videos in different places and in television channels. And then from 1996 we did that with Iván [Sanjinés, founding director of the Film Training and Production Center CEFREC.] I think he broke a barrier when he told us: 'Do you think that only people with a college degree can produce video?'

This passage depicts the kind of spaces in which issues about indigenous identity and indianista ideas were discussed publicly both in public gatherings and in community radio. It also indicates how the question of indigenous identity was intertwined with class elements, for example, having Choquehuanca speaking about indianismo and wearing his Che Guevara hat, a clearly socialist reference. More importantly, Luna points out that the process of acknowledging his indigenous identity has contributed to "breaking self-esteem barriers," an assertion that invests indigenous identity with a history of oppression and lack of access to realms that are usually limited to professionals, such as the production of video. This aspect, Patricio excitedly noted, helps indigenous peoples to recognize their historical limitations and possibilities:

That's how limits break, it's going well, but there is still a lot to do. But also society has changed after watching videos, or people in communities realize what we are

able to do. And through this time a lot of leaders have emerged, good and bad, and we even have our president now. I see that they have emerged and generated also self-esteem. It's not anymore like saying: 'I'm afraid'. All this has worked to break self-esteem barriers.

Because the idea was initially: when are we going to have the courage, to value ourselves? Before 1996 we used to organize video screenings, we used to go around communities as Saphi Aru. Then I used to say: 'We ourselves should do things, like audiovisual production, television, film, we should do.' Then I don't know how it started, in radio, I don't know but it started: 'we ourselves, we ourselves.' And at the end we managed to become ourselves [laughter]. Now everybody talks about 'we ourselves', that's how, little by little.

In this case, Patricio relates his own identification as an indigenous, Aymara man, to a process of "breaking barriers" and daring to participate in spaces that have been historically attributed to professional people, such as political leadership or media production. Patricio explains that making use of such spaces has facilitated a stronger presence of indigenous peoples in political life. He also suggests that the value of indigenous productions is not only about the possibilities that videos by themselves have to call people for reflection, but also the fact that subjects who have never had access to them are now in charge of their production.

Although most communicators have taken part in political struggles within their union and indigenous organizations, for many of them the reflection about indigenous identities just started through their participation in the Plan Nacional. "I did not feel

anything about the word indigenous, originario, identity, none of those things," explained Marcelino Pinto, a Quechua speaking videomaker from the Chapare region in his late thirties:

I participated in the first video workshop but I didn't get the depth of the issue, of what indigenous communication meant. Then little by little I participated in different workshops, I had many instructors and was more attracted by the technical issues, more than by the goal and objectives. But I think it's been a process because after I learned the technical aspects I started learning more about the objectives. And they were big. There I realized that it was not an ordinary thing, it was a unique experience in Bolivia.

For Marcelino, initial video workshops meant an opportunity to learn how to operate video equipment, and only later he understood its use as a political possibility. This political shift, he explains, related to the objective of producing communication as indigenous peoples. In this case, Marcelino's awareness of indigeneity constituted a process through which he understood his own possibilities, as an indigenous communicator, to take part in this "unique experience" of national politics. Humberto Claros, from the same region, also explains that although in his community they "live as indigenous peoples," it was only within the Plan Nacional that he started analyzing the question of indigenous identity more in depth:

There [in my community] 90 percent of the people speak Quechua. I mean, you live as indigenous people. But there is not a self-identification as 'I am an indigenous person because I have my roots,' no. Why? Because nobody has been interested in raising consciousness. Sometimes a professor would talk about our identity. We

talked a lot about language, that we should not be ashamed, that mothers dress traditionally and we don't have to be ashamed, but just at that level of shame, nothing deeper. We need deeper things to self-identify, and that was not enough.

Then in rural areas we are obviously conscious about the cocalero movement, peasant movements, rural or poor people's movements. But we didn't have a real identity that sees where you come from and a vision for the future as indigenous peoples. That was for me the motivation to continue until now. Like when they hide something away from you and don't want to show it. I am talking about the government, about all that politics that is changing now little by little.

In this case, Humberto talks critically about superficial understandings of indigenous identity which stay "just at the level of shame." Instead, he proposes approaching identity as a political process "that sees where you come from and a vision for the future as indigenous peoples," that is, relating it to past history and envisioning a different future, perhaps one in which indigenous peoples have a fuller participation in the national project.

Like Marcelino and Humberto, Guaraní communicator Regina Monasterios became more involved with the issue of indigenous identities through her participation in the first workshop of the Plan Nacional. In her case, her Guaraní identity was unclear due to the migration of her family to a sugar cane processing camp, and also because of the extreme discrimination that indigenous migrants suffer in cities like Santa Cruz:

I left my community with my family when I was six years old. Then my father went to work at La Bélgica sugar refinery. And well, I was raised in a place where people speak Spanish, some others speak Quechua, others Guaraní, and others Guarayo. But

there is more Guaraní presence there, so my father taught us the basics of Guaraní language. And in Santa Cruz there is a lot of raw racism, they call you 'chiro,' or 'Guarayo.' 'Chiro' means curly hair, but they use it to dismiss people.

Then when I went to the workshop I felt the need to reaffirm my identity with pride, to say: 'I am myself.' And 'myself' means Guaraní. Then I started to change my thought and my attitude. Then in the workshop I was very happy to find other Guaraní brothers, and a Guarayo brother. And I liked it because they spoke their language. Then I said: 'we have to become stronger, we have to reaffirm and to continue working with other people.'

Regina's story is common among indigenous people, especially those who have migrated or who have experienced direct discrimination. Regina "changed her thought and attitude" regarding her indigenous affiliation and language after she interacted with other people who self-identified as indigenous and who had experienced similar forms of discrimination, such as eastern Guaraní and Guarayo peoples. Something similar happened with leader and communicator Ariel Yáñez, a thirty year-old migrant settler living in Northern La Paz. For him, the Plan Nacional workshops were also important for reflecting on his indigenous identity and on how it related to the cultural diversity of his region.

Beyond communication, in my region we also do consciousness raising about our reality. I didn't even imagine that there were Mosetén, Tsiman, Tacana, Esse Ejja people, nor where I came from, why I was there. Because in unions we didn't talk much about cultural belonging and identity. Then I got to know myself and to look

for who I was. Because I didn't speak any [native] language and others did. Then I started to ask a lot of questions [...] After two years we produced a video called A new life that explains how migration and settlements took place, about planned settling and spontaneous settling. Then we self-acknowledge as Quechua and Aymara people, and saw that there are also marriages between cultures. And now I can say that I am an indigenous man. It was very useful to me.

Here Ariel presents a context in which indigenous peoples live together with other cultures, some of which are originally from the region and others of which are highland migrant settlers. He also explains how the communication team from the region decided to produce a video to portray the history of this particular reality.

Together with the debates about indigenous identities, there has also been reflection about the question of interculturality, understood mainly as the possibility for living together and learning more about other indigenous cultures and ways of life. Workshops and video production have encouraged reflection about this issue, especially because these activities request that participants from different indigenous regions work together in script writing, video production, and distribution. This implies long processes of negotiation and openness to understand other members' suggestions. "In the first (radio) workshop I had a hard time writing my script. We did it with another compañero from the highlands and we couldn't understand each other," acknowledged Eddie Salinas, a Tacana leader in his late twenties who started collaborating with the Plan Nacional in 2005.

He suggested an idea. I suggested another one, from his viewpoint, from mine. And maybe what I suggested didn't sound right to him. I think the topic was the Constituent Assembly. At the end we spent one whole day with no progress. Well,

we were worried because nothing came out. Then I said: 'I'll put myself in his situation, I will travel from the lowlands to the highlands.' Good. Then we arrived at an agreement and could write the script together. But that first script was very difficult for me.

These kind of "intercultural" experiences at the moment of writing a script, shooting a video, or organizing itinerant screenings in different regions allow communicators to learn about their own identity claims and about their colleagues' when having to negotiate how to portray problems that are common to all, or to represent regional differences. Through Eddie's account, it is possible to understand that the plurality of indigenous peoples is not a harmonic coexistence of diverse cultures, but that it involves disagreement, difficulties and tensions for working together, and a great degree of negotiation.

Testimonies in this section make evident that there is not a single way of identifying as indigenous peoples. Instead, processes of indigenous affiliation are shaped by regional histories and regional forms of interacting with the state and with other indigenous and non-indigenous peoples: while Patricio Luna from the Pacajes Aymara province in the highlands evokes the first references to indigenous demands from indianista debates from the late 1970s in his region and in the city of El Alto; Quechua speaking settlers in the Chapare region like Marcelino Pinto and Humberto Claros were more familiar with cocalero and union struggles than with a particular indigenous identity despite the fact of "living as indigenous peoples and speaking Quechua," as Humberto notes. Alternatively, the denial of an ethnic affiliation among indigenous peoples from the eastern region, like the case of Regina Monasterio, was related to particular forms of discrimination when

migrating to cities and relating on a daily basis with non-indigenous people; and migrant settlers in the North of La Paz like Ariel Yáñez deal more with the challenges of ethnic diversity and migration. Finally, the continuous practice of "intercultural work" through video and radio production processes allow for questioning, debating and learning from the many diverse understandings and ways of living as indigenous peoples.

These few situations illustrate the heterogeneous personal and regional histories that inform specific ways of relating to the question of indigenous identities. They also demonstrate that indigenous identities are not fixed categories, but that they constitute political claims within complex historical processes. Hence, these different ways of identifying as indigenous peoples continuously nourish the Plan Nacional's goal of developing a process of indigenous communication.

The origins: subaltern voices seeking channels to speak

As mentioned earlier, the Plan Nacional was created and conceived in relation to artistic and political projects that sought to express the multiple voices of subordinate peoples. The attempts to express alternative voices inspired numerous participatory and collective projects in the fields of arts, research, and popular education that in Latin America produced abundant results. In Bolivia, as in the rest of Latin America, valuable experiences took place in theater, film, radio and community communication, research and literature, and music.²¹

²¹ Examples of these kinds of projects in theater include Teatro Trono in El Alto, Teatro Ojo Morado and Teatro Del Ogro in Cochabamba; in film: Grupo Ukamau, Mining Cinema, The New Bolivian Film and Video Movement, and Saphi Aru; in community radio a notable communication network is Radio ACLO; in literature and history the most important initiative is the Workshop of Andean Oral History THOA; and in music

Film and, later, video, facilitated the expression of multiple voices and stories, and their distribution in flexible and efficient ways. The simplification of film and video technologies has importantly contributed to the production and distribution of films through itinerant projects that took cinema to rural and marginal communities for the first time.

With this background, at the end of the 1980s and during the 1990s, several film projects emerged with the objective of not just having the participation of minority groups, but of putting technology in their hands so they could "tell their stories by themselves." During this period numerous projects similar to the Plan Nacional emerged in different countries, attempting to "transfer technology" to indigenous peoples through video training workshops. The development of these workshops sought not only to train people in the use of technology, but also to provoke reflection about the political and cultural possibilities of technology according to their own needs. This is how similar initiatives of indigenous communication emerged throughout Latin America: the Audiovisual Media Transference to indigenous communities (Proyecto de Transferencia de Medios Audiovisuales a Comunidades Indígenas) created by the National Indigenist Institute INI (Instituto Nacional Indigenista) around 1985 in Mexico; Video in the Villages (Video nas Aldeias) in 1987 in Brazil as part of the Center for Indigenous Advocacy (Centro de Trabalho Indigenista); a project of audiovisual production within the Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador CONAIE (Confederación de Nacionalidades Indígenas del Ecuador) from the early 1990s; and many other initiatives of indigenous audiovisual communication. These kinds of projects were soon coordinated

there have been education projects organized mainly by the Native Instruments Orchestra, OIN (Orquesta de Instrumentos Nativos).

by the Latin American Council of Indigenous Peoples' Film and Communication, CLACPI, which has been crucial for the Plan Nacional's initial definition and further development as a process of indigenous communication.

Bolivia: Plan Nacional antecedents and contemporary communication experiences

In Bolivia, numerous communication and film projects and experiences preceded or emerged simultaneously with the Plan Nacional. For example, both the important tradition of community and mining radio in Bolivia, as well as the militant and revolutionary cinema that developed between 1960 and 1990 are antecedents of current indigenous video production. Mining cinema also constituted a significant precedent to indigenous video in Bolivia. This experience was promoted by the Varan Association, French cooperation institutions together with the Trade Union Federation of Bolivian Mine Workers FSTMB (Federación Sindical de Trabajadores Mineros de Bolivia).²² "Perhaps the most immediate precedent is mining cinema," explained Iván Sanjinés. The forty year-old founding director of CEFREC and filmmaker collaborated in this project during the decade of 1980:

It was an attempt to develop an experience, giving cameras and training to miners.

That was in 1983, promoted by French people, the Varan Foundation, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in France, the French Embassy, and the Federal Union of Bolivian

²² The Varan Association (L'Association Varan) was created in 1981 in France after the newly independent government of Mozambique requested the French government to send filmmakers to document the country's changes. Jean Rouch and other French filmmakers proposed teaching local people to produce their own films instead of sending European filmmakers. This Association has developed film and, later, video workshops in different countries in Africa and Latin America. In Bolivia, this initiative was developed with miners in 1983. The Association continues to work in 2008 in France (see: www.ateliersvaran.com).

Miners. I participated mainly in searching for options for the project to continue. It took years of efforts, trying to strengthen the team. A cohort of young people wanting to produce films was created.

Plan Nacional indigenous communicators and video trainers also mention initiatives of community communication, mainly in radio and printed media, that took place before or at the time of the Plan Nacional. Many of these efforts have collaborated in one way or another with the Plan Nacional. They were promoted by Non-Governmental Organizations such as Qhana in Provincia Los Andes, and Solidary Formation FORMASOL (Formación Solidaria) in lowland Bolivia, the Varan Association, Radio ACLO in Potosí, the radio program of the Bureau of Ethnic Affairs in the Lowland region, and the Workshop of Andean Oral History THOA (Taller de Historia Oral Andina) in La Paz. In this respect, some videomakers share their previous experience with community communication. "Yes, we worked from 1987 to 1995. We produced radio," Aymara communicator Patricio Luna recalled.

We had trained with the organization Qhana. There was a competition of writers, let's say, of Aymara writers. Then I participated with a booklet I wrote about the history of my community. There I got the first place award and they told me: 'the ones who received awards can participate in a communication training workshop.'

"I didn't know what communication was, nothing," Luna continued.

They taught us to do some writing, drawings for flyers, bulletins. Then we learned to produce the radio programs in Aymara. That's where the Saphi Aru organization

emerged in Los Andes Province [...] There were also union training courses. By then we were reporting in communities. We used to print some bulletins with a mimeograph machine, with that little thing we used to print a lot of bulletins. And information was all about what happens in communities, in meetings, what agreements they have, news, or what regional and local unions are thinking about. In those bulletins we used to write, we used to include little drawings. Then we were working more with radio. Every Thursday we produced a radio program of 15 minutes, then of half an hour. And we had to make turns, rotate: such union branch [sub-central] is in charge of a Thursday. And that's how we produced programs, we talked about culture, we produced socio-dramas, people were interested in that, like little soap operas. It was interesting, people listened to programs. We were broadcasting in two radio stations: Radio San Gabriel and Radio Altiplano.

These very first initiatives of community communication focused mainly on printed press, which used cheap but efficient technologies such as the mimeographic printing machine, and radio, a versatile and efficient tool to produce and disseminate information in indigenous languages. Radio producers used diverse narrative structures such as soap-operas and sociodramas. As Patricio notes, initial community radio projects also worked with unions and made use of union organizing systems, such as rotating production tasks among the different union "sub-centrals" or affiliated communities.

Similarly, Marcelina Cárdenas, a thirty five year-old Quechua speaking communicator with a degree in linguistics, recounted her experience as a popular reporter

with Radio ACLO in Potosí. "I undertook many charges in my community," she sadly recalled.

But there also women, communities suffered a lot of lies from the government and its authorities. They came to tell lies, even professors themselves, because at the end they were also part of the government. They could work or not, anything happened clandestinely at the community. Then there was an ACLO radio station that arrived to communities and that started training popular reporters so they could broadcast news from their communities. Then one day we talked with women, they told me: 'our work is not known, it's clandestine. Then, why can't you go to get training as a reporter, and we can broadcast what we go through, so we stop with all these lies?' Then I got motivated. I went to get training to make news from the community. And when I broadcasted news, not only I but many other compañeros and compañeras went through many problems, we had to crash against authorities because they didn't like us to tell the truth, what they were doing in our communities. Then we were threatened. I made news for the community radio, denouncing. It was all fight, they didn't let us work. And all reporters got unionized and joined the press union [...] We broadcasted in Quechua but I had to write in Spanish. I had minimal training, I had a hard time writing news. It took me almost a whole day to write one news report [laughter].

The fact that the women organization from Marcelina's community appointed her as a popular reporter allows understanding the role that communities assigned to radio producers as spokespeople with the clear objective of denouncing their troubled

relationship with government institutions. As I will detail in Chapter 3, the Plan Nacional followed the practice of motivating communities and unions to appoint indigenous communicators. This practice of training communicators elected by communities and unions involves a transformative political process both for indigenous communicators, as well as for the people to whom they represent.

Marcelina also narrated the clashes that she and other radio reporters had with the government, a situation common to many popular and community radios through Latin America especially in contexts of dictatorship and authoritarian systems. For example, during dictator García Meza's 1980 coup d'etat, one of the first strategies to demobilize social protest was to attack community radio stations like "The Miner's Voice" and "Pio XIX" in the mining camp Siglo XX in Potosí (Lagos 2006; O'Connor 1990). Similarly, in 2001 the government dismantled "The Cocalero's Voice/Radio Chipiriri" in the Chapare region as part of the conflicts with the cocalero movement. These are just a few examples of the effect that community radio has historically had for informing and contributing to social mobilization, and the consequent threat that it poses to authoritarian governments, as the extensive literature on community radio in Latin America has demonstrated (e.g., Agosta 2004; Colle 1992; Huesca 1996; Murillo 2003; Rockwell 2001; Rodríguez 1994; Thomson 2006).

As a response to government attacks on community radio producers, Marcelina notes the importance of reporters' unions for protecting themselves and for working together. Finally, her explanation of how "we broadcasted in Quechua but I had to write in Spanish" speaks about a great challenge that indigenous communication faces in general, namely, the problem with fluent literacy in a second tongue (Spanish) and, more

importantly, the complex cognitive process implied in the process of writing and translating news again into the mother tongue (Quechua) because there was no instruction in written Quechua. Chapter 5 will discuss a similar challenge regarding indigenous peoples' appropriation of video technologies and video script writing.

Other communication initiatives prior or parallel to the Plan Nacional included communication projects by Support to Indigenous Peasants from Eastern Bolivia APCOB (Apoyo al Campesino Indígena del Oriente Boliviano), Organization of Wenayeeek Captainship in Tarija ORKAWETA (Organización de la Capitanía Wenayeeek en Tarija), and Assembly of Guaraní Peoples APG (Asamblea del Pueblo Guaraní) (Plan Nacional 2006).

Another precedent of the Plan Nacional is the New Bolivian Film and Video Movement MNCVB (Movimiento de Nuevo Cine y Video Boliviano), founded in 1984 as a space to promote independent political cinema. The Movement emerged in dialogue with other Latin American film movements from the 1960s and 1970s, and continues to be active in 2008. The MNCVB has contributed to fighting for new film and television legislation; and to promoting alternative film and video through publications, seminars and workshops. It has also informed about political situations, for instance, by denouncing the discrimination that indigenous peoples from Bolivia suffer. Among the founders of the MNCVB there are many filmmakers who continue producing and promoting alternative audiovisual initiatives.²³ This experience allowed for the

²³ Bolivian filmmakers who took part of the MNCVB include Raquel Romero, Alfredo Ovando, Liliana de la Quintana, Francisco Cajías, María Eugenia Muñoz, Cecilia Quiroga, Eduardo López, Iván Sanjinés, Iván Molina and Miltón Guzmán. The late Beatriz Palacios and Néstor Agramont were also active members of the Movement.

emergence of a similar Movement in the City of El Alto, the Movimiento del Nuevo Cine y Video Boliviano - Filial El Alto in 2005 (López and Scott 2008).

The New Bolivian Film and Video Movement has been important not only as a reference for the Plan Nacional, but most of its members have participated in its development as founders or trainers. Some of the Movement's members, like Eduardo López "Chichizo", and Néstor Agramont, developed film and video projects in collaboration with indigenous communities, integrating elements of oral narrative and collective scriptwriting. "We had already produced some videos with him [Eduardo López] in Qhana," Aymara filmmaker Patricio Luna explained about this initial contact with video production.

Then we founded the Saphi Aru Center. The first video we produced was Martín de Crujías [Martin from the Monastery Wings, 1992]. Then 'Chichizo' already knew us: 'we will produce with you,' he said. Then we started writing the script with him, together. By then I didn't know what a script was, anything. Then: 'What are we going to tell? What problems are there? About land, what can we tell? Then, who are involved in these problems?' All that we wrote. Then we addressed religion problems, we analyzed Catholic religion. Then that video expressed that as well, we participated and made the community participate. We did that in Los Andes Province.

Patricio and Saphi Aru's collaboration with Eduardo López depicts a procedure that filmmakers often used to work on documentary or fictional films with indigenous communities: although filmmakers directed and had a professional technical team,

community members would have a strong participation in providing ideas, stories, and real life situations, as well as in acting for productions.

This and other collaborative methodologies were informed by two film movements that had significant impacts on the history of world cinema and on indigenous film and video production in Bolivia. One was Direct Cinema or "Cinema Verité," promoted by French filmmakers such as Jean Rouch, Edgar Morin, Pierre Perrault and Michel Brault between 1950 and 1970; and the second was the New Latin American Cinema, promoted by filmmakers such as Jorge Ruiz, Jorge Sanjinés and Antonio Eguino (Bolivia), Fernando Solanas, Octavio Getino and Raymundo Gleyzer (Argentina), Glauber Rocha and Nelson Pereira Dos Santos (Brazil), and Patricio Guzmán (Chile) between 1950 and 1980.²⁴

Direct Cinema sought to break with classic ethnographic cinema, and was mainly based on documentary productions that could show the "truthfulness" of film. Some of its proposals were filming subjects without them being aware of the camera's presence, creating real situations where the camera could film in more "natural" ways, generally at hand and accompanying more fluently the development of scenes. This movement sought to relate cinema to social, anthropological and political aspects of reality. Since the 1980s, documentary filmmaking throughout the world has been employing elements from Direct Cinema to work with social projects in developing countries or with subaltern

²⁴ The First Encounter of Latin American Filmmakers took place in Chile at the Viña del Mar Film Festival in 1967. They soon consolidated the Latin American Filmmakers Committee C-CAL (Comité de Cineastas de América Latina), and have since then created numerous educational and political spaces to produce and learn about Latin American cinema.

groups. In these projects, subjects involved have more participation and voice, and sometimes they also collaborate in operating cameras and technical equipment.

In this regard, Iván Sanjinés explained the ways in which the Plan Nacional, although influenced by these initiatives, also tries to distance itself from the problems of sustainability that such projects pose. "We started to work together to face the situation that things were done through fashionable projects," Iván Sanjinés affirmed about the initial work of CEFREC with the MNCVB, "or because it was 'pretty' to come and see what indigenous people or miners did, and to organize some good screenings in Paris – which happened a lot." Here Iván made a criticism against film projects that work with indigenous or other subaltern people "to come and see what they did," without addressing in depth the political process in which they live, or without aiming at transforming their condition. "Because CEFREC at the end is a response to some frustration," Iván emphasized.

We were trying to build something beyond a specific project. Because funding is usually defined for a specific project. So some budgets just cover professor salaries. So no structure remains, nothing solid. And reality is not analyzed, it is not considered what happens to cinema, what happens to Bolivia in a specific moment, why people should get trained, why to train people or youth beyond having an interesting anthropological experience, beyond seeing what they do with cameras and all that. Because French people have done a lot of that: they've been in Africa, in many places doing that kind of thing, particularly in the line of Jean Rouch's direct cinema, cinema vérité, all that. And obviously it's a very rich and interesting

experience. They are nice films, the Plan Nacional has built on that, the kind of 'direct cinema.'

Iván then considers direct cinema as a useful approach to indigenous film production, yet at the same time he emphasizes the need to understand it as a communication process –and not as isolated short-term projects or experiences that often end up only as "interesting anthropological" experiments with no further long-term impacts on people's political context.

Another film movement that influenced Bolivian film in general, and particularly the political contents of the Plan Nacional, is Latin American militant cinema. "In my youth I was a leftist militant. So one of my tasks was to provide information on the progress of left politics in rural areas, in the mines, and urban sectors," explained César Pérez, a Peruvian cameraman in his late fifties who filmed many of the productions of Grupo Ukamau and who has worked as cameraman and trainer at the Plan Nacional since 2001.

That's how I incorporated in each sector people who could disseminate the progress of popular struggles. That was in the seventies in Peru. Then we went to the countryside to shoot with super 8 [film cameras] the land occupation in the Southern mountains, in the north, in the Coast, anywhere movements took place. And of course also in mines. And there were always compañeros who wanted to do what I did. And of course I encouraged them because by then technology didn't allow for much. We did things with photos, slides, we projected slide sequences with sound. We explained political tendencies and so on, the political events we were developing then. That's how I worked on this kind of activities with popular sectors. Very precariously and with a lot of will. Precariousness was in technology, which was not

what we have now. Then we taught a little how to film, how to take pictures, in very limited conditions because our activities were not too open, I mean, we were persecuted. We did these kinds of things under these conditions.

In narrating his experience with militant film in Peru during the decade of the 1970s, César emphasizes the political and technological limitations that these projects faced, and the role of film and communication for documenting and disseminating among different regions "the progress of popular struggles." In Bolivia, militant filmmakers also had to produce and disseminate their films under tough economic and political conditions (Burton 1986). Most militant cinema there was developed by the Grupo Ukamau (with filmmakers such as Jorge Sanjinés and Antonio Eguino), and Alfonso Gumucio between 1960 and 1980. Because most of these productions dealt with political problems under the military dictatorships, directors were persecuted and exiled, and their films forbidden.

The distribution of militant cinema in Bolivia was very important for organizing processes. "We organized here, for instance, the grassroots popular education committee from 1977, I was 17," Aymara communicator and union leader from the North La Paz region Jesús Tapia remembered.

And we promoted many activities in communities. Then some movies by Jorge Sanjinés came out, as well as some videos that expressed indigenous problems and social struggles. And since those were the times of dictatorship, there was a great need to show injustice, problems. And also to encourage people about how to organize to change the situation of the country. I think that for all that it was important to have audiovisual materials. I was interested in that, in how to 'rescue'

events: that people have organized marches, road blockades. And while showing those facts to people, a lot of new ideas came out. Films by Jorge Sanjinés were very popular, for example *Ukamau* [That's the Way It Is, 1966], a film about discrimination.

Jesús' account underlines the need to make things *visible*: to "show injustice, to show facts to people," through film distribution in organizing activities. By explaining his interest in "rescuing events" (*rescatar esos hechos*), Jesús points at the technological possibility of film to record past events and display them on the screen so community audiences could visually experience them and get engaged in their development. Based on these kinds of experiences and with more flexible distribution technologies, video circulation for social organizing has been also a crucial feature of the Plan Nacional communication strategies, as Chapter 7 examines in detail.

When analyzing their current work within the Plan Nacional, some communicators and trainers recognize the influence of Latin American and, specifically, Bolivian revolutionary cinema on their productions. But at the same time they note that while Grupo Ukamau proposed to do "film with the people" (Sanjinés 1979), the Plan Nacional is doing film "from the people," that is, now indigenous communities and organizations propose themes and are in full charge of production and distribution.

Finally, other communicators explain their initial contact with film as a personal interest through the arrival of film and television to their communities. As these testimonies indicate, most indigenous communicators had a previous contact with film, radio and audiovisual media before their collaboration with the Plan Nacional. While union leaders like Jesús Tapia were conversant with the strong tradition of militant

cinema, and especially with Jorge Sanjinés' films; other younger communicators like Marcelino Pinto had familiarity with itinerant "movie theaters," from their childhood, and with television and early video technologies such as VHS tapes from the early 1980s. From that decade on, contact with audiovisual media in rural areas has accelerated with the development of video technologies, allowing for wider or more open circulation strategies, as Chapter 7 will analyze in detail.

The communication projects and initiatives that preceded or emerged simultaneously with the Plan Nacional have provided it with key elements. The Plan Nacional borrowed union and community radio's strategies such as rotating tasks among different sub-centrals or communities, and collective appointing of communicators, as well as the use that unions made of film screenings for organizing activities (Figure 6). It also borrowed participatory film techniques for writing collective scripts with communities; as well as the way in which militant cinema producers worked with "natural" actors both in technical and political training. Likewise, the Plan Nacional has learned from the limitations of previous experiences, such as the lack of sustainability of projects like militant cinema, and the risks of working with foundations or anthropologists on isolated experiments that are not based on Bolivia's political reality. Besides learning from other experiences, the Plan Nacional has learned a lot from its own history, as Chapter 1 described. Adding to Plan Nacional's definition of communication as a collective process discussed in Chapter 1, its engagement with numerous film and communication methodologies that preceded it has greatly enriched its work.



Figure 6. Shooting in collaboration with regional peasant unions, Alto Beni, 2002. (Courtesy CEFREC-CAIB).

Looking into the historical context in which the Plan Nacional emerged has been illuminating in various aspects. First, the many ways in which communicators have related to an indigenous affiliation allow us to understand that there is not a homogeneous indigenous culture or a fixed identity, but that this affiliation relies on specific regional and individual histories of relating to the state and to other cultures. Therefore, the definition of the Plan Nacional as a process of indigenous communication is a mechanism to contest a common history of oppression and discrimination. This history includes, on the one hand, the lack of access to material and educational means, such as technological

infrastructure and education systems –hence the repeated references that interviewees make to the need for "opening spaces" to develop their own projects. On the other hand, this history is marked by hierarchical practices of representation that indigenous peoples are questioning, such as the right to "self-representation," the property of images about them; and the power relationships with those who study or represent them, such as filmmakers, researchers, scientists and anthropologists.

Reviewing the artistic and political moment in which the Plan Nacional emerged permits explaining that the value of indigenous communication is not the fact that it is indigenous per se, but that it becomes a space for expressing voices that have not been granted access. Its political value is beyond cultural identity or representation claims. Through this Chapter and the previous one I have discussed the ways in which Plan Nacional members have appropriated communication in a particular way. They understand communication as a process built out of relationships with numerous political subjects. They also emphasize the possibilities of communication for collective work and for engaging in an ongoing, unfinished process, rather than being concerned with audiovisual products themselves. For these reasons, they avoid to defining themselves as "filmmakers," but rather stress their function as "indigenous communicators," who aim at developing a communication system that contributes to ongoing political transformations.

A central question of this dissertation is what renders indigenous communication political. The history of the Plan Nacional permits understanding that its own appropriation of communication involves a productive process that aims at constructing a political future. By generating political subjectivities and imaginaries, this communication process has concrete effects on the people who take part of it when

writing scripts, shooting cameras, acting fictional community situations, or watching the videos.

This transformative, dynamic, and collective practice of communication provides an understanding of indigenous media as political processes. This understanding differs from a great body of literature on indigenous media which explains them from a "politics of representation" perspective, often focusing on how media products such as videos and films re-present or speak for pre-existing or fixed indigenous identities (i.e., Aufderheide 1995; Ginsburg 1995 and 2002; Turner 2002).

The following Chapter examines the histories and roles of indigenous communicators, as well as the impacts that their involvement in the Plan Nacional have had in their own political subjectivities.

Chapter 3. Indigenous media makers as political subjects



*Figure 7. Indigenous communicators preparing television program Bolivia Constituyente. Sucre, Chuquisaca, 2007.
(Courtesy of CEFREC-CAIB).*

Iver: Are you currently a leader of the peasant or indigenous union?

María Isabel: I was a Departmental General Secretary of the peasants' union. Now I am finishing my term in the community's steering committee.

Iver: What do you think about the political situation that we are experiencing in the country?

María Isabel: We are now experiencing a moment of chaos, of misinformation, we don't know many things. We don't know where the Constituent Assembly is heading because representatives are being elected through political parties. The truth is that we ourselves are very confused. We don't know what will happen on August 6, or six months after. There might be a new presidential election, or maybe there will be a change in the economic system, because we are oppressed by the economic system that we've had up to now.

Cástulo: What interests you about communication?

María Isabel: I am interested in people telling their feelings, that we don't get afraid in the future if a cattleman arrives wanting to make use of our land, not to be oppressed. I like communication, since I was young I liked to be a leader. And I always had the support of my family and my community. Because, as they say, he who doesn't cry won't eat. We want our voice to be heard when we speak and express our feelings and thoughts. Because the voice of poor people is like a wood bell: even if you hit it, it isn't heard.

-- Interview for Plan Nacional communicators' selection process.

Community of San Javier, Beni. June 2006.

These interview fragments exemplify some of the criteria that Plan Nacional members consider for selecting new indigenous communicators to join training. In this case, Iver Sevilla, a non-indigenous Film Training and Production Center CEFREC (Centro de Estudios, Formación y Realización Cinematográfica) staff member, together with Cástulo Cejas, regional leader from Beni and member of the Indigenous Audiovisual Coordinating Body from Bolivia CAIB (Coordinadora Audiovisual Indígena Originaria de Bolivia), were in charge of interviewing María Isabel, a young leader from the community of San Javier in the Amazonian Department of Beni. María Isabel was the only one chosen out of five candidates from that community. Her leadership experience, her awareness of the national political situation, and her commitment to her community and union were strong points in her favor. Like María Isabel, most indigenous communicators of the Plan Nacional have a political profile that allows their communication work to take part in national political life.

By introducing who the communicators are in the Plan Nacional and how their political subjectivities inform their work, this Chapter analyzes some of the processes and tensions that subaltern subjects experiment when taking part in national transformations. Most indigenous communicators have been appointed by their regional organizations or communities to take part in the Plan Nacional's training workshops. While many of them are leaders with wide organizing experience and with deep knowledge of their regions, others were "popular communicators" or used to work in community radios. Their role as "indigenous communicators" situates them in a novel and interesting political space which implies knowledge and commitment with indigenous struggles; an active relationship with debates among leaders, intellectuals, and government representatives;

technical knowledge of video and other communication tools; and an ability to intervene in political reality through the production and circulation of images about indigenous peoples.

Plan Nacional members themselves describe the commitment of indigenous communicators to their communities and organizations as an "organic" quality that makes their work different, and particularly political, in relation to other media and filmmakers.²⁵ This Chapter discusses the implications and challenges of such a practice. It also analyzes Plan Nacional's training as a significant educational process.

Most indigenous media literature explains indigenous media makers as cultural subjects who represent their ethnic identities through video (i.e., Himpele 1996; Ginsburg 2002; Schiwy 2002a; Wortham 2002). This Chapter, instead, proposes to understand indigenous media makers as political subjects by analyzing the implications of their political action beyond representational practices, as well as the ways in which they situate themselves in relation to dominant cultures and the state. This approach implies examining the "transformative processes" that indigenous communicators experience in political, educational and personal terms as they engage media production.

Who are the indigenous communicators in the Plan Nacional?

Communicators at the Plan Nacional range from experienced leaders who founded organizations in their regions to young cultural promoters who have only recently started to work in their communities. A common characteristic is that most of them have at least

²⁵ Although the use of the term "organic" is clearly associated to Gramsci's concept of "organic intellectuals," which he related to the working class, its use in Bolivian social movements seems to be an adaptation to national politics in which peasants and indigenous peoples have a central role as political ideologists and leaders.

a minimum of experience as cultural promoters or political representatives in their communities and regions, although, particularly in early stages of the Plan Nacional when selection processes were not too developed, many communicators started with little political experience, often recommended by family members who sought to offer them educational options.

From 2005, the selection of candidates to be trained as communicators or political leaders within the Plan Nacional became more elaborated. First, regional teams composed by Film Training and Production Center (CEFREC) staff, Indigenous Audiovisual Coordinating Body from Bolivia (CAIB) members, and regional or local organization authorities visit a number of communities for periods of one or two weeks (depending on transportation). Before the trip starts, the team plans the visit to each community by phone, radio, or other available means, in coordination with local authorities who are supposed to call for a community informational meeting on the day of the visit. At the community meeting, the team introduces the Plan Nacional and explains their intention to extend the indigenous communication network to that region. This explanation includes screening a couple of fictional and documentary videos. Then the team explains that they are looking for people who might be interested in receiving training as communicators. At the meeting, community members and authorities suggest up to five people who could be responsive to the training; others just sign up voluntarily. Most candidates are young people under 25, although sometimes there are also older men and women with longer political trajectories. After the meeting, the selection team briefly interviews all candidates with questions concerning: 1) personal information (i.e., name, age, place of birth); 2) ethnic affiliation (i.e., indigenous origins, ethnic identification,

indigenous language abilities); 3) their involvement in organization and community activities (i.e., if they attend community meetings, if they belong to, or occupy some position in the community/organization, what they would do to improve local organization); 4) information about their occupation or job and how this could contribute to their communication work or, be adversely affected by it; and 5) their knowledge and opinions about the political situation of the country (i.e., the Constituent Assembly, the current government, indigenous struggles). After all meetings and interviews in the region, the team gathers with national CEFREC, CAIB and local or regional organization or union representatives in order to make the final selection. Candidates' "political trajectory" or experience and commitment in different leadership and educational positions in their communities, regions or organizations have a strong weight in the final selection. For example, a man under thirty years old applied at the same time as María Isabel, the woman whose interview appears at the beginning of this Chapter. At the time of the interview, this man was working for a lumber company. Although at the interview he demonstrated educational abilities to occupy a job (for example, he knew how to use computers and had high-school studies, a rare quality in an Amazonian community), he was evidently unrelated to any kind of community organization activities and unaware of the country's political situation. When interviewers informally discussed his case on the way back to Trinidad, they thought that this young man was clearly interested in learning communication abilities and had working experience, but they found that his distance from any organizing process would not bring any collective benefits in case he was selected for the Plan Nacional training. In other words, as somebody mentioned, he was "clearly looking for a job" (estaba buscando "pega"), a phrase used within the Plan

Nacional and within social organizations in general in Bolivia to mean that somebody is looking for an individual, self-benefit job beyond any political commitment. Another case which provoked a long debate among interviewers was a 27 year old charismatic leader from the same region who applied for the Plan Nacional training. At the community meeting with Plan Nacional representatives he was actively organizing people and he enthusiastically participated in debates. In our way back to the city I asked interviewers if they thought this young leader would be a good candidate for training. They answered that he was obviously active in community activities, but they thought it was risky to immediately assume that he was the good candidate, especially because he was the son of a respected local leader. A CEFREC staff member explained that when the Plan Nacional started they used to accept, almost directly, recommendations from local leaders, but they soon realized that many elected "candidates" were leaders' children or close relatives. This phenomenon, which often happens in social organizations as well, involves a certain degree of corruption. They argued that the selection process now tries to avoid choosing direct relatives of leaders, although this decision is also difficult because in small communities people are usually family related, and because leaders' children have often learned leadership skills and developed political commitment within their families. As it came out, this young man happened to be the best candidate of his community. Yet during training sessions some instructors would complain that he had a difficult "star" personality due to his "privileged" position as a leader relative, which often caused tensions in team work dynamics.

Finally, up to two candidates per community are finally selected to take part in training and further Plan Nacional activities. The final selection should ideally include an

equal number of men and women for the initial training, although there is always a larger number of men who have the time or desire to participate, and a larger female drop-out rate through the training process due mostly to domestic pressures.

There are different groups of communicators according to training stages and regional initiatives. Although they all take part in the Plan Nacional, the richness and diversity of every regional experience influences specific training methodologies, production and contents, as the following sections detail.

The Indigenous Audiovisual Coordinating Body (CAIB)

As Chapter 1 explains in detail, a first group of indigenous communicators, described as 'the founders,' initiated its work with the foundation of the Plan Nacional and the Indigenous Audiovisual Coordinating Body from Bolivia (CAIB). This group, composed of around 20 indigenous candidates from lowland and highland peasant and indigenous organizations, started to work in the first video training workshop in the community of Yotala in the Department of Chuquisaca in May 1996. "We went to Yotala for the workshop," remembered Jesús Tapia, a 55 year-old Aymara union leader and communicator.

We were 16 compañeros from Bolivia: from the national peasant union [Trade Union Confederation of Bolivian Peasant Workers, CSUTCB], from lowland organizations [Bolivian Indigenous Peoples' Confederation, CIDOB] and from the migrant settlers' union [Union Confederation of Migrant Settlers of Bolivia, CSCB]. Then other compañeros came from Ecuador, Mexico, Chile, Colombia, Brazil. And that's how the workshop started. It had a lot of difficulties, we didn't have video equipment, just

some cameras that belonged to some instructors, and some others rented. We did everything with the minimum. And that's how the work started. We saw some videos from Mexico. I saw how to produce a video: learned how videos are produced and how we can produce them ourselves. I was already interested on learning and this was a good opportunity. And I liked it."

As Jesús notes, training started with few economic resources and scarce technological equipment, an issue that reflects a political commitment over economic benefit since the beginning of the Plan Nacional. Most participants at the Yotala workshop also pointed to the initiative's novelty, its possibility for meeting indigenous representatives from other regions of Bolivia, and the presence of communicators from other countries working on similar projects as strong motivations to continue their work with CAIB. As I will explain later, the interaction and work with people from different regions of Bolivia and Latin America through these kinds of workshops has contributed to communicators' sense of taking active part in national political transformations.

As for 2008, CAIB had more than 100 members and had just obtained legal status (personería jurídica). While some of its members have remained as full time communicators, most of them combine their communication work with leadership and organizing activities, or working as school teachers, popular educators, state functionaries for the current government, and in various jobs that contribute to economic sustainability such as agricultural or construction activities. In the following testimonials, communicators describe the variety of jobs that complemented communication work within the Plan Nacional:

-- My name is Alfredo Copa Manuel, I am from the Department of Potosí, Linares Province. And I work in agriculture and a little bit in home construction, I am wanting to learn. And my communication work, I do it taking time from here and there, when I rest from my other jobs. I also worked last year in a program in Quechua in Radio ACLO from Potosí. That was my last full-time communication job.

-- My name is Ana Vilacama, from the Department of Potosí. What do I do? Well, many things [laughter]. Popular education and communication is what I'm doing now.

-- I am Regina Monasterio, and I belong to the Guaraní People. Right now I am working in the General Office of Community Policies, which is part of the Decentralization Vice-ministry here in La Paz. And I am in charge of the Unity of Community Policies for the Lowland sector.

-- My name is Miguel Angel Yalauma. I am from Santa Ana de Yacuma, Department of Beni, I belong to the Movima People. And well, I have a music and regional dance school, that's where I work and what gives me the money to live.

-- My name is Patricio Luna Aguirre. I am from the Pacajes Province in the Department of La Paz, and I live both in El Alto and in my community. It is convenient for me to work and live in both places because it's necessary. Because if we totally migrate to the City, life is a bit tough here, it is not so good for people who are not so professional.

On the one hand, this variety of occupations offers an important experiential contribution to the work of the Plan Nacional. On the other hand, their ability to juggle their collaboration within the Plan Nacional with other income generating jobs is related to economic, educational, and professional tensions that this Chapter will address later.

Most original founders of CAIB have a weight in Plan Nacional's decision making processes. They are often representatives in the CAIB's board of directors, are part of regional selecting and distribution committees, coordinate regional activities, and take care of challenging projects such as the production of the Bolivia Constituyente television program.

The Indigenous Audiovisual Facilitators, FAIs

A second trained group was defined as Indigenous Audiovisual Facilitators FAIs (Facilitadores Audiovisuales Indígenas). Between 1997 and 2000, the Plan Nacional put together the FAIs with the participation of community leaders from different regions of the country also through video production workshops. Some of the communicators who started as FAIs recalled feeling a hierarchy between CAIB founders and FAIs. This is one reason that many who started initially as FAIs later just became CAIB members. The functions of these two groups, however, were initially planned as different. While CAIB founders were more focused on audiovisual production, FAIs were mainly trained to screen videos and lead political debates in communities, although they also got some video production training. "In the workshop we talked a lot about indigenous issues, about why we want to make video," Quechua communicator Humberto Claros recalled the critical and historical knowledge he obtained during his first workshop.

We talked a lot about organizations, about social movements that took place in the past. But what was most moving was to discover little by little what indigenous video is about. In my Chapare region, how could we represent all that repression that was taking place, through video? That was very interesting and moving. And the other thing is that we had to work on our own experience about being indigenous, about the context of being peasants. Then we thought that there is much work to do, we have to do a lot of consciousness raising. And that's a big challenge.

Humberto explains how the questions and debates raised in his first workshop led him to a particular definition of "indigenous video," as a medium to represent both the political reality of his community, as well as their experience as indigenous peoples and peasants. This "discovery" of the potentialities of communication is what, in Humberto's opinion, defines "indigenous video."

Many other communicators recall a similar openness to discovery and possibility after attending their first video workshops. More specifically, they recall how video production enabled them to talk about their specific problems. For many, the possibilities that training opened for working with indigenous communicators from different regions also meant an opportunity to feel part of nationwide indigenous struggles in order to fight shared histories of oppression. Although the idea of the FAIs did not continue in that moment, the Plan Nacional took back the FAI profile in 2005 to train young leaders on political and communicational contents through the Communication Strategy described in Chapter 1.

*The Center for Community Communication in Northern La Paz and Southern Beni –
Community Television Channel at Sapecho*

Although there was permanent training for communicators since CAIB was created, beginning in 2001 training processes became more regular. First, with the initiation of a training center that latter became the first Plan Nacional community television channel in the community of Sapecho in the Northern region of La Paz, 20 communicators from the region were trained. Besides hosting the Community Television Channel, the Center for Community Communication sponsors television, video, and radio production activities in five areas covering an extraordinary cultural and geographic diversity. At Huanay, in the Larecaje Tropical area, the Center works with highland migrants and Leco people; in High Beni it works with Highland migrants and diverse indigenous communities; in the South Beni region, covering the zones of Balivián, Rurrenabaque, San Borja and Yucumu, the Center works with Highland migrants and with Tsiman and Esse Ejas peoples; in the North of La Paz, in municipalities like Ixiamas and Apolo, the Center works with highland migrants, Tacana and Leco people; and it also works in the Caranavi region, mostly populated by highland migrants organized in peasant migrant settlers' union centrals and sub-centrals.

Due to the television production demands in terms of programming and timing, this Center allows for training dynamics with a strong practical component, where communicators participate directly in program design and in continuous production of television programs, documentary and fictional videos, as well as, more recently, in radio production. The Channel operates through internships: at least five regional communicators stay in charge of programming and production for periods of one to six

months, to then rotate and leave the responsibility to new communicators. The community members of Sapecho participate both in television programs and production activities, as well as in program design through a "programming committee" which rotates from time to time.

This unique committee was created some months after the program opened. Upon its foundation, besides including regional production, the Channel would download from a satellite signal all kinds of entertainment programs such as Mexican and Brazilian soap operas, cartoons, sport programs, news, and action films. But soon the community started having arguments about how to organize programming in such a way that all community members' expectations for entertainment could be fulfilled, and to emphasize the role of television as an educational and political tool. They also argued for example that a continuous programming in the morning would imply a waste of energy because children go to school and people work, so they established a schedule from noon to 10PM that would not affect people's work so much. They concluded that although television had to fulfill entertainment needs, it also should contribute to cultural strengthening and to covering the information needs of the region. The programming committee was then created to design and regulate collectively a balanced and diversified programming by downloading national and international signals while also including regional materials (news, reportage, contests, musical programs, fictions and documentaries) produced by local communicators trained at the Plan Nacional. A strong motivation to build the Community Channel was to broadcast in the community the soccer World Cup in 2002, which was the first and only time that Bolivia's soccer team classified to play in a World Cup. "We shouldn't deny that there are hooks that motivate this," joyfully mentioned

CEFREC trainer Abel Ticona about this story. He is a thirty six year old professional from El Alto and one of the founders of the Plan Nacional.

And this happened right in the year that Bolivia made it to the World Cup, then people were very excited to assign resources to buy equipment. Then both things happily coincided, and local budget plans included buying equipment. But it was important the approach they had to the National Plan. Then they said: 'yes, we are interested in soccer, but then what?' Then they said: 'we want a communication medium with the characteristics of the National Plan: a medium that defends our culture, that is in our language, that reflects our life experiences.' Then these concerns coincided, and people from the community created the conditions to initiate the Community Television Channel."

This story, together with the negotiations that the programming committee goes through with young people wanting to see fashionable music programs like MTV, or with housewives wanting to download a soap opera, makes evident that the community channel is not purely about "indigenous identity" or "cultural strengthening." Instead, collective programming combines these aspects with what some essentialist views might consider as the culturally "polluting" messages expressed in the soapoperas or action films, which also fulfill the communities' entertainment needs.

Ariel Yáñez, national leader of the Union Confederation of Migrant Settlers of Bolivia CSCB (Confederación Sindical de Colonizadores de Bolivia) and long-time regional coordinator of the Community Communication Center also recalled how the Center was created, its relationship with the community, and its functioning:

The community was then buying a repeating station: a parabolic antenna, a transmitter, and a tower. I think they sold their electricity generator –electricity had just arrived to the community. Then they saw CEFREC and CAIB as interesting allies. The community also assigned a piece of land. They built it, it took some time, but they built a two-story wood house, and the television station was also there. By then we did not have yet well trained communicators: maybe they could manage the political aspects, but not the technical ones. Then the community demanded: 'What shall we do? Let's make a community television.'

Then our work was to build that community television related to identity. One that also offers a service to the community and a communication committed to indigenous peoples. We are already getting solid. And from this precedent other ideas emerged in other regions to build new centers: in Chapare, in Santa Cruz. And I think we have made a lot of progress, we have trained communicators, we are assuming that challenge.

As Ariel details, the participation of the community in this project involved taking part both in providing the material infrastructure of the Channel (Figure 8), as well as in defining its function and contents in terms of "service" to people. Hence, its definition as a Community Channel implied the shared material and conceptual ownership of the medium. The election of this locality to build the Community Channel responded to the favorable conditions it offered, such as the coexistence of different indigenous peoples and organizations in the region, as well as the interest of community members on the Channel and their readiness to build it and manage it in a collective way.



Figure 8. Community members building the Center for Community Communication in Sapecho, 2002.
(Courtesy CEFREC-CAIB).

"Then we opted for working regionally. And this intersection of organizations, interest, commitment and request made us decide for Sapecho," explained Abel Ticona, one of the Channel's main advisors.

Interinstitutionality in Sapecho operates through a group of institutions, local organizations, local governments and peasants unions, so they constitute a sustainable structure for this process to develop in a natural way. We were not forcing anything, nor demanding their commitment. And that was nice because organizations offered their commitment. And not only their moral commitment, because the community immediately assigned a piece of land and thought of some infrastructure for the television channel.

This testimony details how the collective appropriation and responsibility for the Channel has facilitated its sustainability. After seven years of broadcasting, the Television Community Channel has already become a part of people's daily life. "Sometimes the community does not pay for the electricity bill and they cut it off for two weeks: there is no television," Ariel Yáñez laughingly remarked.

Then they run around, leaders come, ask us: 'What happened? Why did you not take care of that?' They scold us too: 'How come you didn't let us know?' They start to collect money. And within two weeks people are already: 'the news, what might be happening?' And women: 'And the soap opera...' Everybody has their favorite programs, for children, everything. I mean, it has become a part of their lives, the television is part of their life.

Ariel notes how people have appropriated the television signal and adjusted it to the various entertainment and informational needs of the community. But besides community's programming negotiation, the regional production team faces several challenges. On the one hand, María Morales, an accomplished thirty-eight year-old Aymara videomaker from the region explained the difficulties that women face when participating in communication activities. "I used to go to the office of the migrant settlers' union (CSCB). And there a compañero, Don Jesús (Tapia), mentioned that they did not have women's participation," María explained.

I was there as a leader. Then he told me: 'compañera, you can participate, there are no women participating.' Then I was called to attend to a center in Sapecho, which

they had just built. There we were trained, out of 28 communicators, we were nine women. But out of these nine women, I'm the only one who continues. Others have married, have quit. I learned how to operate the camera. And there was some discrimination: 'What will she do,' because I was a 'women of pollera' [an indigenous woman identified by her pollera traditional skirt]... that's how I felt.

María points at both external domestic and economic pressures, as well as at certain levels of discrimination within the Plan Nacional, as the main challenges for female communicators. On the other hand, Jesús Tapia, one of the CAIB founding members and main promoter of the regional work in Northern La Paz analyzes the working context and the intercultural challenges that the Plan Nacional faces in this region:

And I think that this communication process contributes to some degree to understanding and strengthening interculturality in my region in Northern La Paz. Because otherwise there is nobody who brings peoples together. Every group is closed: Masetén, Leco, or through their union CPILAB [Union of Indigenous Peoples from La Paz]. Then they feel that migrant settlers have occupied their lands. Or sometimes foreign people get into their territories to get wood. Sometimes those things distance us from each other, as if we were really different from each other. And even leaders are unable to take initiative to solve problems. So I think that our team is making progress... we have struggled constantly to make a communication team in the region.

Together, these narratives emphasize both the richness and the challenges which Bolivia's geographical and cultural diversity constitute for such a project, as well as the non-resolved issues, for example, in terms of women's sustained participation in communication activities. They also express how communities and regional organizations appropriate communication processes by providing an account of how this unique television experiment has been conceived, as well as the advantages of defining it as a "community" project in terms of collective management and sustainability. Regional organizations' commitment shows through their involvement in communication activities and programming design, as well as in co-providing infrastructure and funding for the Center and Television Channel.

In 2006 a new group of 40 indigenous communicators was created in this region and they have been working on the consolidation of the Community Channel. In October 2007 the Center opened a radio station with its own production which will have a much wider reach than what the television Channel has. Through continuous training processes parallel to the ones developed in the departments of Beni and Santa Cruz, this group is getting trained both in audiovisual production as well as in political contents related to indigenous rights.

Regional team in Santa Cruz - CIDOB

Other initiatives required broad agreements and cooperation among different indigenous and communication-based organizations. For example, CEFREC, CAIB, and the Bolivian Indigenous Peoples' Confederation CIDOB, (Confederación de Pueblos Indígenas de Bolivia) worked together in 2005 to build a communication area in the

offices of this organization in the city of Santa Cruz to work mainly with Guaraní, Chiquitano, and Guarayo people. Although the CIDOB had been part of the Plan Nacional from its foundation, this more formal collaboration also included a training process for audiovisual production with around 25 young representatives of indigenous organizations from the Bolivian lowlands affiliated with CIDOB, mainly from the departments of Santa Cruz and Beni. "CEFREC made a call to different organizations and it came to the APG [Assembly of Guaraní Peoples]," Guaraní communicator Veimar Hinojosa explained about his initial involvement in communication work:

I am part of it. We had to fulfill certain requirements, to have a sort of vocation. As they say, communication is a tool for us, it can be very good and we have to know how to use it. I've had the chance to work not only in my project but also to go to other places to produce videos with my colleagues, and most of them relate to the same issue: that we want to denounce how we have been oppressed by Karai [white] people and all that.

Veimar notes how, as in other regional processes, national and regional organizations were in charge of calling and selecting people for training. Much as other leaders started their collaboration with the Plan Nacional, young communicators from this region found in communication workshops access to something that had been strange for them until then, and that offered possibilities to address discrimination issues they faced as indigenous peoples in their regions. Lowland regional teams address topics such as slavery against Guaraní peoples, and hacienda owner abuses and labor exploitation. They tell the struggles that indigenous people from the region have waged for land and natural

resources against lumber, oil, and forest companies. They also, however, tell stories that document and celebrate regional organization. Due to the large territory covered by CIDOB and its communication activities, the Plan Nacional created a new regional team in the Amazonian lowlands, as the next sub-section details.

Regional team in Beni

In 2006 a more permanent training process with new groups of communicators from the departments of Beni and Pando started working in the city of Trinidad with indigenous organizations affiliated with the Union of Indigenous Peoples from Beni CPIB (Central de Pueblos Indígenas del Beni, also affiliated with the National CIDOB). This regional team works with a great diversity of peoples including Tacana, Chácobo, Yaminahua, Movima, Moxeño, Cavineño, Itonama, and Canichana. It is perhaps the most difficult region in terms of geographical access because most communities and villages are situated in the vast Amazonian forest, have few roads, and the only means of transportation are small planes and boats. This region also presents challenges in terms of political organization because of a long history of oppression against indigenous peoples by hacienda and company owners exploiting all kind of natural resources such nuts (Brazil nut or castaña), oil, rubber, precious woods, and exotic animals like alligators (lagartos, hunted for their skin), to name just a few. Indigenous organizing has been difficult because of geographical dispersion and lack of communication infrastructure. Nevertheless, the presence of regional organizations like the Union of Indigenous Peoples from Beni CPIB (Central de Pueblos Indígenas del Beni) and the Indigenous Union of Originario People from the Pando Amazon CIPOAB, (Central Indígena de Pueblos

Originarios de la Amazonía de Pando) has led to the acknowledgement of indigenous peoples' needs and a link with national indigenous movements through CIDOB, for instance, through participation in the many mobilizations and marches for land and territory that have taken place since the early 1990s.²⁶ An active member of this new team, Tacana communicator Julio Cortés, explains the political trajectory that supported his participation at the Plan Nacional:

I belong to an organization called Organization of Tacana People (OITA). In my community I have been president of school meetings, and a secretary of my organization. That's how I started participating in assemblies, workshops, congresses. And I started learning about education and organizing. Then in Cobija I always supported my organization in meetings. That's a job I've never left and will never abandon, especially now that I am part of the National Plan. There our mission is to support communication and organization activities, promoting indigenous rights that everybody should know. That's why we are getting trained, to make our situation visible in our country and in the whole world.

Like other communicators, Julio has a strong political trajectory occupying different positions in his community and regional organization. This experience, together with the training in organization workshops and congresses, has allowed him to connect the knowledge of his region's situation and needs to his communication work. The interconnection between community, organization, and communication positions as part

²⁶ The March for Land and Territory organized by Eastern indigenous organizations from the lowlands to La Paz in 1990 introduced in Bolivia the demand for "territory" as an indigenous right.

of a single political trajectory allow for a great degree of sustainability and reliance on communicators of the Plan Nacional: in many ways, their communication work is a continuation of a broader political commitment. Although this aspect is a great advantage for the Plan Nacional, it also poses challenges in terms of monetary compensation, as I will discuss later in this Chapter.

Political leaders within the Communication, Indigenous Rights and Constituent Assembly Strategy

Since mid 2005, the Communication, Indigenous Rights and Constituent Assembly Strategy, started a training process with 45 indigenous representatives from different regions of the country, all of them affiliated with one of the five national indigenous and peasant confederations of Bolivia. In contrast to the emphasis on audiovisual production, this Strategy focused on training political leaders who, based on indigenous rights contents, could develop abilities to design and teach topics related to indigenous claims for the Constituent Assembly. "Debates in seminars on indigenous rights were very interesting. And this possibility attracted my attention, the Plan Nacional and its work with three national peasant and indigenous organizations," explained Ramiro Argandoña, a fifty-five year-old sociologist who is the main trainer for the Communication Strategy, about how the Strategy was planned in 2004.

It was interesting to hear them discussing common issues, with the same concerns. I found the dynamic interesting. And that's where we saw the need to have a Communication Strategy. By then people were already talking about Constituent

Assembly and all that [...] And there they proposed the idea of creating the Communication Strategy. Then we started the way.

The uniqueness of this political training relied on the idea of teaching such contents through production and distribution of videos in indigenous communities and organizations, as well as through finding possibilities for broadcasting in local or regional television and radio programs.

The Communication Strategy works through coordination, follow-up and evaluation meetings with a National Commission, constituted by members of CEFREC, CAIB and leaders of the National Confederations. In meetings, the National Commission analyzes the general progress of activities. It also discusses issues related to the political moment and the Constituent Assembly, as well as the role and proposals of organizations.

The Communication Strategy group had a two-year strong training on political contents and techniques for audiovisual production. "Like many others, we didn't have knowledge for example about this topic of the Constituent Assembly," Tacana leader and communicator Eddy Salinas affirmed about his learning from this process.

Then the first thought we have is: 'I am not interested in what others do.' 'I live from my own work, nobody will care about me, so I don't care.' But through all this process I've felt a change in my thought because when I learn something I want to learn more, so we can inform and share that knowledge with our people. To go ahead with this process of a Constituent Assembly, to be able to do something to change this country. We also want to be subjects in this action.

And we want things to change so natural resources and incomes get distributed evenly, especially in isolated areas where indigenous people live, the more abandoned areas. This process is also a political act so we can vindicate ourselves as peasants and as indigenous people. It's a long process that has taken a long time.

Eddy suggests that the possibility for learning and sharing information is a way to participate by "being subjects" in the national political transformations and that therefore, this process constitutes a "political act." This statement is insightful for understanding indigenous communication as a process that contributes to communicators' political subjectivity by appropriating information and building alternative imaginaries about the role of indigenous peoples in national politics.

This account emphasizes the lack of access to information and the geographical dispersion as conditioners of the political awareness of indigenous peoples from the Amazonian region. It also reflects how communicators appointed by their communities and organization acknowledge the responsibility for bringing information back to the community, as well as for bridging their realities to the larger indigenous movement and, more importantly, to the nation itself. This statement clearly illustrates the indigenous movement's demand for including indigenous peoples as subjects of the nation or citizens, and affirms indigenous movements' intention to be part of the national project -- instead of being against it as many of their detractors claim.

The Communication Strategy selected and trained an average of ten representatives per national confederation, most of them young community or regional leaders. "From the moment I was assigned a piece of land, then I had the right to participate in

assemblies," recalled Quechua communicator Juan Barea in relation to his trajectory from community member, to community leader, to assuming broader political responsibilities as a communicator and political organizer.

That's how I started as a leader of my community, then in the sub-regional Union, and then in the regional one. I've participated in mobilizations, for instance in 2003 we made a big march as the eastern block of the country. I also participated in the march of 2005, where we had to walk for a full month. There in the National Organization I was assuming this responsibility, obeying the tasks that bases gave me, following their decisions. That's how I've become a leader. I like it and I know that if we work in this direction, our country will change.

Juan explains that his experience as a union leader adds to his communication training, and the communication position has also influenced his appointment as a national leader. This interrelation between communication and political leadership often allows for indigenous communication to have a more "organic" role within regional and national organizations, namely, to be part of activities and strategies that organizations develop to transform the political situation of Bolivia. For example, as a regional leader, Juan was able to organize well-attended informative sessions on the Constituent Assembly with Union Confederation of Migrant Settlers of Bolivia (CSCB) affiliates in urban neighborhoods and villages of Santa Cruz populated by highland migrants. Such sessions included long debates and Plan Nacional video screenings. Alternatively, as a CSCB national leader, Juan gave priority to communication activities within his Union as part of their political strategies --for example, he and other CSCB leaders actively

participated in radio and Bolivia Constituyente television programs to discuss their proposal for the Constituent Assembly.

Communication Strategy's training methodology

The Communication Strategy workshops have a strong emphasis on legal and political aspects of indigenous peoples' rights in Bolivia and in the rest of the world. At the workshops, participants debate concepts such as multiculturalism, cultural identity, land and territory, economic development and natural resources, as well as issues related to the political context of Bolivia. Thematic workshops are combined with periodical meetings with national leaders to discuss and learn about their opinions. From these debates, participants develop specific topics in order to create radio, video and television "messages."

The creation of messages starts by writing radio and video scripts related to each topic of interest. Once communicators and trainers define topics and treatments, there is a meeting with national leaders to review and confirm that messages reflect the needs and opinions of all organizations. After messages are discussed, communicators produce the final materials that will be circulated nationwide. For example, in order to address the topic of consuetudinary law, a team of communicators and leaders wrote the script for a fictional video that detailed the procedures that an Aymara family from Oruro followed after their llamas were stolen. The story combined ordinary legal procedures, such as reporting the robbery to the police, with traditional ones, such as consulting the local healer to look for the thieves. Once the script was ready, a National Commission composed of at least one representative of each national indigenous and peasant

confederation and CEFREC and CAIB members, reviewed, discussed, and approved the written script, suggesting for example traditional forms of solving the conflict once the llama robbers were discovered. Then the team went to a community to shoot the video, with the participation of people living there. After the video had a first edition, the National Commission reviewed it again, discussed it, suggested a few changes, and the production team produced a final version. This process took about ten months, but in this time the National Commission reviewed about ten videos and twenty radio programs produced simultaneously by different communication teams.

When products are completed, communicators take responsibility for distribution in their regions, identifying and negotiating spaces in regional and local radio stations and television channels, and organizing screenings in their communities and organizations (Figure 9). Besides local distribution work, CEFREC, in collaboration with national confederations and with CAIB, negotiates spaces in national radio and television networks.



Figure 9. A Communication Strategy young Chácobo leader leads an informational workshop in his community about the Constituent Assembly. Beni, 2006. (Courtesy CEFREC-CAIB).

Up to 2008, the Communication Strategy has consolidated a training space for four consecutive years. Its training methodology differs from the one developed with the rest of communicators participating in the Plan Nacional, who have learned mostly about audiovisual production. The communicators trained at the Communication Strategy, instead, have a stronger emphasis on political contents. Most young political leaders participating in the Communication Strategy acknowledge that it has been a successful mechanism to work for the Constituent Assembly process, which includes informing and educating communities on this and other political topics through audiovisual products. Training methodologies that the Communication Strategy used on political contents were so effective that the Plan Nacional incorporated some of these contents in regular audiovisual training workshops in different regions.

Constituent Assembly Communication Team – Sucre

One of the latest initiatives of the Communication Strategy was the production of the television program Bolivia Constituyente - Entre Culturas to follow up the development of the Constituent Assembly. This initiative implied bringing together a new regional team to work in the city of Sucre following the inauguration of the Constituent Assembly in August 2006. This team was in charge, among other things, of producing the weekly television program Bolivia Constituyente, which broadcasts every Thursday night on state Channel 7. The one-hour program is hosted by at least two indigenous communicators from different regions who introduce the topic of the day. After the introduction, they present a news or reportage video clip addressing a specific situation or

problem related to the Constituent Assembly negotiations. Afterwards, they introduce program guests, usually indigenous or peasant leaders or governmental representatives, advisors of the indigenous movement, or intellectuals, to discuss the topic of the day, which can be for example a specific proposal for indigenous management of territory and natural resources; ideas about how to build an intercultural education system; or debates about what a pluricultural state means. The program includes images and clips about life in communities, political struggles and Constituent Assembly sessions.

The program producers are part of the Indigenous Audiovisual Coordinating Body from Bolivia (CAIB) and have collaborated within the Plan Nacional for about ten years. Nicolás Ipamo, a thirty five year-old Chiquitano communicator and coordinator of CAIB from 2006 to 2008 explained the origins of the program:

In the last national meeting of all organizations that took place on August 3, 4 and 5 [2006], we covered the event, the parade, then we started to gain visibility as indigenous communicators. We gathered with organizations and explained that we needed their support. Then they understood, and we moved the television studio to Sucre because that's where all organizations, institutions and political parties were concentrated. Then the first program went on air. We invited leaders, constituent representatives and advisors to disseminate the Pact of Unity's proposal.

Nicolás underlined the role of CAIB for the consolidation of the program:

Then we made a multidisciplinary team in Sucre to search for people who could produce, who could edit, but everything under CAIB's responsibility. And from then

on people saw the results because private channels did not value "organic" representatives, indigenous representatives. I used to watch television and I was very sorry because only businessmen, ex deputies, ex Senate presidents would come out, for them, the 'pros' of all times. Then one says: 'No, we are not going to cover them. We're going to bring those who speak well, those who will explain fine.' That's how we made the program visible, so now we're already known as CAIB, as the Plan Nacional. And confederations are happy now because those are the only minutes when they have preference to spell out or say something about their proposal. Then we have already made various programs on land and territory, on indigenous peoples, the idea of the country, about indigenous autonomies as we want them, about the new state's structure, about the importance of water, about coca leaf, about the environment. Now we are deepening more and more.

As Nicolás mentions, Bolivia Constituyente is a significant alternative to conventional television programs that give voice to conservative politicians, leaving out the voices of those who are becoming central political subjects, such as indigenous leaders and government representatives. For this and other reasons, the production team faces interesting challenges. First, it is a pioneer experience within the Plan Nacional in producing a live television program, with updated information, reportage, news clips and live debates and interviews with leaders, Assembly representatives, political analysts and advisors of social organizations. Second, this is the first time that almost all the production responsibility relies fully on indigenous communicators. The team also gets support from other CAIB communicators and CEFREC advisors. Additionally, the

program production works as a training space for indigenous communicators from different regions who have just joined the Plan Nacional, who make internships during program production and broadcast. Sonia Chiri, a thirty four year-old Quechua-speaking communicator from Potosí who is the main program commentator, describes her working experience with the team:

As a person, as a woman I say that it's a beautiful experience. Because at work we can measure our strength, right? We're working more permanently with different regions. We are two women and two men. It's different than doing a job with professional people who have been in universities. Now that we are all indigenous people in the team, maybe some of us have been to the university, others not, but what is important is the experience and the work we do, and the enthusiasm, the interest, the effort that each of us makes. We have responsibilities, but beyond them there is team work. First we have to agree on the topic we are going to analyze, how we want the program to come out. Then each of us takes care of their responsibilities.

As Sonia notes, this team and most members of the Plan Nacional explain the program as one of the most important achievements of their work because it occupies a wide public space in national television, because it is an effective space where indigenous representatives can express their voices, and because it accomplishes a key political function in favor of peasant and indigenous organizations. Furthermore, as Sonia explains, it demonstrates to the general public and to indigenous communicators themselves that there is no need to have a formal education, or to be "professional," to

appear on screen performing tasks that are often exclusively attributed to "professional" people. As I will discuss later in this Chapter, indigenous communicators often mention the parameter of professionalism to measure or value their own work. I will argue that the notion of "professionalism" and "education" is used and perceived more as a class attribute than as the ability and knowledge that somebody has to perform specific tasks.

Other regional teams

There are other smaller teams that work together to promote community communication in their regions. One is the regional team of Potosí, constituted by Quechua-speaking communicators who used to work with ACLO Radio before their collaboration with the Plan Nacional, and who have done a lot of production and video screenings in their region. Likewise, the team of the Chapare region has worked in video production and successful distribution campaigns in the area, which is well known for its history of political organization, among other things, against coca leaf eradication. This area is populated by Quechua migrant settlers from other Cochabamba regions and the highlands (colonizadores), as well as by Yuqui and Yuracaré peoples. There is also a regional team in the province of Los Andes in La Paz, which was already consolidated into the Aymara organization Saphi Aru before joining the Plan Nacional, and continues to produce videos under this signature, sometimes independently. As communication processes grow, new regional teams get organized and operate informally both to produce videos and to program distribution activities.

Working together: collaboration and specialization

Regional communication teams have differences. Some joke that difference is based on technological criteria: the "analogue" ones are the founders, who learned to work with limited analogue (non-digital) technology, in comparison to the "digital ones," who have been trained recently not only with new technology, but also in a more privileged moment in terms of financing and access to video operation. Every team or group has a sort of identity, and although there is often collaboration between them, sometimes differences are too evident in relation to other teams. For instance, it was interesting to note in a gender workshop organized by the Plan Nacional in Santa Cruz in May 2006 that there was a differentiated participation of, on the one hand, the Communication Strategy political leaders who were actively debating in sessions; and on the other, the communicators from Santa Cruz, who were charged with filming the discussions. Despite some differences in terms of training or access to equipment, there are no major tensions between regional teams. Instead, efforts for interregional collaboration are usually quite productive because they allow for communicators to visit and learn about other cultures and regions. In this respect, CEFREC and CAIB have developed mechanisms to integrate regions, such as internships for new communicators; national workshops, and the conformation of disseminating teams composed by communicators from different regions.

Experimentation with different training methodologies has motivated workshop leaders to include, on the one hand, simple and concrete technical training to produce radio and video and, on the other hand, theoretical and political training about indigenous rights that started with the Communication Strategy. This more integral approach allows

for videos and radio programs to have more solid contents and topics, and to be better situated within the political context of Bolivia.

As CEFREC trainer Franklin Gutiérrez explains, the diversity of communicators' experiences and profiles allows them to develop specific abilities or approaches to communication activities. For example, communicators with ample experience as political leaders, such as Jesús Tapia from North La Paz, or Ana Vilacama from Potosí, have a special ability to use video screenings strategically because they understand the significance of video as a tool to develop group discussions of issues that concern indigenous peoples. This "open-ended" possibility of video technologies for motivating group discussions is one more element that facilitates concrete political uses of audiovisual media. "We in the Plan are now working on topics of territory, indigenous rights, all that," explained Ana Vilacama in relation to promoting video screenings in community and organization assemblies, workshops and other kinds of meetings.

Then as a political organizing process we have talked about these topics, that's how we organize, the [International Labour Organization, ILO] 169 Convention, all that.²⁷ Then it is not only about talking, with images we complete, we combine. And that's an important methodology to reach communities, because watching allows for more understanding.

²⁷ The International Labour Organization 169 Convention was approved in 1989 as the first specific international law on indigenous and tribal peoples' rights. Indigenous peoples have appropriated it to struggle for their rights both at the international level and within their own countries.

Ana remarks the importance of visuality to reach audiences. Similarly, Jesús Tapia details the importance of communication work for organizing processes, particularly through video screenings:

When you are a leader you want to convince people about a topic, about a problem that we are addressing. Then video on these aspects is very important because there are the images, there are dramatic stories, you can perceive problems like in real life. All those things help in reality, to inform about struggles for instance: we have marched from here to there, somebody fainted, somebody could not walk anymore, etc. Or when we want to talk about our knowledge, about our culture, how to illustrate these things? Or to motivate in struggles, about the victories we can obtain. Then video is important for that. It's like recently when we went around communities with the Constituent Assembly topic: there is a video that has a message about a series of problems on indigenous rights, or gender. To educate, video is a very important tool: it facilitates things.

These two accounts underline the advantages of visuality in video technology. They explain the use of images to "illustrate," to help "perceive problems like in real life," and to provide a visual testimony of struggles to provoke a feeling of immediacy. Additionally, video technology is considered to have wide audience coverage. "When there are no videos only adults participate, but when we include videos all kind of people participate, adults, youth, children," noted Alberto Quispe, a twenty-four year-old Aymara communicator and leader who completed high school in his region.

Then with video you catch everybody. I am more of an educator, technically I'm bad [with video production]. I like more to be an educator, and then to conduct a program. As an educator my work is not to teach people, but to orient them and to exchange ideas with them.

Alberto explains how video screenings facilitate his ability to carry out educational and political work with communities, noting in particular how video speaks to different generations within the communities.

Other communicators work with communities to gather a series of experiences and situations, synthesize them, and propose them as stories. They often present themselves as scriptwriters. Marcelina Cárdenas and Alfredo Copa from Potosí, María Morales from the North of La Paz, Nicolás Ipamo from Santa Cruz, Humberto Claros, Albino Pinto and Marcelino Pinto from the Chapare region, Patricio Luna from La Paz, and Miguel Angel Yalauma from Beni are some of the communicators who work to collect experiences and put them together into scripts, many of which are later produced into videos. "With Marcelino [Pinto] we wrote some stories that were not concretized because of budget issues," said Humberto Claros.

And he told me 'you are a scriptwriter.' That was even before I joined the process. And well, it kind of stayed, right? I like the idea of stories, I don't know if I am a good or bad scriptwriter, but I like stories, to put a detail to each image, that kind of things. But about writing, everyone has a writing style. If I tell you a story, I tell it right. But if I write it, perhaps I'll make it better there.

In this account, Humberto prioritizes the interest of telling stories over the idea of being a "good or bad scriptwriter." This view, common to most indigenous communicators, relates to a view of video production, and communication in general, as political means to tell already existing stories beyond developing individual talents as scriptwriters. Alternatively, there are those who have more interest in technical operations or ability for taking part in specific production tasks.

Although many communicators have received training on scriptwriting, camera, and editing, there are just a few who are conversant in all of them. For example, while there are a great number of scriptwriters working out ideas, few know well how to use cameras and editing equipment. In this respect, specialization and overemphasis on technical training can also prove to be a limitation on the political development of video. "After many years what we are really fighting for now is to have our own productions," communicator and leader Ariel Yáñez from northern La Paz observed.

And a proof of that is that Marcelino has produced his video on the Yuracaré people. I saw it only briefly, but I noticed a good treatment of image, set on scene, dialogues, the axes are never broken. Then that just tells us that we can operate the camera, that we can edit, that we can make sound. Maybe we have to demand more from ourselves. Participation of technicians is not bad, but it has to get reduced little by little so that CAIB empowers itself out of these spaces.

Of course, "fighting to have their own productions" implies that CAIB members dare, as Marcelino has, to experiment with video equipment even if their initial products do not have the same quality as if they were shot by professional technicians. The Plan

Nacional is overcoming this limitation in terms of technical operation through simpler training methodologies that fit better with oral-based narration, which is the most common among indigenous communicators.²⁸ Also, technical development and the lower cost of equipment, together with the economic stability that the Plan Nacional has enjoyed since 2004, allow communicators better access to technical equipment. "The fact that technological development has cheapened costs greatly facilitated these processes," trainer Franklin Gutiérrez affirmed.

Because in the end, the cheapening of video costs has opened a lot of doors for us. It has opened other doors in terms of culture, these acculturation doors in the Western world. But for these processes it has been something very good. Video format was already good in the eighties, it was relatively cheap. Editing was the tough thing. In the nineties we had still some trouble. But now in this new millennium you can build an editing set with 1000 dollars, which is great.

Here Franklin introduces a long-term debate within indigenous media literature. For example, by analyzing the ways in which indigenous peoples have appropriated and adapted "Western," "non-indigenous" technologies, Faye Ginsburg suggests that such an appropriation has implied "a Faustian dilemma," because media technologies allow both for "expressing indigenous identity" and for "a final assault on culture, language, imagery [...] and respect for traditional knowledge." (1992:360). Although media technologies have undeniably meant, in Franklin's terms, an "acculturation door," I would like to move away from the dichotomist debate of whether these have "assaulted

²⁸ Chapter 5 will discuss in detail narrative tendencies among indigenous communicators.

indigenous culture and knowledge," as if indigenous cultures were static, homogeneous, and power relations-free entities. Franklin's testimony-- and the history of the Plan Nacional itself-- make clear that video technologies, like many other "Western" technologies, have become an active element of indigenous life and a key tool for indigenous struggles within a broader political history.

Communication and political training: issues around education and "professionalism"

The training work within the Plan Nacional, and particularly political training within the Communication Strategy, contributes to the important function of confederations as spaces for political formation. Due to the lack of formal educational options such as colleges and universities; workshops, courses, assemblies, and national and international conferences and encounters developed by national organizations and their allies constitute unique training spaces for youth.²⁹ From these non formal educational spaces, young people from indigenous communities obtain trajectory, experience, and acknowledgment at early ages. "To participate in the Plan Nacional has strengthened my self-esteem," acknowledged Quechua speaker communicator Daisy Condori, one of the few participants of the Communication Strategy who has access to a university career.

Because for example in some college classes we already learn about workers' rights.

Here I have learned about how the national treasury is managed, all that. Then I

²⁹ The education system might be improving due to the focus that Morales' government has had on rural and indigenous education and literacy campaigns. But until 2005, education access for rural and indigenous population in Bolivia was extremely marginal. Statistics show for example that literacy among urban population was four times larger than among rural population; and that access to university is seven times larger in urban areas than in rural ones. Although there is a large amount of indigenous people living in urban areas, they also have limited access to education and particularly to high education due to their low economic incomes (Weise-Vargas 2004).

dared to participate in college classes, because before I didn't. Before, when I had to present I used to blush, I couldn't articulate one word. But in my community I could talk very well. And there in my college class I couldn't, I mean, I felt very very small. But with our training here I thought: "I could talk with people who were more important: with the Minister of Government, with human rights advisors. So now I talk a bit more, I'm not so scared of college teachers anymore. Sometimes I also respond: 'what's going on?'"

In contrast to her active participation in Plan Nacional sessions, Daisy attributed her poor performance in college to a unending exposure to discrimination from her classmates and teachers:

I don't know, maybe because of our last names, or because of your skin color even teachers humiliate you. 'What will she then know?' or 'what will she say?' Sometimes we can't speak Spanish very well, I don't know, words are hard to say. Then teachers tell you 'What is that? Come on, you don't use this word that way! You sound like an Indian from the countryside, those ones have to stay there!' And your classmates also discriminate against you because of your last name: 'She's from such-and-such a place. How can you talk to her?' But I can't get depressed about who I am. I am very proud to be from my place.

[...] One of my teachers used to call me: 'Hey, Mama t'ara!' because he used to see me with traditional community authorities in meetings in the city. And I didn't like

him calling me Mama t'ara.³⁰ And then my classmates: 'ja ja ja,' they laughed, no? And I told my teacher: 'Licenciado, you don't say Mama t'ara, you say Mamat'alla.' And if I am a Mamat'alla then I'm proud, because that means that I can lead a community. From then on my college teacher did not make fun of me anymore. At the end I've demonstrated that I am good for studying. Now he doesn't tell me anything, he rather asks: 'How is Evo [Morales] doing?' he says.

Daisy acknowledges that her participation in the Communication Strategy has helped her value her learning abilities, acquire education that goes beyond university training, and get respected for her own knowledge and work on indigenous rights. Educational spaces like the ones that indigenous and peasant unions, as well as projects like the Plan Nacional offer, provide significant political training that allows young leaders under the age of 30 to accomplish important functions as regional or national leaders. Many of them assume their positions with wide experience and with solid discursive and theoretical tools.

Communicators who are part of the Communication Strategy have acquired the ability to develop thematic workshops in their communities and organizations, thereby gaining a closer collaboration with their local and regional organizations. This work has also allowed them to gain more credibility and support from their communities, and therefore to have a stronger presence as leaders or representatives.

³⁰ Here Daisy's professor was distorting the word *Mamat'alla*, which in Quechua means a higher female political authority, into *Mama T'ara*. T'ara is used as a discriminatory racial term towards indigenous peoples in Highland Bolivia.

Through their work, many communicators and political leaders who take part in the Plan Nacional have expressed a feeling of being part of major political transformations in Bolivia and therefore, of "taking part in the nation."

Participating in the diverse Plan Nacional activities often helps communicators to feel confident about their work and knowledge, particularly in education, state and legal institutions, as well as in other public scenarios of interaction with "professional" or "well educated" people. Likewise, communication activities such as the operation of video technologies, acting, and television or radio conduction are often perceived as exclusively "professional." Therefore, when indigenous communicators start learning these tasks, they experience access to spaces that they used to consider strange or exclusive to "educated" people, spaces which they used to equate with people from a higher, more privileged social class. "Before this, I always thought of being a communicator... a 'filmmaker,' as they say now," explained Guaraní videomaker Veimar Hinojosa.

Because I was curious. When I was a child I saw images on the screen and my question was how people had gone in there, in television. Then I felt that need and well, I got the opportunity to be here. Before I didn't have any experience. I was at school. But I didn't get a chance [to go on] because of the issue of economic resources. That is very hard, we as Guaraní people live out of [agricultural] production, but it doesn't give us enough to continue with studies.

In spite of his interest in video, Veimar did not imagine having access to this activity because of economic and educational limitations. Access to an alternative education possibility is one of the aspects that indigenous communicators and leaders who take part

in the Plan Nacional value the most. This access is not only a practical possibility to operate equipment or to learn about specific topics, but also a symbolic crossover to spaces that have been historically denied to indigenous people. Sociologist Patricia Chávez (2006) provides an interesting example of the weight of symbolic crossover through her analysis of indigenous representatives working at the Bolivian Parliament before Evo Morales was elected President. She discusses the processes through which indigenous representatives attempted to incorporate community and union practices into the state structure –for example, by speaking their languages in official events, wearing traditional clothing, or establishing consulting mechanisms with their bases,- and the discriminatory elements that intimidated such attempts. Chávez explains that although most indigenous representatives arrived to the Parliament with clear goals for transforming policies and practices in favor of indigenous peoples, and with strong political bases, many of them ended up isolated from their bases and faced discrimination from their congress colleagues. Furthermore, she demonstrates how their work at the Congress was often overshadowed by aspects like racial appearance, clothing, language, and educational capital, issues that become sites of symbolic struggle that are as relevant as other legal and political struggles over specific laws or government policies.

Through a different example, Alcida Rita Ramos analyzes the ways in which indigenous people from Brazil struggle to occupy public and institutional spaces through appropriating technologies while also emphasizing their cultural differences:

Indigenous people in the country are now matching their traditional ways of expression to such Western channels as writing, video, tape recording, radio, and television. But it seems that these new media are not displacing old models of

thought; rather, they are providing indigenous peoples with more effective means to conduct their struggle for recognition as legitimate Others. (1998:139).

The examples mentioned above suggest that indigenous communication adds to the many other possibilities for indigenous people to occupy public spaces and institutions, as Ramos explains, "as legitimate Others," despite their lack of formal education. This does not mean that indigenous communication and union-related training should substitute for formal education. Indeed, one of the strongest demands of indigenous movements is to have equal access to educational institutions at all levels. Yet, access to education has become a marker of social class. On the one hand, right-wing sectors use it to discriminate against indigenous people through arguments like "what will an Indian who never stepped into a classroom know about governing a country?" On the other hand, some indigenous people consider their lack of formal education as a limitation to access institutional spaces, such as governmental ones, and often feel intimidated by "professional" or "well educated" middle-class people. In this context, alternative training within unions and spaces like the Plan Nacional work not only as concrete educational processes, but also to give indigenous people the confidence to appropriate spaces that they felt exclusive to "professional" people. In this regard, training at the Plan Nacional works to strengthen communicators' sense of personal and political possibility.

Influence of the Plan Nacional on the life and work of indigenous communicators

Most indigenous communicators agree that their contact with video production has changed their lives, and that once they started, it becomes hard to leave. From what I

could observe in field work and interviews, around 70 percent of communicators who started collaborating within the Plan Nacional have remained involved with communication activities, either actively, or temporarily, combining their communication work with education and organizing activities. Once they start, many decide to fully dedicate themselves to video production. "I had to decide between kicking the ball once in a while, or to play the full championship. And I decided then to play the championship," said Humberto Claros, one of the Plan Nacional's most active young videomakers, about his decision to fully commit to communication work.

Communicators agree on a fascination with the personal, educational, and political possibilities of video production and communication. Those who decide to have video as their main activity do so through various mechanisms. Some are appointed to a position on the Indigenous Audiovisual Coordinating Body from Bolivia (CAIB) coordinating board. From this position, which lasts two years, they then become involved almost fully in activities related to video production and communication planning. Others develop more interest in learning technical operations, or they invest money with great effort to obtain their own equipment in order to work more independently, but without separating from the Plan Nacional. This was the case of Vicente Mamani from Potosí, who gathered money from personal savings and family loans to buy a US\$4,000 professional camera; or the Aymara organization Saphi Aru, which works in collaboration with the Plan Nacional to produce its own videos.

Others come and go between their political leadership activities and audiovisual work. Still others become specialized in specific areas and are even acknowledged and hired to do temporary jobs outside the Plan Nacional. Nicolás Ipamo from Santa Cruz, for

example, has been hired to do sound for important national productions. Others, like Anselmo Martínez from Potosí, acknowledge the importance of communication for political work, but communication is still complementary to his main activity as a national leader in the National Council of Ayllus and Markas of Qullasuyo CONAMAQ (Consejo Nacional de Ayllus y Markas del Qollasuyo).

Political commitment and economic needs

Until 2005, it was unusual for communicators to receive economic compensation for their work, and this is one reason most can not dedicate themselves full-time to this activity. Nevertheless, since 2006, a year that marks a notable growth of the Plan Nacional, a few active communicators have developed more specific roles and are economically compensated regularly. This is the case, for example, of the five production team members in charge of the television program Bolivia Constituyente. Besides these specific cases, most communicators who participate in training, production or distribution activities within the Plan Nacional do not receive monetary compensation. Instead, like political leaders who work with peasant and indigenous unions, they have travel, food, and lodging expenses covered by funding that diverse international entities grant to the Plan Nacional.³¹

Communicators have different opinions regarding the lack of a stable income through which to develop their communication activities. The contribution that most communicators give to the Plan Nacional through their political trajectories, knowledge, and dedicated work is key for the Plan's functioning. While most communicators assume

³¹ Issues of funding, distribution, and other economic aspects of the Plan Nacional will be analyzed in detail in Chapter 7.

such collaboration as a political commitment with their organizations and communities, they also acknowledge the lack of economic compensation as a limitation to involve in depth with the Plan activities. "We have to dedicate ourselves, we need to live out of something," videomaker Alfredo Copa noted.

I don't think one can live only out of communication, at least I don't think so. That's why I'm dedicating myself, as I told you, a bit to construction.

This economic issue reveals a situation which is common in unions and NGOs in Latin America, namely, the ambiguities around how a full-time political commitment should be economically compensated. Furthermore, there seems to be a feeling of gratitude, mainly among young communicators, for training opportunities that the Plan Nacional offers them, and for having access to spaces that no other professional possibilities would grant. Some communicators mentioned in informal conversations their concern about not having stable economic compensation to do their job. One communicator, for example, mentioned to me that, even though they should not receive a salary "because we are nobody's employees" and "because we are working for a political reason, to the benefit of our own communities," there should be clearer economic compensation for specific, time consuming activities.

Communicators often joke that in order to work for the Plan Nacional, "you have to remain single." "And if you are not," they go on, "you'll become single again soon." Far from being funny, this joke rather refers to the very tough family trouble that most communicators face when trying to balance their family responsibilities with the highly demanding schedules and low economic compensation at the Plan Nacional. The issue of

monetary compensation impacts differently young communicators who take their work as part of their education, and those who have family responsibilities and who, therefore, have a stronger need to juggle their communication job with other activities. The work of communicators is not a regular job, but demands availability to take trips of a month or more during workshops, shooting, editing, or distribution periods. Hence, besides the need for monetary compensation, the work commitment implies leaving community or family responsibilities in other people's hands. This issue is related, for example, to the larger dropout rate among female communicators: while male family heads can live through periods of economic pressure through family support, women can hardly stay away from domestic responsibilities such as child care for long periods of time.

This delicate situation that sometimes implies assuming political commitment or mission as a sort of economic sacrifice has caused further tensions in the work. For instance, some communicators have tried to inflate their transportation costs for attending workshops and other events. Other communicators have attempted to keep for themselves the money obtained through a festival award for a specific video (instead of assuming the Plan's principle that a collective production process implies a collective distribution of the award). This issue has also come up in the unresolved debates and disagreement about how to distribute possible video earnings in case videos were sold.

It is worthwhile noting that not even half of the Plan Nacional's achievements would be possible if it were not based on this economic dynamic. It is not the case, as in many NGOs, that "professional" staff salaries are incommensurate with those of interns and community promoters. As Chapter 7 details, the Plan Nacional is mainly funded by European Non Governmental Organizations such as Mugarik Gabe from the Basque

Country, international cooperation agencies such as the Spanish Agency for International Cooperation AECI (Agencia Española de Cooperación Internacional), and has received smaller funding from the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization UNESCO (Organización de las Naciones Unidas para la Educación, la Ciencia y la Cultura). Funding for Plan Nacional activities is incredibly stretched to assure the development of numerous activities and events; to pay modest salaries for those communicators and staff who work full time for the Plan; and to guarantee comfortable conditions for those who participate in workshops, video production, and distribution. Nevertheless, economic compensation continues to be an issue that often leads to ambiguous feelings and tensions between a political commitment, which is generally assumed as the right moral premise; and the concrete economic needs of a regular compensation for the time and work invested in communication activities.

In contrast to the tensions around economic compensation, the possibilities for national and international trips are seen as an important incentive to develop the work. Most active communicators have made trips and accepted international residencies to get training, -for instance, to the well known International Film School at San Antonio de los Baños in Cuba; to share their experiences or support video training in other places in Latin America -for instance with indigenous video experiences in Chile, Peru, Paraguay and Colombia; as well as to present Plan Nacional productions at international festivals in other Latin American countries, the United States, Canada, and Europe. Communicators value these possibilities because they allow them to learn about other places, experiences and people, as well as to strengthen political alliances and to value their own work, which is usually acknowledged and appreciated in such spaces.

Some communicators view international trips as an opportunity to analyze the Bolivian context in different ways. "[From international trips] one comes back with more strength," affirmed Marcelina Cárdenas about her frequent trips to festivals and production activities in the United States, Cuba, and Spain.

When we go outside for me it's like going to the top of a hill and to see my country from there. For example, most people always think that in the United States, in Europe, they are more perfect, more developed, that it is a happier world. But sometimes it's also the worst. In many things they have been also mistaken: while accumulating money, while progressing in technology, they have not thought of the other brothers [hermanos], they have not thought even of themselves. Then when I see my country from there, one starts to love it more, to compare. Then it's a contribution for me, it is very useful.

For others, international trips also offer the possibility to value the work of the Plan Nacional from a different context. "I also participated in Spain with another video: *Miradas Cruzadas* (Crossing Sights, 2001)" remembered Marcelino Pinto, a respected producer from the Chapare region in his mid thirties.

I think that has been one of the maximal experiences, to travel internationally. People gave us the opportunity to go there and to demonstrate that we can produce video. That has been a great contribution, like we have represented indigenous peoples with dignity. I operated the camera."

Similarly, these experiences allow communicators to prove themselves in other places, and to therefore value their own work, for instance, in "professional" terms. "I went to Spain to produce a video. That was the first time we were going out to make an international production," said Regina Monasterio, a 38 year-old Guaraní producer who became a state functionary during the government of Evo Morales.

Mmm, it was beautiful! [...] Then that was a job, for me, at a professional level. People would tell you 'filmmaker,' they wouldn't tell you 'videomaker.' Then: 'they are the indigenous filmmakers.' And I think that we have demonstrated so. Even though that was the first time we had that kind of experience, of a production job at that level. Because one requires a double effort, let's say, or triple in this case because you had to demonstrate your technical capacity and also a little bit of politics. Because you are in a different country. But yes, I think we passed the exam.

The active production and distribution work of the Plan Nacional around Bolivia also allows communicators to gain political strength and to understand better the different realities of indigenous peoples there. "Before I used to know the Quechua, Aymara and Guaraní peoples," explained Constancio Chileno, a forty year-old Quechua-speaking communicator from the Chapare region.

But now with all the other places we have visited with the Plan Nacional I have known the other peoples and that strengthens me, that I visited the nine departments of Bolivia, of my country, and also I traveled to other places, to other countries.

Another significant aspect that deeply motivates communicators is the acknowledgement and respect from their families, communities and organizations toward their work. "My family saw only one year ago what I do," Humberto Claros noted.

My father didn't tell me. It was a national leader from here who ran into my father and told him 'that he was very happy for what I do.' Very happy. And they screened the coca leaf video [Cocanchej Sutimpy (In the Name of Our Coca Leaves, 2005)] that time. Well, actually my father didn't tell me anything. But that leader told me that my father told him his opinion, and that he was very proud of what I do.

This account constitutes a very rare reference to how their work relates to communicators' family relations. Usually communicators present themselves as working full-time for collective political projects, but scarce, more intimate comments about their family life, permit perceiving both the connection and the tension between family and community relations, and political action.

Communicators say they feel actively committed to the political transformation of Bolivia. They also reflect on the ways in which their communication work has given them a greater sense of personal and political possibility, as well as access to activities and places that they never expected to know. Nevertheless, as much as participation in the Plan Nacional is empowering, it is also strictly regulated through formal and non-formal mechanisms that range from continuous observations, jokes and gossip among communicators about, for example, each other's behavior, to formal expulsion from the process. For example, when somebody's video wins an award, or when somebody is invited to an international festival or training session, that communicator acquires a

stronger commitment to fulfill moral expectations such as reciprocity and collective and political participation beyond self interest.³² At her return she goes through a sort of period of surveillance by her colleagues, who are watching to see that she is not getting economic or other sorts of personal benefits, that she is not showing off her achievements as personal, that she is not using her learning to do private jobs, that she is sharing her learning or experience with other communicators or community members, or that she is not distancing herself from the Plan's communication process. Formal mechanisms of regulation include expulsion from the process in cases of evident economic self-profit out of Plan Nacional activities (i.e., attempts to report inflated transportation costs, or to keep the full economic benefit when a video wins an economic award); as well as in cases when communicators get romantically involved and their relationship puts the Plan's work at risk. (For example, one young communicator became pregnant from a married communicator while attending a one-month workshop. In this case both communicators were expelled from the Plan Nacional).

I would argue that such regulating mechanisms replicate some of the complex processes that support the social relations of indigenous communities, which imply tough regulating mechanisms based on collective surveillance and moral punishment. Finally, as in any other collective process, there is an undeniable tension in terms of status that translates into certain degrees of envy and competition among communicators who are attentive to who is sent to specific events, and whether the person deserves it or will morally respond to the assumed commitment.

³² This issue, which often becomes a tension, is related to the definition of authorship within the Plan Nacional, which will be discussed in depth in Chapter 5.

When describing the Plan Nacional most communicators express clearly and confidently its objectives, history, and goals. Although this does not necessarily imply a lack of tensions, it does suggest that there is a common commitment and trust toward this project. Most communicators agree that video is an extremely powerful tool for the political processes of indigenous peoples in Bolivia.

This Chapter has explored the different aspects that constitute indigenous communicators as political subjects. The Plan Nacional has designed mechanisms through selection, training, and communication processes, for communicators to work "organically" with their communities and organizations. As mentioned earlier in this Chapter, "organic" is a term that Plan Nacional members themselves use to explain that: 1) the communicator does not work as an individual, or for self benefit, but works for a collectivity as a community representative or as an appointed member of a political organization; 2) her work accomplishes one specific function within a larger political structure composed of many other functions (i.e., although it varies from one to another, most organizations have a communication position and area that tends to have the same value as the other *dirigentes* or political leaders responsible for such things as charges for land and territory, natural resources, gender, health and education; and 3) that her charge is supposed to accomplish a political mission which includes working to increase knowledge and defense of indigenous rights, and informing the general public about "indigenous peoples cultural diversity, realities, and needs" (CAIB 2006: 1).

This "organic" quality based on political affiliation, trajectory, and commitment to a common mission, sets the ground for a technical and political formation. Training is

rooted in the assumption that communication work will form part of a larger strategy to cover the information and communication needs of indigenous and peasant organizations in Bolivia. It is this "organic" quality that defines indigenous communicators as political subjects who are rooted in concrete historical processes, and identified with the struggles of peasants and indigenous peoples. This does not mean that their struggle and political practices are totally coherent or free of contradiction. It does, however, imply a series of shared assumptions and desires about a common political position, strategy and mission. Hence, their communication work becomes a political practice that adds to a larger transformation in which peasant and indigenous organizations are becoming subjects in national politics (Rivera-Cusicanqui 2003; Tapia 2006; and Albó 2002).

While understanding indigenous communicators as political subjects, I would like to move away from describing their work as an "empowerment" process, namely, as a process through which self-conscious agents appropriate media technologies in order to represent, construct or "perform" preexisting cultural identities (Ginsburg 1995 and 2002; Himpele 2002; Turner 1995 and 2002; Wortham 2002). Literature on alternative and "citizens' media" offers analyses that move away from the focus on representation and identity to understand the "transformative processes they [media] bring about among participants and their communities" (Rodríguez 2001). These kinds of perspectives analyze communication processes as embedded in political contexts that both limit political action and make it possible, an idea that breaks with essentialist understandings of the political actor and her empowerment abilities.

This Chapter has discussed different processes through which the work of communicators contributes to the political development of indigenous media. I have

discussed for example the ways in which indigenous leaders explain communication as a "political act" that, together with the ongoing interaction within different regional teams, permits taking part in national transformations; the impacts of communication training processes in the lives and political subjectivity of communicators, the potential of the "open-ended" quality of video technologies to use them as a tool for group discussions with diverse audiences; and the possibilities of television projects to motivate the engagement of community members in collective programming. All these processes demonstrate that indigenous media in Bolivia produce, more than representation struggles over indigenous identities, concrete transformations in the political subjectivities, imaginaries and practices of people who participate in them either as communicators, trainers, leaders, community and organization members, or audiences.

Building on the question of how a political context can both limit political action and make it possible, through this Chapter I have discussed, on the one hand, how most indigenous communicators see in their work concrete personal and political possibilities and achievements: their work strengthens their political consciousness, provides them with more experience and knowledge about indigenous peoples' situation and struggles, and clearly allows them to take active part in the larger political transformations in Bolivia.

On the other hand, there are a number of elements that also constrain indigenous communicators from freely locating themselves as individual resisting agents because their practices are rooted in concrete historical processes. Among such constraining elements we can count: 1) internal power relations within the Plan Nacional in terms of gender inequality, competition, educational or experiential hierarchies, and status; 2)

structural and historical limitations such as the tensions and disagreement around economic compensation, family responsibilities, and political commitment; and 3) practical and symbolic subordination to dominant parameters such as "professionalism."

The tensions that indigenous communicators experience as political subjects exemplify some of the processes that other subaltern political subjects in Bolivia are going through as they actively take part in social transformation. The following Chapter details the involvement of other subjects, such as community members and organization leaders, in communication activities

Chapter 4. Reenacting and recreating: fiction, life experience, and new politics



Figure 10. Still of Cocanchej Sutimpy, Cochabamba, 2004.
(Courtesy CEFREC-CAIB).

My first visit to Bolivia in 2004 responded to an invitation from indigenous videomakers from Potosí, La Paz, and the Chapare region. By then, the most important references I had of Bolivia were related to at least ten indigenous films produced by the Plan Nacional in different regions of the Country, which I had watched at indigenous film festivals in Mexico and New York. In such films I had seen for the first time the raw contrast between Andean and Amazonian landscapes, the strange geography of La Paz and El Alto, groups of indigenous people from Potosí celebrating a carnival party, and the amusing atmosphere in a Chapare chicha bar.

Among witty jokes, my hosts introduced me to places and people reinforcing my already filtered sight: “Here Gabriela, let me introduce you to the enemy of Juancito, the rich kid who wanted to marry Rosita,” said Quechua communicator Marcelina Cárdenas pointing at the handsome young man who worked as ayuco or driver assistant in the bus traveling to her village. When showing me the surroundings of his community, videomaker Humberto Claros explained seriously “Well, many people die in this dangerous pond, especially gold seekers.” Then he paused, expecting me to connect the reference to the final scene of a film they made in his village. When introducing me to new videomakers, there was always a joke about their participation in such or such a film: “This is Ajayu (spirit), he's nice but you gotta watch out, he's quite tacaño (stingy),” said Max pointing at well known Aymara actor Reynaldo Yujra, making reference to his role in two different films, one as a soul seeking his way out of life, and another as a stingy and ambitious peasant.

I toured around Bolivia for the first time hearing these jokes. My sense of reality was altered both by the inevitable surprise of the first encounter, and by the ways in which

indigenous videomakers and their films showed Bolivia to me. I knew real places and people, not only by their actual names, but also by their relationship to indigenous video.

This relationship between actual places and situations, and the videos produced about them, turned out to be a fascinating way of "intervening in reality" through a pedagogical development of fiction. By explaining video production's ability to "intervene in reality," this Chapter analyzes the political role of indigenous video as a communication process.

A first aspect to consider is the role that video technological qualities play for making possible such an "intervention" of reality. In this regard, Walter Benjamin's metaphor of the "magician and the surgeon" is useful to illustrate the ways in which film and video technology mediate reality. "Magician and surgeon compare to painter and cameraman," wrote Benjamin.

The painter maintains in his work a natural distance from reality, the cameraman penetrates deeply into its web. There is a tremendous difference between the pictures they obtain. That of the painter is a total one, that of the cameraman consists of multiple fragments which are assembled under a new law. Thus, for contemporary man the representation of reality by the film is incomparably more significant than that of the painter, since it offers, precisely because of the throughgoing permeation of reality with mechanical equipment, an aspect of reality which is free of all equipment. And that is what one is entitled to ask from a work of art. (1968: 227)

Benjamin's metaphor explains that the technological possibilities of film force the filmmaker to take action into pieces of reality in order to "assemble" and construct a picture out of them. I propose to build on this idea to emphasize the active, productive,

and transformative role of film for "intervening in reality," a concept that goes beyond the more passive idea of "representing" what already exists. In addition to the technological possibilities, the "intervention in reality" is also possible due to the innovative ways in which indigenous videomakers understand and use fictional forms to take part in national politics by commenting on particular realities that had not been visible, and were often silenced, in conventional media. At a time when indigenous peoples have become central subjects of historical transformations, videos produced by native people contribute to recounting stories that build upon social reality in order to bring attention to what indigenous media makers see as relevant, necessary, possible, imaginable, or desirable.

A central element of my analysis is the way in which feelings such as life experience, suffering, and belonging are evoked during the whole video production and circulation process. In this amusing and yet serious game of mixing reality with fiction, the practice of reenacting and transmitting one's own life experience has become a political statement: "I am allowed to talk about this because I lived it, I went through this, I suffered it, I was there." Many indigenous video producers explain that their direct involvement allows them to reenact their own experiences, suffering, struggles, and lives –their reality- to those who do not know them. One's life experience is pointed to as one of the key characteristics that provide indigenous video with authority and legitimacy: it is assumed as different because it is made "from within," by those who know, who have experienced the situation, who are from the place.

This Chapter interrogates how indigenous communicators use the notion of life experience in their films to talk about authenticity, identity and politics. Why does it become necessary to recreate life and organizational experience through concepts such as

suffering and struggle in local narratives and recent history? How do their recreations of recent and old historical situations render personal and collective experience political? In productions, life experience is deployed in various ways, which range from participation in political struggles to love stories, from family life to community celebrations.

Interestingly, evoking one's life experiences and suffering has also become an important element of indigenous leaders' political discourses, especially when they explain their abilities to govern "from below." Alternatively, although historical recreation does not involve a lived experience, it evokes collective and shared stories of oppression, suffering, and struggle. The combination of personal experience and historical recreation in fictional films allows stories break from their individual existence to turn into shared, generalizable situations that become "political." This Chapter underlines the centrality of personal life experience and collective history both in indigenous video production and in recent political discourses of Bolivia.

The following sections discuss the ways in which life experience and past history are evoked in the different moments of video production: from the original idea and script writing; during preproduction, when the idea is discussed with the community; during production or shooting; and in distribution.

"Because my family lived through that, right?" Script writing and life experience

In August 2007 I attended a script writing workshop in the city of Trinidad, Department of Beni, in the Amazonian region of Bolivia. Workshop participants were a basic group of seven communicators and leaders from the region, three CAIB members in

charge of specific production tasks, and five CEFREC members who contributed with scriptwriting training, technical work, and local production.

The first workshop day the group discussed questions like: Is there one way to write a script? Is it possible to create our own narrative? Franklin Gutiérrez, the workshop instructor, argued that there is not a single way of writing a script, and that the work of this meeting is to appropriate the original story in order to develop it according to the participants' cultural references and ways of life. Participants agreed that each region has its own differences and that they can be expressed in the video. The first day Franklin also introduced the key aspects of the Aristotelian dramatic structure in which stories are generally composed of an introduction, development, conflict, breakdown, climax and resolution. He made clear that this is just a base, but not the only way to tell stories. The following discussion was about developing elements to "help tell the story visually."

Once introductory aspects were developed, the group read the original story proposed by a young communicator after a real event she heard in her community. In a previous workshop, members of the Film Training and Production Center CEFREC (Centro de Estudios, Formación y Realización Cinematográfica), the Indigenous Audiovisual Coordinating Body from Bolivia CAIB (Coordinadora Audiovisual Indígena Originaria de Bolivia), and regional communicators had selected this story out of ten proposals because it addressed issues that they considered to be relevant to make visible the situation of the region. The story, which was produced into *El Grito de la Selva* (A Cry from the Forest, 2008), focused on a community that organized against a lumber company, and the protagonist was a female traditional healer who was accused by the company owners to be a witch. These aspects, the group discussed, permitted depicting

the possibility of community organizing to defend their natural resources, the loss of traditional healing knowledge, and the political and social role of women in indigenous communities.

Based on this story, the group started identifying locations. The group also spent hours trying to imagine the age, appearance, virtues and weaknesses of each character. They defined the main conflicts developed in the story: lumber companies, lack of acknowledgement of traditional medicine, and gender conflicts. Finally, they placed the story historically during the 1990s as an attempt to situate the entrance of the supposed lumber company to the community's territory according to how neoliberal governments of the time allowed for such companies to exploit natural resources irrationally.

During the following three days of the workshop, the group worked hard to define in detail the course of the story. It took a while for the group to arrive at agreements on how to represent negative aspects of the community, for example, at some point the lumber company owner is supposed to offer money to organization leaders so they allow him enter the forest without the community's authorization. Participants suggested various ideas of how to solve this scene: "drinking in a lady's bar"... "no, no, at the leader's home..." "no, that's not realistic, it should be at the company owner's home, that's how they actually do it."

This is how the detailed definition of events and situations of the story was product of an intense and often exhausting debate about how realistic they are being represented, and about how to show a balanced image of indigenous communities that is not too celebratory, but neither too negative or hopeless. Once each situation of the story was defined, it was developed into specific scenes. For this particular script, this process took

about four more days. Finally the script was ready. People in charge of production had already contacted the communities and prepared everything to leave. Each workshop participant then took a role: camera assistant, continuity, sound assistant, production, lighting. It took one more day to have scripts ready for everybody, to pack and travel to the first community.

As these events detail, most of the ideas that inspire scripts are based on attempts for reenacting some aspect of the political or cultural reality in which the writer lives. Usually, when a story is chosen for a script it has not only autobiographical elements, but also situations are common to a group of people. Stories address many different experiences: love, domestic violence, torture, or land dispossession. The process for selecting a story varies from group to group. For example, in training groups composed of more experienced communicators, they themselves discuss their proposals and select those which the group feels to address a particular theme of interest. In other cases, individual communicators produce their own stories independently even if they were not selected by the group. Yet in most cases, CEFREC instructors still have a strong weight in deciding which proposal brings together issues that they consider urgent or relevant in relation to national or international politics and in relation to audience and funding agencies' expectations. For example, since the Plan Nacional creation there have been productions addressing gender tensions in indigenous communities. Proposals with these topics often result out of the interest of a particular female communicator and the efforts for addressing gender relations in the Plan Nacional agenda, which are often related to funding agencies pressures and the growing awareness within the Plan Nacional to work in this regard. Other criteria for selection of stories are the concern to have a balanced

number of videos from each regional team, to have stories of indigenous groups who are not too visible in national politics -such as the Chácobo, Esse Ejja, Yuqui, and other unrepresented Amazonian and Eastern peoples; to address issues directly related to indigenous claims such as natural resources, territory, traditional knowledge, and consuetudinary law; and to require feasible conditions of production. Sometimes two or more stories are selected and adapted into a single production. Other proposals are not at all produced. Such was the case of a story proposed in the same group as *El Grito de la Selva*. This alternative story, also based on a real life event, was about a young woman who was eaten by piranhas in the Amazon while she was searching for medical help to cure her wounded mother. Although the group felt that this story could address the tough health and transportation conditions in the Amazonian region, they finally chose the case of the female healer leading a community fighting against lumber companies because they considered the latter to bring together many different conflicts into a single story.

It is worth mentioning that CEFREC and CAIB, the two organizations in charge of Plan Nacional management, do not assign the same attention, staff, and resources to all produced stories. While some videos such as *El Grito de la Selva* are assigned the best equipment and technicians, as well as enough economic resources; other productions such as *Historia del Pueblo Cavineño* (History of the Cavineño People, 2005), a video reportage about traditional knowledge and history, have modest financial and production support from CEFREC and CAIB, and the production process is in charge of local indigenous communicators. Criteria for assigning resources to productions also relate to the nature and genre of the story (i.e., generally fiction obtains more resources than non-fiction reporting) as well as to the expected impacts in different kinds of audiences.

When responding about what inspires their scripts, videomakers generally ended up relating important and intimate passages from their own lives. "Then I presented my script, a story based on the reality of my town," explained Movima producer Miguel Angel Yalauma. At the moment of presenting a script idea for *Renacer: Historia de un Movima* (To Be Born Again: The Story of a Movima Man, 2005), he proposed a story of exploitation within cattle *estancias* in the Eastern Department of Beni:

My town is known for being the capital of cattle in Beni. Before, cattle owners were Movima people, but not anymore. Now Movima people are employees, the exploited ones. Then I based my story on that... because my family lived through that, right? And I started writing. My dad's family owns cattle. My mother's too. But there were various tricks, that's how rich people took cattle and land away from them. That's when my family decided to leave everything and come back to town. That was in 1982. That same year my town also suffered a flood. So everything got lost, so we had to start over again. By 1988 we were again in the estancia [hacienda] working for the patrones because there was no other job. That's where I grew up until I was ten or twelve. I only started school when I was 12.

This film documents the experience of his own family working for the patrón in the hacienda, and at it also tells a story common to most Movima families of the region. In a different context, Aymara videomaker María Morales intended to depict the situation of discrimination in which women from her region live in the video *Venciendo el Miedo* (Conquering Fear, 2004). "I had already thought of this story because there was a lot of

discrimination against women," said María about her idea of putting together in a fictional video a series of situations that women went through.

When I was a leader, many abused women used to come home. I lived only with my mother. They came home fearless because we were living alone. I used to get upset: 'How can they treat women like that? Women do everything at home, wash clothes, cook, the work is hard, and despite that, they get beaten.... why is there no respect for women's rights?' I used to tell women: 'Let's place a complaint before the police or the community.' But they were too afraid: 'If I place a complaint he will beat me, he'd kill me.' From those situations I started writing the script. The woman whose story I took for the script lives by herself. As in the script, the family left the highlands to live in the tropical region of Northern La Paz. It was a poor family. They arrived to the tropic, they built their house, they already had their children, everything. And suddenly he went with the other woman and left his wife with 7 children. She had to live for the kids, the older ones could not go to school, only the small ones. Her children helped her to produce coffee, banana. Then the man came back after five years. And she got pregnant again. He left her pregnant again. The kid who acts in the film is that boy.

In this story, María was not only concerned with representing the suffering of women, but also with showing the possibilities that they had created to overcome their situation, such as searching for support from the community authorities, and strengthening local forms of organization:

Then the man came back. 'But he has already abandoned her, he has nothing to do here, he must leave,' the community decided. The community got him out, they said: 'if he ever comes back, we won't let him in.' They even wrote a certificate and signed it. And the woman did well. The children grew up, they went out to work. From that story other women thought that we are able to raise our children by ourselves, and to support each other. Now there is a women's organization, which is why women participate now in the community decisions.

This testimony provides a concrete example of how video production is not only about "representing" a specific reality, in this case, about women's suffering; but mainly about "intervening" in this reality. This happens both by creating video scenes where women fight gender discrimination through community action, as well as by involving community members in acting such scenes, a process that implies a certain degree of discussion and reflection about the topic within the community. Another source of inspiration for scripts, particularly in the first years of the Plan Nacional, was adapting traditional stories. "I started writing a local story, then I organized it in scenes, sequences," said Quechua communicator Marcelina Cárdenas about Llanthupi Munakuy (Loving Each Other in the Shadows, 2001) one of the strongest adaptations of a traditional story about forced marriage in communities.

People told me the story, I heard it. Then I researched to deepen more. Local stories do not exist by chance, they talk about mystical things, about values and cultures. Every local story is always related to local realities.

While many scripts tend to reproduce actual conflicts or situations, some of them also intend to communicate local realities through traditional stories. But only a few projects embark on the challenging project of recreating historical events. Quechua communicator Alfredo Copa is particularly interested in historical recreation. His ideas are non-conventional, they are ambitious and break with the structures of most of the Plan's videos in terms of narrative, length, and production possibilities. For example, Alfredo laughingly remembers his first project: "I wonder what they think about me... I am a bit complicated. I wanted to recreate the arrival of the Spaniards to Bolivia. For that, I said, I need 500 horses, well armed Spanish soldiers..." While defending his positions, Alfredo insists that before anything, his videos should be understandable for indigenous audiences. Alfredo enjoys having his script reviewed over and over by instructors and colleagues, and although sometimes he drives them crazy in defending his ideas ("les hace quebrar la cabeza,") he is acknowledged as one of the most original and hardworking producers: "Jodido (stubborn) is Cinchi, but at the end he always manages to work out his projects," his colleagues say. "It was always important for me to use history in order to see the present and the future," explained Alfredo about historical recreation.

It's quite a challenge for me. It's tiring: reviewing books, talking to the elders, summarizing. History is the memory of our ancestors. It's important for me because they already went through many things, and faced many difficulties. If we don't know history, we can stumble with the same stone, as they say.

Alfredo explains history as the link between present experience and their ancestors' memory. In this case, although old history is a distant experience, its appropriation through the idea of "our ancestors' memory" allows them to move away from the personal experience to mobilize it as a shared one and thereby, to render it political. Alfredo's latest project, *¿Ahora de Quién es la Verdad?* (Now Whose is the Truth?, 2006), proposed to inform and reflect about the Constituent Assembly. In this video, Alfredo insisted in including historical passages. The story is guided by an Aymara ancestor who explains the history of domination over indigenous peoples to an Indian girl living in the city of El Alto. The historical explanation includes short recreations of the Republican times, the Spanish Colony, the First Constituent Assembly, and the National Revolution. These recreations are combined with actual interviews with well known political leaders and intellectuals, as well as with clips of political demonstrations and social struggles. "I feel happy about the script on the Constituent Assembly, even when they say that it was too historical," Alfredo admitted.

When we were screening it in my place, people cried, they asked, 'why do we have to go through this? Why did we have to die like that? Our elders suffered all this, so many abuses, education and religion have influenced on the situation... that is why!' People get motivated, they know that the Constitution is important, that all that has to change. My idea was that the Assembly is important because we have already suffered a big damage, and the only opportunity to change things is the Constituent Assembly.

Here again, indigenous audiences appropriated old historical passages recreated fictionally in the video as part of their own, personal history. This was possible because Alfredo and the production team had the ability to take advantage of the technological possibilities of video. For example, having organized the historical scene where Spanish colonizers arrived at an Aymara community, the cameraman shot their figures on backlight to accentuate their mysterious appearance to the eyes of indigenous people; he then made a detailed shot of the Catholic cross that Spanish priests wore, and made close shots of the faces of priests and indigenous people to accentuate the drama of their violent encounter. In the editing work, the team interwove recreated historical passages with footage of real demonstrations and interviews in order to address the political debates that were already taking place among indigenous audiences. Once the video was projected, the possibility that audiences had for watching in group, on a large screen, recreated historical passages together with actual mobilizations footage, provided a sense of immediacy and emotional closeness in relation to such events.³³ These might be some of the reasons why, as Alfredo noted, audiences were emotionally moved and motivated to discuss the historical relevance of the Constituent Assembly for indigenous peoples.

Young Guaraní communicator Veimar Hinojosa proposed another script that uses historical recreation: *Korewasu: Historia y Fiesta de Santa Rosa* (Korewasu: History and Celebration in Santa Rosa, 2005). This video recreates the battle of Kuruyuki, which took place in his community, led by Guaraní leader Apiaguaki Tumpa against the "karais" or white hacienda owners and the Santa Cruz army in 1892. "It's a docu-fiction," said Veimar when he explained the reasons for using historical recreation:

³³ Chapter 7 describes more in detail viewing processes among rural and urban audiences.

A documentary that inside its narrative had to recreate in fiction the Kuruyuki massacre. We worked a lot, we had to move around in order to recreate how things were before. Not everything appeared as I wanted because we did not have enough resources for that.

The genre of "docu-fiction" that Veimar mentions has become popular among indigenous communicators to address political issues precisely because it allows for a creative combination of "real life" documentary scenes with historical recreation and fictional forms.

Upon successes of indigenous movements in Bolivia from 2000, there is a growing interest both among professional filmmakers and independent film initiatives in recreating historical struggles of indigenous peoples. Such is the case of at least two ambitious video projects planning to recreate in features the "Cerco a La Paz," a blockade to the city led by indigenous leader Tupac Katari and his wife Bartolina Sisa in 1781.³⁴ A similar project, directed by Bolivian filmmaker Juan Carlos Valdivia, will recreate the Kuruyuki battle led by Guaraní leader Apiguaki Tumpa. After watching Veimar's video, mentioned above, Valdivia offered work on the script team of his own project, which is supposed to receive a couple of million dollars for its production.

The previous examples illustrate some of the situations that inspire script writing in indigenous productions. Communicators find in their personal, family or community situations, possibilities for expressing their own realities. From script writing, indigenous communicators have experimented with various fictional forms to recreate traditional

³⁴ One of these was mentioned to me by young participants of the Movimiento de Nuevo Cine y Video del Alto, and the other by a videomaker from La Paz.

stories with some kind of moral message, historical events, or daily life situations, often in combination with documentary resources. Of course, life experiences recovered have different degrees of emotional engagement, both among people who participate in productions and among audiences who identify differently with each situation. The notion of life experience then is mobilized differently in each production: while for some it is more interesting to comment on situations of domestic violence, for others it is important to recreate situations of political torture. Alternatively, recreating distant historical events allows for bridging personal and present life experience to a collective and shared memory in order to reinforce the political significance of such events for present struggles. Finally, script writing is a way of visualizing how to make use of video technological possibilities to accentuate, compare, or explain situations, as well as to produce emotional feelings and a sense of reality and immediacy.

The following section discusses the motivations and processes that inspire people from communities to get involved in video productions.

“People's experience in relation to those scenes was very alive.” Community's identification with stories

After having attended the scriptwriting workshop for El Grito de la Selva in August 2007, I joined the production team for the shooting process in September of that same year. The film shooting took place in Bella Selva, a small Moxeño community of around 30 families. Although Bella Selva was only two hours away by car from Trinidad, the capital city of Beni, it had no electricity. The community offered the Assembly meeting home for the production team to settle with their tents. The team shot from five to twelve

scenes every day. Each scene needed about five takes to obtain the right material. Men, women and children from the community were patient actors who agreed to repeat the action when necessary.

On the fifth shooting day the team had scheduled to film the scene of an assembly meeting. Community members or comunarios had gathered in the morning in the Assembly room. The dolly was ready in the middle of the room and comunarios sat on the wood seats. In the corner, some blue lights were installed to support the unbalanced lighting. The scenes to shoot were: (1) A hunter came back to the community to tell the corregidor that, in the forest, he saw a tractor and some lumber company workers inspecting the woods. (2) The corregidor called for a meeting right away to consult with the community how to proceed. In the meeting represented in this scene, based on previous negative experiences with lumber companies, the community agrees to go and face the workers and owner, to ask how they got permission to work in their woods, and to ask them to leave.

It took about two hours to develop the latter scene. In every shot, comunarios developed their dialogues, some in Spanish, some in Moxeño, arguing against and in favor of the possibility for confronting the company. As always, early dialogues were timid and sloppy, but little by little they got more fluid, improvised, with character. It was late and people looked tired and hungry. Finally, as every time a scene was done, the team shouted: ¡Hecha! and applauded happily. As the team started to pick up the equipment, the corregidor called for everybody's attention: "Un minutito de su atención por favor..." he started. He then gave a solemn speech thanking the team for having chosen their community to work. He said that as the work went on they felt that this

would be very useful to speak about their problems. He then addressed the comunarios: "As many of you have heard, there is again that tractor wondering around. We've told them they couldn't use our road to bring their machines, we don't want them here. I ask the support of you all so we can go together, tonight or early tomorrow, to talk to that company owner for once! If necessary, we'll seize their machines until they agree to leave!" Men and women started to express their support, one by one. It was like a repetition of the filmed scene. Once the comunarios set a time to meet in the morning, the corregidor asked the team if they could assign a camera to accompany them and register the confrontation.

The next morning, the corregidor, community members, and some people of the production team, including the cameramen, went to the company's settlement. There, the cameras recorded all the discussion with the company's employees, who argued that the patrón was not in. This real scene, with the same community characters acting as themselves and with no second take, was later incorporated into the film.

As this anecdote shows, a real political event of the community confronting a lumber company coincided with the central topic of a fictional video at the time of shooting. Beyond being a casual overlapping of fiction and reality, this example clearly demonstrates that fictional films within the Plan Nacional build out of "reality" itself in order to comment or "intervene" in it. As this example shows, the pedagogical use of fictional forms to intervene in reality becomes a political process not only after the video is edited and screened to discuss with audiences, but also at the time of shooting. In this extraordinary case, the community asked the production team to accompany them to document their confrontation with the lumber company, and this documentary footage

was later incorporated into the fiction. In many other cases, it is common that the involvement of the community in the production process provokes a collective reflection both about the film topic, as well as about the political potential of video.

Preproduction and shooting are the moments where communities get more involved with productions. During preproduction, the script is reviewed with community and organization authorities, as well as with potential actors. Especially in communities where a video is made for the first time, preproduction includes screening other videos of the Plan Nacional in order to show people the treatment and topics of videos. Generally people feel motivated to see other indigenous communities acting their own stories in their own languages. Video screenings are very useful to motivate people to participate.

Nevertheless, it is not always easy to obtain people's trust on the project, even when filmmakers are from their own community. Some people feel that their images will be exploited or sold elsewhere, and others expect an economic compensation for their time, as María Morales noted:

But many also said: 'No, they come to take us pictures, to film us, but they won't give the images back.' Then I told them: 'But we don't work with that perspective. We are going to do this film and give it back to the community.' Then they accepted. But others didn't want: 'no, no, no.' Some people were thinking on what foreigners do: they come and pay children 10 or 20 bolivianos for one picture. They brought that mentality, people get used to that. I told them: 'We don't pay. But we are going to bring the images back. We can't pay because we are not buying nor selling.' 'If that is true, then we will do it.' That's how they got enthusiastic about it.

Preproduction includes arranging meals and lodging for the production team, which are sometimes offered by the community. The production process is not only about shooting the video, but also a process of learning and sharing both for the production team, which is composed of indigenous communicators from different regions, and for the community itself.

Preproduction also involves organizing a casting to select actors. Actors are people who volunteer to do a role, people chosen by the director who are convinced by the production team, or actual authorities and yatiris or traditional healers who act according to their actual occupations (Figure 11).



Figure 11. Communicator Patricio Luna preparing scene for Ángeles de la Tierra with an Aymara yatiri or traditional healer. (Courtesy CEFREC-CAIB).

Generally people end up quite enthusiastic about participating, although there are some who do not accept to act, for instance, because they feel that their roles might bring bad luck in their actual lives. Such is the case of some traditional healers, who hesitate in faking a ritual. Another example was the search for Rosita, the main character for Llanthupi Munakuy who was supposed to die in the film. "The girl that I chose to act didn't want to die," explained Marcelina about the reasons why the girl she originally chose did not take the role.

When her family saw the script, they said: 'why is she supposed to die?, Why will they make a wake for her? That would be like wishing her death, we can't wish that!' Then they did not accept. I had to take another girl who already had experience in acting.

After people from the community decide to participate, they do it solemnly and seriously, for example, indicating to actors how they should be dressed in order to look "authentic;" what they are supposed to do to make the scene seem real; or what is the best place to reenact situations such as parties, political demonstrations, community gatherings, or sacred rituals. They express their opinions about what the music should be like, and even about the course of the story. Such was the case of community members acting on a scene where they had to be repressed by the police when attempting to take a wood sawmill as an action against the lumber company owner in El Grito de la Selva. When the production team explained that they had to run away from the police, many of them asked: "And why would we have to run?" "Is this how the film will end?" "In

reality we would not run away, we would stay even if we got killed" "If the film ends this way they will take us as cowards." The production team had to remind them that this scene was just the middle of the film, and that at the end the community would actually win.

The following description of a video production on community justice explains the gradual involvement of the community. This fiction is about a llama robbery, and about the procedures that the owners, authorities, and community members go through for finding and punishing the thieves. "We took advantage of the donkey rodeo to show people gathered, that is where they supposedly get the thief," explained the producers and actors. They took advantage of real celebrations to perform some scenes, at moments making people confused about whether the thief arrest was real or fake (Figure 12). They also got advice from healers and authorities to define how to punish the thieves:

The yatiris [traditional healers], who know how to punish thieves, oriented us on how to use the skull to get the robber sick. Then they take him out to a public punishment. Many people thought we were real thieves: they said that their donkeys got lost and that for sure we had stolen them. An old man was sorry about us and asked them not to hurt us. Another man hit me thinking I was a real thief.



Figure 12. Community authorities arrest a llama thief in Markasan Jucha Thakahuipa, Oruro, Bolivia, 2005.
(Courtesy CEFREC-CAIB).

In this case, the production itself becomes an exercise of imagination over a common real problem, where people reflect, discuss, and agree on the real possibilities to solve it:

Not everybody wanted to punish the thieves: some said yes, some said no, some wanted him to be expelled from the community on a donkey, others wanted the thieves to apologize publicly.³⁵ This was part of an exercise of customary law, and is related to the question of self-determination. In this video we wanted to show what community justice is, its differences with ordinary justice. In ordinary justice the thieves get imprisoned but they don't repair the damage. In this case they had to give

³⁵ Among Andean peoples from Bolivia, one of the most common and humiliating traditional punishments for robbers and criminals is getting expelled from the community half naked, riding a donkey backwards.

the llamas back, pay for their cost, and do a community job. That's a way to reincorporate them to community life.

This testimony exemplifies another way in which video "intervenes in reality" by using a fiction story to make a pedagogic explanation of how customary law can legitimately take part in community life.³⁶ Already excited about the story, people offered to contribute with original music, and even to perform a traditional tinku dance-fight for the film:

They also were motivated to perform traditional music, they even wanted to perform a 'tinku' as part of their customs.³⁷ At the end they thanked us and said we could come back to do another video recreating their suffering.

Guaraní communicator Veimar Hinojosa also talked about the participation of elders from his community to recreate the Kuruyuki battle:

Elders and authorities were very helpful. The actual conflict took place in a specific place, so we had to go and find it. At the beginning, to make production easier, I thought of doing it in a closer location. But no, there was the opinion of elders who said: 'if we do it here, it won't be as valid, we better go where the real event took place, where our ancestors died. There we can recreate the film better, the forest is a good place to do it.' So, since it was their decision, I could not oppose. Then they took me to the place where we could shoot the scene. Then all the community

³⁶ In this case the production team sought to provide a positive image of customary law to argue against the representation of this practice in conventional media as a "savage," "cruel," and "irrational" way in which indigenous and poor people "take justice into own hands" through lynching and other punishing practices.

³⁷ Tinku is a fighting ritual in highland regions of Potosí and Oruro. It is also the name of a folkloric dance based on this ritual.

participated in making their clothes: they made their 'paticolas,' their arrows. It was a lot of work. It didn't take only one day, it took them two or three days to do it. They even had to stop working on their personal stuff to dedicate themselves full time to the film.

The participation of community members in video productions often involves a serious take on the problem exposed. This is particularly the case in videos with contents that express explicitly a political problem. *Cocanchej Sutimpy* (In the Name of Our Coca Leaves, 2005) a fictional video by Quechua filmmaker Humberto Claros is an interesting example that touches a common problem, and that therefore makes people become not only emotionally involved but also politically engaged in the project. This video shows the conflict of coca leaf eradication among coca producers or cocaleros from the Chapare region through the drama of a local family. In a time of armed confrontation between the Bolivian Army and cocaleros, the elder son, carrying out his military service, is sent to his own community to eradicate coca leaf. This video reenacts many of the violent situations that cocalero families have gone through during times of eradication, such as torture, arrests, disappearance, killings, destruction of their fields, and threats. It also reproduces some of the ways in which local people have resisted violence, including improvised community gatherings, political marches and demonstrations. "First we finished a preliminary script," explained Humberto about the process through which the local authorities and organization leaders discussed and agreed on the script. This implied providing a general outline upon which participants could discuss and build the actual scenes in order to make them look accurate:

Albino and I took it to the organization leaders and to people at the school. They first saw it. Then we came back knowing that they already had an idea about the film. And they built it. Of course, when you make a film you have to direct in order to arrange the technical details, but it was them who built the scenes.

Interestingly, the video was recorded in a moment of confrontation, in October 2004. "Here we are very worried about the situation of the region because of the forced eradication of coca leaf," wrote Humberto describing the times they were going through at the moment of the video production:

All the area is completely militarized, there were already many confrontations that have left about four dead and many wounded among our *compañeros*. The situation is tense in the Chapare. People started mobilizing, going out to the roads to watch over. The government agreed to make a pause on forced eradication. But that was a trick to continue repressing our *compañeros*. And just around those days we had planned the shooting of the film that I told you about. We dared to risk and shoot the film despite the situation, but things are getting hotter, so we are now waiting for things to calm down. I will tell you later what happened at the end.³⁸

Later on, once the video was produced, Humberto thought that recording the film in the very times of political conflict allowed for a more engaged participation with the project:

³⁸ Humberto Claros, personal communication. October 4, 2004.

But we had the bad luck to have the confrontations exactly at the moment of shooting the film. That was really terrible for the work... but also favorable. Favorable because the experience of the people about those scenes was very alive. It was quite hot.

He then explained how the cocalero organization, the Special Federation of Peasant Workers from the Tropic of Cochabamba FETCTC (Federación Especial de Trabajadores Campesinos del Trópico de Cochabamba) took the participation in the video as part of the members' contributions to the organization:

We had to get the organization's help. We normally work with them, but this time they got stronger and said: 'you, you, we will count your participation in the film as part of the commitments you owe to the organization.'

While reenacting their own experiences, such as arrests and torture, most actors participating in this production took their roles as part of their political mission and struggle:

Most people, around 70 or 80 percent have lived the situation. Let's see... I think they lived through all the strong scenes: the arrest is real, the guy has been arrested and that's why he has a memory problem. And the one who acted as tortured has also gone through that... and in general everybody has lived through the conflict. That was an advantage for the video.

Although all the film is built with fictional scenes, Humberto decided to include, at the very end, a clip of actual demonstrations that took place during the conflict. This clip follows a fictional scene of people preparing signs and wiphala flags for a demonstration. To Humberto, the presence of the actual conflict in the fictional film gives a special strength:

So I don't consider it as a fiction. The documentary has been useful to give context, to say: maybe this scene is acted but here you also see real images. To me the final part gives a lot to the film. The scene that documents the demonstration gives a lot, it strikes you deep inside.

As in the case of the community's conflict with a lumber company, it was not a coincidence that the problem that Humberto's film addressed was one that his community was actually facing in the moment of shooting. Humberto made emphasis on the importance of "seeing real images" for "striking deep inside" the audiences and to make them realize that the film was depicting a concrete historical reality through a fictional form. He also underlined the possibilities of visual technology to allow audiences to "see" and feel real images.

But the preparation of productions does not only involve working with people who agree or feel identified with the situation. It also implies negotiating and convincing others who are not necessarily emotionally or politically engaged with the project. Such is the case of the negotiation with a cattle rancher in the Beni region. "We went to see the hacienda owner," Miguel Angel Yalauma explained about how he convinced the patrón (hacienda owner) to let them use his hacienda for the film:

It was hard for me to tell him: 'we are going to make a film about exploitation.' And I thought to myself: 'If he accepts, fine.' I knew him, his name was Don Antonio. And I told him: 'I am doing my film practice, it's like an exam for me.' And he told me to tell him the story. And I told it to him. And then he laughed: 'so we are the mean ones...' 'Yes' I said, 'in this case you are the mean ones.' 'Go ahead then, there is the estancia (hacienda), the foreman, he will give you a receipt and sign permission. He'll give you everything you need.' And then we left.

Another example was the request that Veimar Hinojosa had to make to members of the Bolivian Army to participate in the recreation of the Kuruyuki battle:

We had to request help from people who had nothing to do with the community, for instance, the soldiers. We had to go together with the community authorities and our instructors. We went and talked to an Army Commander near my community. And I told him that we were recreating a story that happened a long time ago. I told him that to do so, we needed soldiers to recreate the story exactly as it happened. Then finally the Commander agreed, he asked how many people we needed. And he agreed to send 30 people, asking how soldiers had to be dressed. I said they should bring an old weapon from the time, a 'kabur,' and old clothes. Then the soldiers came and we did the recreation. And then, since our community is small, we had to ask some of the soldiers to dress as 'kereimbás' or Guaraní warriors. And finally the Commander was happy because he realized what everything was about. And we could do it, right?

In this case, army members did not only act as themselves –as soldiers,- but some of them were also asked to act as kereimba or Guaraní warriors. As in most armies elsewhere, soldiers of the Bolivian army are part of the poorest population, including of course indigenous peoples. Many soldiers participating in this film must have been Guaraní people themselves. And perhaps many of the strong young men performing the kereimbas have been soldiers as well. Something similar happened when a Plan Nacional production team invited police members to act as policemen repressing a community. During the film shooting, they turned out to be relatives or friends of community people whom they were supposed to repress.

María Morales talks about another case where not everybody agreed with the story. Men from the community and even some of her colleagues thought that in her attempts to show discrimination against women, her script was also “discriminating against men” by depicting them as mean, unfaithful or violent. To this argument she responded that her film was showing many faces of reality:

Some didn't want me to write that script because 'it was too much discrimination against men,' they said. 'No' I told them, 'that's not it. I want to give an example of what happens in some homes. There is another home where they live happily, that's the other scene, a family that lives happily, they understand each other, children do well. Then there is the other home with lots of fighting, they never do well.' I show various examples.

In this section I have described the process through which the production team starts the interaction with communities, and the ways in which groups of people or whole

communities become motivated to participate. But, what do videomakers mean when they say that the "community" produced the video? Or that indigenous videos express the "feelings of indigenous peoples"? The concept of "community" and ideas such as "the feelings of indigenous peoples" that communicators mention are rather contentious. In spite of organizing life experience and historical memory into collective stories, the examples discussed above show that the aspects of life experience that are recovered are not the same for everybody and that the "community" is not a homogeneous, stable, and harmonic entity. This section describes the negotiations and difficulties that filmmakers go through in order to get people to trust and participate in the story. It also shows that not all stories are immediately adopted by the community, that problems and feelings represented do not have the same relevance for everybody, and that members of communities are not always willing to participate or feel identified with the story.

Strategies for building collective stories out of diverse life experiences and historical memory include challenging uses of fictional forms such as recreating historical events, reenacting community situations, and combining documentary footage and techniques with fictional scenes. Effective uses of video technology on aspects like camerawork, sound, and editing, have also contributed to convey a collective sense of immediacy, closeness, reality and affective complicity with the story. The following section analyzes the involvement of people, but focusing more on the work with actors, and on their experiences and motivations.

“I was not anymore Reynaldo Yujra, I was Sebastián Mamani himself walking in the streets.” Acting / Reenacting

After telling his experience as a migrant from the countryside to the city, Aymara actor Reynaldo Yujra evoked his work in developing the character Sebastián Mamani, main personage of the film *La Nación Clandestina* (*The Clandestine Nation*, 1989) by Jorge Sanjinés. Reynaldo, who at the time of the interview was fifty years old, explained that since his arrival to the city of La Paz, at the age of 18, he worked weaving and selling baskets, and then in a mechanic's workshop, experiencing discrimination among those with whom he worked and even among his relatives in the city.

One afternoon in 1984, a white man visited the workshop asking Reynaldo to build a steel structure, “for hunting parrots,” he joked. The man was renowned filmmaker Jorge Sanjinés, looking for somebody to build a camera crane for his next movie. As Sanjinés started to discuss the idea of the crane with Reynaldo, he realized Reynaldo was the ideal person to interpret Sebastián Mamani, the main character of his next movie. Sanjinés invited Reynaldo to work with him, and introduced him to the world of cinema through a personalized workshop on Latin American film and Bolivian history. "Then they gave me the text of the script," Reynaldo recalled.

It was large. They told me: 'you will read it well and once you finish you come back.' I accepted. The script was in my hands. I read it. In it I found many things that were going on in reality, it was just fine. After I finished reading they told me: 'What did you understand?' I told them everything I had understood. 'Fine, the work is to do that.' And at the end he told me: 'you know what? You have to be born again.' I told him, 'how am I going to be born again, Don Jorge? Am I going to go back to my

mother's womb? What am I going to do?' 'No,' he said. 'You have to believe that you are Sebastian Mamani.' Just then I understood what it was about. Then we practiced, made rehearsals. I understood what the job was about, it was to act.

Sebastián Mamani was a complex character: an Aymara man who had migrated to the city at a very young age, who had been discriminated against, who had difficulties to find himself comfortable both in the city and in the countryside. Mamani lived alone and had a distant and conflictive relationship with his family and community, both despising and longing for the country life. He had a special relationship with death, symbolized by his work as coffin crafter, and by the memory of a dancing ritual, the same one that brought him back home only to die.

Sanjinés found in Reynaldo Yujra the person to interpret Mamani. And Yujra found in his own person the possibilities to communicate some of his own experience through the character:

From there we started working more seriously, I had to practice at home, with a small voice recorder: voices, crying, screaming, I practiced all by myself. I put a lot of interest, and there was a filmmaker interested on myself... and at the end we succeeded and made the film. I lived the character of Sebastian Mamani before the shooting started. I was not anymore Reynaldo Yujra, I was Sebastian Mamani walking in the streets. I also realized that for other people I was somebody else. They used to tell me: 'Hey, what happened, why are you so worried, what happened to you?' I walked, I thought, I lived for somebody else, for the character of Sebastian Mamani. Yes, I identified myself with Sebastian Mamani.

I was not an actor, I have never studied to do it. I think I consider myself as an interpreter of Bolivian reality, not as an actor. The script, the character itself gave me the idea that people could understand through me the problems we are living. That's why I got interested in doing that film.

Reynaldo's reflections on his appropriation of Mamani's character detail how he was able to become "somebody else" in addition to himself. He was able to combine his personal identification with Mamani through his own life experience, with a more conscious "interpretation of Bolivian reality," in order to give life to a character intended to represent a collective voice.

After this unexpected encounter with the world of cinema, Reynaldo has dedicated his life to it. When the Plan Nacional was founded in 1997, he started collaborating with it and has done it up to the moment, working as an actor, director, filmmaker and trainer. As Reynaldo's experience shows, identification with characters is one of the aspects that most motivates people to participate in productions.

"I feel we don't have to give them written dialogues, but just the ideas," explained Marcelina Cárdenas about Reynaldo's work with the actors for Llanthupi Munakuy through evoking painful or moving situations from their own lives:

If they had to act according to written dialogues it would take them weeks, months, they would have to memorize. Instead, they just need to situate themselves in their own realities, do things naturally, what happens in their everyday life. So we first give a time for them to concentrate. Reynaldo helped me a lot. For instance, when Rosita had to die, we just told everyone to concentrate and remember when they lost

a family member. Then everybody concentrated and they even started crying. But they were only concentrated on what happens in reality in their own lives.

This method of free interpretation, common in popular and political theater, has resulted quite effective in Plan Nacional videos. As Marcelina explained, it consists of putting actors in situations that are familiar to them, and that usually involve evoking and reenacting strong life experiences. Political theater initiatives from the 1970s have extensively experimented with this method both as a means to create political awareness and struggle, as well as a therapeutical resource for participants to bring out collectively violent personal experiences (Boal 1980, Arcila 1983, Gainor and Gainor 1995).

Another example of identification with characters is how, in the search for somebody to perform the patrón (hacienda owner) for *Renacer: Historia de un Movima*, Miguel Angel Yalauma found somebody who got very excited about representing the bad guy. "Then for the patrón, the guy himself offered to act," said Miguel Angel underlining that the patrón was one of the most disciplined and collaborative actors, always on time for the shooting.

We went with the professor to film the party and we found him drinking with his friends. I did not have a patrón, I had not found an actor to do that character. Then my brother asked if he could collaborate with the film. The professor said: 'but we have to rent a gun for the patrón.' And right away the guy said: 'no, don't worry about it, here I have two!' Two guns he had! And the professor got scared: 'no, please, just keep them there.' The guy is from that town, but he was in jail for being what we call *pichicatero*, involved with narcotrafficking. When I asked him which days he was

available, he answered: 'No, I'm available right now, let's go!' And it wasn't his turn yet, but he would go everyday, even when he didn't have to act.

María Morales also talked about how personal experience motivates people's acting. She worked with women to get them to express through their performance the discrimination that they go through. She stressed the possibility of the film to make their demands visible:

I would tell women: 'You are going to act but not just loosely, you have to get involved in your feelings, how you feel in reality, how we feel when we ask for something and nobody listens to us.' I told them. They got excited: 'Yes, let's do!' We said: 'The story says this, but this is what always happens here anyway.' 'Yes, that's right, this has happened in reality' they said. And that's how they got motivated. Women are always sentimental, we cry for everything. They felt what has happened. Then women said: 'yes, let's do it!'

In this account María underlined the significance of evoking emotions about "how you feel in reality" in order to achieve a better, more realistic and moving performance that reflects "what always happens anyway." This emphasis on emotional work through acting is a strong element that renders personal experience collective in fictional films.

An interesting aspect of the Plan's productions is the recreation of collective celebrations such as parties, rituals, and demonstrations. In such cases, the community fully reenacts the event with meals, live music, drinks (Figure 13). "For instance, in

parties we don't direct anymore," explained Marcelina detailing that in such cases the production team has to work as in a documentary.

You can't ask: 'do this, do that.' All parties and events just take place naturally and then we start shooting, we just have to shoot, we can't say: 'you, dance' 'you, sing.' What happens in the community is more natural. We just say: 'now we are going to make the party, what we always do.' The community, women, everybody already knows how to do it, so they just do it. That's why it looks as if they were professional actors, but they don't go through any class, they start acting directly.



Figure 13. Recreation of carnival celebration for Llantupi Munakuy, Potosí, 2000. (Courtesy CEFREC-CAIB).

Direct cinema has largely experimented with this method of creating situations and environments where actors interact more freely than with a written script (Nichols 1991:38-39). According to script trainer Francisco Cajías, a fifty-five year-old writer and filmmaker from La Paz, another aspect related to acting in communities is ritual celebration, which implies a long-term relationship with representational practices. "Acting works because people are used to perform in rituals, annual representations," he argued about his experience for shooting *Ajayu* (Spirit, 1996), a video produced outside the Plan Nacional:

They have a way to appropriate acting, to do it from their inside. And also because generally they act as themselves, right?

In this continuous shifting between fiction and reality, the emotional link of real people's experiences with stories and characters is a key element for strengthening the film. Why are there characters that evoke more identification than others? What makes the "ideal person" to perform such or such role, as Sanjinés explained when he met Reynaldo? This section suggests that for this kind of production, the "ideal actor" is not only one who can perform without inhibition before the camera, but whose own life experience is somehow related to the role performed. Nichols explains this process of "recognition that characters and situations are lifelike in a universalizing way" as "psychological realism." (1991: 171). In this case, the Plan Nacional uses this technique of "psychological realism" to communicate indigenous realities and to create an empathetic response from audiences.

In order to reflect on the performance of non-professional actors in Plan Nacional video productions, it is worthwhile closing this section with Benjamin's discussion on film and actors. Benjamin compares the stage actor with the film actor. While the first one performs in person to the public, live; the film actor's performance is fragmented, interrupted, repeated several times and, more importantly, mediated by the camera shots and editing or montage work. Benjamin emphasizes the technological quality of the film camera, like photography, for capturing the actor's presence out of time, or "above life" in order to make it "mechanically reproducible," "separable, transportable [...] before the public." (1968: 224-25) This technological mediation, Benjamin argues, provokes the actor's "estrangement" or distance before the public. Yet this mediation has resulted rather convenient for Plan Nacional productions. The mediation of the camera in the work with non-professional actors allows for recreating scenes separately and to motivate actors' involvement more easily than if they had to perform a whole story before a public. Furthermore, the technological possibility of reproduction allows for transporting the actors' performance into a "collective experience" through community video distribution, as Chapter 7 will detail.

As the previous discussion shows, recovering and reenacting life experiences in videos is perhaps the aspect that makes videos more emotional and moving, and that therefore allows for a stronger identification or sympathy with stories and characters. Of course, we could make this observation about television series, soap operas, and many non-indigenous programs and films. Indeed, as I discuss in Chapters 5 and 6, the dramatic structure and audiovisual language of indigenous productions use many of the techniques deployed in soap operas, television programs and documentaries. But what

makes the productions of the Plan especially different and appealing both for indigenous and non-indigenous audiences is the way in which they recover, throughout the different moments of the production process, experiences and realities that belong to groups of people who have been historically silenced. Nichols explains this continuous reference to concrete situations, histories and experiences as "indexical bind," a documentary film resource consisting of "a close physical or existential bond [...] between referent and representation." (1991:149) Through production, these films not only recover "real" experiences, but also manage to involve people in the development of the story and characters, the creation of the scene, and the acting process itself.

In all this process, the strategic use of audiovisual technologies allows for communicators to: 1) use diverse fictional forms to "intervene in reality;" 2) visually construct situations and characters through camera work and montage; and 3) develop a specific relationship of non-professional actors with audiences, mediated by the camera and reproduced through portable video projectors that allow to enlarge the screen and to become a collective, simultaneous experience.

Because of their technological mediation, the use of these tools involves a twofold process. On the one hand, it implies a sort of estrangement or distance with the story: it is fictional and technologically intervened by camera and editing effects --therefore separated from reality; actors have a distant, non-simultaneous, and mediated relationship with audiences; and the screen also situates audiences at an intangible distance from the story. On the other hand, the deployment of these technological tools according to the communication needs of indigenous videomakers and communities grants a particular power to fictional videos. In videos, recreated personal experience and collective

historical memory render affective involvement and political empathy through the visual and sound effects of immediacy, intimacy, and drama. The distant and technologically mediated relationship of the actor with the public, at the same time, allows for non-professional actors to concentrate and strongly perform separated scenes.

Finally, what makes these productions different is the way in which they recover a political or social reality, through reenacting life experience or recreating history, in order to articulate political messages that are built upon emotional references of indigenous communities. The distance or estrangement of such recreations render them generalizable into collective political experiences, and allow them to echo and dialogue with situations and debates that already exist among audiences. It is worth underlining that reenacting situations does not only imply "expressing" indigenous peoples' realities, but mainly "intervening" in them through videos. This is one of the aspects which allow understanding the work of the Plan Nacional as a "communication" process, and not only a "representation" practice.

The reinterpretation of life experience is central not only for indigenous processes of audiovisual production, but also for processes of political negotiation that indigenous representatives undertake in the Morales' government. In one of the first crises of the Constituent Assembly in Sucre, in early September of 2006, Assembly President, Quechua leader Silvia Lazarte gave a speech that clearly stated one of the strongest positions of indigenous leaders in the government. As in other occasions, she was explaining the difference between indigenous, "organic" representatives, and intellectuals or "professionals" who were elected representatives for the Constituent Assembly. She said that although intellectuals had a lot of knowledge and education to argue in the

Assembly, indigenous and organic leaders had their own life experience, through suffering and struggle, to really understand what kind of transformation the nation needs. She argued that having lived through poverty, torture, hunger strikes, persecution, imprisonment, killings and other forms of suffering, made organic and indigenous leaders more faithful to the causes of indigenous struggles, and more attentive to the needs of their people.

While this argument risks of being essentialist, it is also presented as a legitimate response to historical discrimination against indigenous peoples in Bolivia. Interestingly, since the triumph of Evo Morales, political discourses by indigenous leaders contain many autobiographical references that range from their childhood and families, to their political struggles. Communications media also place a growing emphasis on the personal past of indigenous leaders, often presenting whole sections with pictures of their humble houses, the rustic schools or poor communities. In this context, personal or community life experience is mobilized as a learning process and as a legitimate form of knowledge vis-à-vis parameters such as "professionalism" and "education" that are used to discriminate indigenous representatives in the government. As discussed in Chapter 3, right-wing sectors, and even some leftist ones, use the parameter of "professionalism" as a class reference to argue the supposed incapacity of indigenous representatives. In this context, indigenous representatives also use this parameter as a class reference against which they mobilize their life experience as a form of knowledge with more value than professional education. Therefore, there is an emphasis on their origins, their trajectories, their different forms of understanding and doing things in order to transmit to the general

public the reasons for their struggles and their arguments for transforming the Bolivian state.

As Evo Morales noted in his first speech as President, there is a sort of astonishment and incredulity about the fact that indigenous peoples are in charge of the government. This phenomenon, new in many ways, implies reformulating political practices at all levels. On a symbolic level, there is a series of events that in any other moment would have looked unusual but that now start to be part of the daily life and imaginaries in Bolivia: a president without a tie, indigenous peoples parading with wiphala flags and marching on goose step escorted by the military band on Independence Day; official discourses and the national anthem in Quechua, Aymara and Guaraní; and entire newspaper sections taking back debates about indigenous and mestizo issues.

In this complex negotiation of practices and symbols, where discourses, decisions, initiatives and projects appear different, new, and often shocking, the appeal to indigenous life experience, suffering, and struggles, becomes more and more an emotional point of reference that guides and supports political practices.

There is an interesting dialogue between two different realms where indigenous people in Bolivia have a prominent presence. One is an "indigenous" government that is learning how to rule under different values and principles. The other, on a smaller scale, is a communication initiative that builds stories and represents realities from indigenous viewpoints. Both realms use life experience as an emotional element to build, introduce, make visible, and even to legitimate, different and in many ways new, forms of doing politics.

Chapter 5. Negotiating narrative and aesthetics for indigenous video production



Figure 14 Editing process, Beni, 2005.
(Courtesy CEFREC-CAIB).

Throughout its history, the Plan Nacional has defined, revised and redesigned its working styles, which now have some clear features but also numerous aspects that are subject to constant rethinking, experimentation and redefinition. Explained by its members more as a *process* than as a project, the Plan Nacional is a complex and unfinished overlap of collective and personal experiences that nevertheless addresses clear political goals. This process includes a variety of moments, topics, geographical and cultural areas, as well as numerous training, production and distribution methodologies. This richness results in tremendously heterogeneous production experiences. Despite this complexity, the Plan Nacional has developed principles that are now characteristic of its productions. For instance, it has developed its specific training, production and distribution methodologies; it has its own processes for developing content and narrative styles; it relies on a particular way of conceiving authorship; and it is based on collective working strategies that make possible the involvement of numerous constituencies in the process. As its members acknowledge, despite its inevitable contradictions, the Plan Nacional has grown thanks to its capacity for learning from its own experiences and its mechanisms of consultation and negotiation.

By analyzing the main features, concerns and tensions through which the Plan Nacional has developed, this Chapter discusses the question of how power processes inform this communication initiative. This discussion involves examining the logic of the technologies through which visual reproduction is crafted by analyzing production aspects such as training methodologies, narrative structure, "audiovisual language," authorship, and technical expertise.

From "valorizing culture" to "indigenous rights:" topics and training methodologies

As described in Chapter 1, despite its different moments and regional experiences, it is possible to identify two main stages of work within the Plan Nacional. The first one goes from its foundation in 1997 to around 2002. In this period, production of films based on oral stories and local documentaries aimed at contributing to value indigenous cultures and languages. The second period goes from around 2002 to 2008, and is characterized by a focus on communication as a way to address the question of indigenous rights and their currency in the political moment of Bolivia. In the following discussion I use these two moments to situate specific debates within the Plan Nacional.

A first aspect to describe is the use of specific topics in order to address particular objectives or goals. As mentioned, the Plan Nacional focused at the beginning on "better valorizing indigenous cultures and their expression" by compiling elements from indigenous cultures, as it states on its website:

... such as indigenous languages, stories, myths and traditions; as a base for strengthening indigenous identity, indigenous potentialities in different areas such as environment preservation, as well as appropriating and adapting convenient technologies (Plan Nacional, accessed September 20, 2008).

As detailed in Chapter 2, this emphasis on valorizing identity and culture is related to a broader political process within Bolivia and the rest of the world. Indigenous struggles have been present throughout Bolivian history, although major social movements since the twentieth century were mostly driven by workers and peasants. Indianista movements

that reemerged in the 1960s and 1970s preceded the more solid reemergence of ethnic and cultural struggles during the 1980s and 1990s, which have maintained a debate and joint action with worker and peasant struggles especially since the 2000 "Water War."

Chapter 2 has also explained how, in the context of ethnic reemergence, projects like the Andean Oral History Workshop THOA (Taller de Historia Oral Andina) aimed at recovering indigenous peoples' histories from their own voices through strategies such as compiling oral stories and testimonies about local culture, organization and struggles, as well through radio and video production. In interaction with these kinds of projects and methodologies, the Plan Nacional started to recover indigenous peoples' own histories and to make visible local themes. "For example, at the beginning the emphasis was on culture because it was very rich for them," remembered scriptwriter and trainer affiliated to the Film Training and Production Center CEFREC (Centro de Estudios, Formación y Realización Cinematográfica) Francisco Cajías about indigenous communicators.

It was liberating to go and discover. Because everybody started to remember something that many of them had already lost. Even years later they continued appearing and appearing with the same story: 'Aymara people have that story, we have this one.' Each one 'made their disappeared ones appear,' as I used to tell them [laughter.] It was the third year when we turned to producing documentaries in communities. Then they had to produce their documentary about specific regional topics, and topics were proposed by them [videomakers.] And then the latest fictional productions have been with social and current contents.

During this first period the Plan Nacional worked mostly on three different video genres: fictional videos, music clips, and local documentaries. Fictional videos were based on oral stories, tales or situations that exemplified specific aspects of indigenous life, culture, and moral values. For example, *Llanthupi Munakuy* (Loving Each Other in the Shadows, 2001) is based on an oral story about forced marriage in Potosí; *Qulqi Chaliku* (Vest Made of Money, 1998) was made after a moral tale about an ambitious man who accumulates money in his vest; *Oro Maldito* (Cursed Gold, 1999) is also a tale about an ambitious man who makes a pact with the devil in order to find gold; and *El Cazador* (The Hunter, 1999) narrates how the "animals' sacred guardian" punishes a hunter in the lowland region who illegally traded the skins of exotic animals. Music clips documented traditional dance and music such as *Arioxtee Piexta* (Farewell to the Party, 2000), a video about a Chiquitano dance performed to close celebrations; *Beni Macheteros*, which documents a traditional dance of the Movima people in Beni; and *Florcita del Parque* (Little Park Flower, 2000), a videoclip on a song about coca leaves composed and performed by a girl from the Chapare region. Finally, local documentaries and reportage were based on themes, problems or stories related to specific communities or regions. These include *Huellas de Plata* (Silver Tracks, 1998), a documentary on silver artisans that traces back the history of silver mining in the Potosí mines; *El Zafrero Guaraní* (The Guaraní Zafrero, 1997) about the history and working conditions of Guaraní sugar cane harvesters in Santa Cruz; and *Radio Soberanía*, (Sovereignty Radio, 1997) about the history, work, and political significance of a community radio in the Chapare cocalero region.

At first, indigenous communicators learned production techniques such as script writing, camera and sound through workshops organized two or three times per year. According to trainers like Francisco Cajías, Franklin Gutiérrez and César Pérez, in those times the methodology for teaching audiovisual language was "too academic," that is, it included abstract content such as image theory, and "was more concerned about participants learning the names of the different angles than on helping them tell a story." Video trainer Franklin Gutiérrez explained some of the initial methodological difficulties:

And the next question was if there was a universal audiovisual language and a universal narrative form. Why? Because we were teaching under the assumption that audiovisual products were already universal. And that was another paradigm for this process: what shall we do? Is audiovisual narrative more or less the same? If so, that would imply that we taught in a conventional way and reproduce it. And we realized that there is not one single way. And what we were doing at the beginning was to reproduce that universal way. First, because we hadn't understood what were the other ways for narrating and, second, because we hadn't found ways to teach differently. Then in our discourse we included indigenous issues, collectivity, identity, all that, but methods and procedures were the same ones: the frame shots, first plane, American plane, I don't know what, the same things. And we were working on script writing under the conventional Aristotelian logic. And of course we talked about orality, all that, but we hadn't found, I would say up to now, the way to combine orality and that form of telling stories, with audiovisual production. We haven't found the more integral way. Also because each group of people has its differences. And I think that has been the main issue during all these years.

In this account Franklin introduces the tension between the expectation of creating something completely innovative and different from an "indigenous viewpoint," and the fear of reproducing conventional ways of producing video through teaching and production methodologies. As Franklin notes, this tension results from realizing that, in practice, it is impossible to teach a "universal" audiovisual language and narrative vis-à-vis the heterogeneous realities of indigenous videomakers and their communication needs. This tension posed a key challenge to the Plan Nacional for experimenting with different teaching methodologies, narratives, and technologies.

Franklin mentions that their initial training methodologies were based on the assumption that there was a "universal" audiovisual language in which techniques such as the use of specific "frame shots" could convey particular readings, for example, assuming that a wide shot can provide the context, while a close up provides intimacy or accentuates a dramatic moment. He also makes reference to "Aristotelian logic," a concept to which communicators often refer. This concept, commonly used in film schools to teach script writing, is based on a linear dramatic structure proposed by Aristotle in his *Poetics*. According to this structure, stories are composed of an introduction, development, conflict, breakdown, climax or highest dramatic point, and resolution. Once these events are defined linearly, they can be organized in various ways, for example, the film can start with the resolution and then flash back to the introduction; or start with the conflict and jump to the resolution before showing the story's development. The definition of characters such as protagonist and antagonist permits building tension in the drama. This linear dramatic structure, described by many as the

"ideal," "universal," or "natural" way of telling a story, has rather become a conventional formula for script writing. Yet written and film narratives have extensively experimented beyond a linear structure. In film for example, authors like Jean-Luc Godard, Chris Marker, and Jill Godmilow have used "counter-narrative" experimentation techniques such as "intransitivity" or digressions and interruptions that break with a coherent linear structure; "foregrounding" or "reflexivity" by making visible the mechanics of the film; and "multiple diegesis" to break with established cultural or viewing codes, to name just a few (Nichols 1991: 256-57). These examples prove the multiple possibilities of telling stories and producing effects on audiences aside from a linear or "Aristotelian structure."

Video trainer Milton Guzmán, an enthusiastic and experienced fifty year-old filmmaker from La Paz, also analyzed the initial tensions between the "academic" methodology of trainers and the narrative proposals of communicators:

With other instructors I discuss the idea of respecting 'mistakes' because that's their narrative form. We might feel shocked and it can seem a 'mistake' to us, but for them, that's what they want to tell. We should not disguise things, we should respect with all possible implications, renounce to our academicism and stand in their place. I think that's the only way in which their own narrative will emerge.

Here Milton acknowledges the "academicism" of professional filmmakers and trainers as an obstacle for indigenous communicators to experiment alternative audiovisual forms that, from a conventional view, can look like "mistakes." This reflection relates to a broader debate among Latin American revolutionary or militant filmmakers about "imperfect cinema." "Nowadays, perfect cinema -- technically and

artistically masterful -- is almost always reactionary cinema," wrote Cuban filmmaker Julio García Espinosa in 1969.

A new poetics for the cinema will, above all, be a 'partisan' and 'committed' poetics, a 'committed' art, a consciously and resolutely 'committed' cinema — that is to say, an 'imperfect' cinema. [...] We maintain that imperfect cinema must above all show the process which generates the problems. It is thus the opposite of a cinema principally dedicated to celebrating results, the opposite of a self-sufficient and contemplative cinema, the opposite of a cinema which "beautifully illustrates" ideas or concepts which we already possess.

[...]

Imperfect cinema is no longer interested in quality or technique. It can be created equally well with a Mitchell or with an 8mm camera, in a studio or in a guerrilla camp in the middle of the jungle. Imperfect cinema is no longer interested in predetermined taste, and much less in "good taste." It is not quality which it seeks in an artist's work. The only thing it is interested in is how an artist responds to the following question: What are you doing in order to overcome the barrier of the "cultured" elite audience which up to now has conditioned the form of your work?

(1979: 25-26)

García Espinosa argued in favor of different film aesthetics against "predetermined taste," and called for challenging criteria like "technological quality" in order to "overcome barriers" imposed by "the cultured elite audience." As CEFREC trainers Milton Guzmán and Franklin Gutiérrez acknowledge, this critical position is tough to concretize in practice because it implies breaking with the preexisting assumptions about

beauty and technical quality that video trainers themselves have. In this regard, Milton's reference to "mistakes" suggests that Plan Nacional video instructors have to struggle with their own assumptions about technical quality in order to allow for different kinds of expression among indigenous videomakers.

Another challenge that Plan Nacional instructors faced was in relation to script writing. At first, video trainers insisted on having participants writing the script, but this was a very hard task for most communicators due to their limited knowledge of reading and writing. Although indigenous communicators had great stories to narrate, "once they started writing, everything got stuck," explained Francisco Cajías about communicators' attempts to "translate" indigenous oral stories into audiovisual narratives.

Those were the first slips, mine particularly. Because when they narrated and spoke everything went fine, but they started to write and problems began. But afterwards we started to make them tell things orally, to record them, to tell stories to each other, there were some of them who could write. And on the other hand they have developed a lot. From the beginning to now they are practically literate. Now they can read a lot and write too, some of them, not everybody. Then for example in a workshop I tend to combine all these elements.

The way in which video trainers experimented with different methods for facilitating the process of script writing is an example of how the Plan Nacional has learned from its own experience in order to adapt video training methodologies to indigenous communicators' abilities and limitations. As Chapter 4 details in relation to process for selecting stories, in both periods of the Plan Nacional, communicators have shared their

scripts in order to produce those with more possibilities to be expressed in an audiovisual language or those which, according to participants, contain more important messages. After the group selects stories, communicators go on with writing the story collectively into a script. Both communicators and trainers acknowledge the tensions involved in this process, especially during the first stage of the Plan, because trainers unintentionally "imposed" a way of telling the story or the inclusion of specific elements. "I participated [in a workshop] and there were some instructors who didn't know my reality, my community," explained Quechua videomaker Marcelina Cárdenas in relation to the script for Llanthupi Munakuy.

Then we started to decide, to participate. But then the instructor distorted my script: instead of a bike, they said to use horses, but in my community there are no horses [laughter.] 'It's going to be more natural, nicer, to use a horse.' Then they said to use a horse. Then they wrote and by then I couldn't use the computer very well, so I wrote by hand and when they wrote it in the computer, they changed everything. Then at the end they asked the compañeros and everybody agreed, without discussing anything. Then I remained silent. 'The film will come out nice,' they said. But in my heart I stayed silent, thinking: 'it's not my community's reality.'

In this case, the instructor who "distorted" Marcelina's script was one of the many film experts who occasionally collaborate with the Plan Nacional without knowing in depth its own history and process. He, as many other instructors who have collaborated with the Plan Nacional, unintentionally "imposed" his own aesthetic references to Marcelina's script so the story looked "more natural, nicer" in his own terms, but also

"more exotic" or more primitive. At the end, during shooting, Marcelina ended up substituting the horse for a bicycle, which is more of a common object in her community. Despite these difficulties, around which the Plan Nacional has learned a lot in terms of methodology, the first productions offer significant stylistic and aesthetic contributions. The first method for writing scripts was to have participants remember a story from their community or region, and to compile oral stories from diverse people in order to have the detailed development of the story. In these first fictions there was an attempt to represent "warnings" and messages through dreams, as well as ideas about death and afterlife. Fictions like *Qulqi Chaliku* and *Qati Qati* (Whispers of Death, 1998) use sound distortion, the conversion of image into black and white or sepia, and slow motion, to represent dreams that warn and determine changes in the course of the story or in the life of characters. Sound and image distorting effects are used to differentiate life from death and afterlife in videos like *Llanthupi Munakuy* and *Qati Qati*. Other forms of sound and image distortion are used to represent altered emotional stages or the contact with supernatural forces: in *Ángeles de la Tierra* (Angels of the Earth, 1997) a shaky and subjective shot is used to represent the drunkenness of Antonio, a Quechua migrant living in the city who denies his relationship with his Indian brother. In *Oro Maldito*, image is also distorted every time that an ambitious man negotiates with the devil in order to obtain his help to find gold, and in *Qati Qati* there is a visual effect to show a flying head as an evil spirit.

The topics of the Plan Nacional productions were modified since 2002, when the Plan started working more specifically on the relationship between communication and indigenous peoples' rights. As mentioned earlier, the "Water War" and growing social

mobilizations since 2000, as well as negotiations for implementing the Constituent Assembly from 2004, strongly influenced this political focus. Besides the thematic turn, in this new period the Plan Nacional worked more to improve training methodologies, to improve the quantity and quality of videos, to broaden its work through intercultural and interregional collaboration, as well as to define more clearly the objectives and roles of its members. Particularly with the development of the Communication, Indigenous Rights and Constituent Assembly Strategy since 2005, this second period is more privileged because it has better funding, a clearer political position, stronger political alliances, and more possibilities for training, geographic coverage and technological access.³⁹ Nevertheless, this moment posed new challenges related to the development of aesthetic and narrative possibilities.

In the second period of the Plan Nacional aesthetic proposals seek to be more realistic and more politically explicit. For example, in this period communicators experiment less with representing supernatural situations through sound and image distortion or with themes just related to indigenous culture and identity. Instead, they work more on *mise-en-scène* that permits recreating community and political situations in realistic ways, as Chapter 4 has discussed. Although all these videos show tremendously dramatic situations such as the suffering of a woman abandoned by her husband in *Venciendo el Miedo* (Conquering Fear, 2004) or the death of the main characters in *Cocanchej Sutimpy* (In the Name of Our Coca Leaves, 2005) and in *Renacer: Historia de un Movima* (To Be Born Again: the Story of a Movima Man, 2005), stories seek to show suffering and discrimination but trying not to victimize characters. They do so through

³⁹ For a larger description of the Communication Strategy see Chapter 2.

situating characters in contexts where characters have to take part in organization, consent processes, and collective work in order to solve their personal and political conflicts. For example, Adela, the main character for *Venciendo el Miedo* could be easily victimized as the woman abused and later abandoned by her husband (Figure 15). Nevertheless, in spite of her undeniable suffering, she finds support from the local women's organization and some community families, and manages to integrate into community life as a leader.



Figure 15. Still of Venciendo el Miedo, North La Paz, 2004.
(Courtesy CEFREC-CAIB).

This resolution of the conflict does not focus on her individual agency, but rather situates the character in a complex web of community relations that is not always solidary and harmonic. In similar contexts of conflict, recreated scenes of assemblies and meetings where groups of people make collective decisions solve or mark significant

changes in the story: in *Cocanchej Sutimpy*, an emergency community meeting resolves to organize vigilance brigades to confront violent army actions to eradicate coca leaf; *Un Nuevo Camino, Un Nuevo País* (A New Path, a New Country, 2006) shows a meeting where different neighboring communities resolve to fix together a collapsed road that all of them used, a situation that represented the metaphor of having to work together to fix the country's political situation; and in *Markasan Thakahuipa* (Justice of our Peoples, 2005) community members gather to assign a punishment for the llama thieves.

In this period films also tend more to historical recreation. These kinds of videos use visual and sound effects to represent the mythical or historical past. For example, the first scene of *¿Ahora de Quién es la Verdad?* (Now Whose Is the Truth?, 2006) portrays an Aymara ancestor emerging mystically from Lake Titicaca, evoking the creation myth among Andean peoples. His voice is deep and slow, altered by an echo, full of authority and wisdom. Other historical scenes use more conventional resources, like converting the image to black and white to differentiate them from the present. Another characteristic of this period is the production of "docu-fictional" videos that combine fictional *mise-en-scène* with real interviews and documented events such as demonstrations, marches, and community life in videos like *Cocanchej Sutimpy*, *Un Nuevo Camino Un Nuevo País*, and *¿Ahora de Quién es la Verdad?*

Among the dramatic elements that these videos employ to accentuate identity conflicts are the alternated use of indigenous languages and Spanish. For example Julián, one of the main characters of *Venciendo el Miedo* speaks Aymara with his wife at the beginning, but after abandoning his family and migrating to the city, he returns to the

community speaking only in Spanish and denying his indigenous last name, Quispe, which he has changed to Gisbert.⁴⁰

Far from depicting fully romantic views of community life, videos in both periods of the Plan Nacional represent situations of tension within communities: Llanthupi Munakuy represents class and gender conflicts within a Quechua community in Potosí; Cocanchej Sutimpy is built around the family and community conflict generated, among other things, by the enrollment of the young son in the National Army; Venciendo el Miedo shows explicitly the gender tensions, domestic violence, and conflicts around women participation in community politics and land ownership; and Ángeles de la Tierra is about an indigenous man who migrates to the city and then discriminates against his brother who came to look for him from the community.

Translating "indigenous narratives" into audiovisual languages

As discussed earlier, communicators find it difficult to express, in Spanish and in an audiovisual language, their ideas for stories. This difficulty is related to a complex question: is there an "indigenous" way (for instance, a Quechua, Aymara or Guaraní way) of narrating events and stories? And, can this possible indigenous form of narration be faithfully translated into an audiovisual language? As the variety of opinions from indigenous communicators and instructors discussed in this section shows, there is not a single answer to this question. Yet the many attempts to answer it demonstrate the

⁴⁰ This is a common practice among indigenous migrants living in cities, who change their Aymara or Quechua last names like "Quispe" for "Gisbert," "Mamani" for "Maisman," etc.

richness of this inquiry to provoke experimentation in terms of narrative structure, length, use of natural locations, and aesthetic references to indigenous life.

For example, scriptwriter and trainer Francisco Cajías, who has worked widely in literature and linguistics, suggested that although there are not homogeneous styles of indigenous narration, there are some common elements within oral narrative. "We tried from the beginning that everything came from oral narrative," said Francisco about the possibility of "translating" into an audiovisual language oral narrative elements such as "endings without an end" and repetition within Andean cultures.

And we were supposed to work in translating such oral narrative into a cinematographic discourse, into an audiovisual language. And of course at moments it becomes tough to force things into an Aristotelian structure, for example. For instance, repetition is a very clear element in indigenous language. If they tell you something they'll repeat it three times: 'they hit me, they made me hurt, they made me powder...' They don't say one single thing, and even that can be translated into audiovisual language. Or the ends without an end, like when they narrate an event as it is, but without an end. Then there are some structures that we've sought to respect and maintain.

Here Francisco makes reference again to the "Aristotelian structure" as a conventional narrative form against which Plan Nacional members have experimented with the possibility of "translating" elements from indigenous languages into audiovisual forms. These attempts have faced limitations on many fronts. For example, many communicators explain that although they are able to use in film their own narrative

elements, they have not experimented enough with technical equipment operation in order to fully achieve the desired results. Examples of stories that incorporate indigenous narrative elements include those with more directing work by communicators like Marcelina Cárdenas, Patricio Luna, Marcelino Pinto, Humberto Claros and Alfredo Copa. For example, *Justicia comunitaria* (Community Justice, 2007) breaks with the idea of a linear temporal structure. Although this docu-fictional video starts by introducing the territorial boundaries conflict between two communities and finishes by solving it, in most of the video a fixed camera testifies a long recreated discussion among authorities from both communities. There is no climax, no major tension, no protagonist or antagonist, just two groups of people standing up in a highland field having a long discussion in Aymara. A single point of narrative tension is toward the end, where a group of soldiers arrives to attempt to solve the conflict and the authorities tell them to go. Although this video might feel boring or visually unappealing to some audiences, communicator Patricio Luna affirms that he made it that way in order to fully document the procedures through which communities solve their boundaries problems through consent instead of calling for the intervention of governmental institutions.

Some communicators explained that the possibility of proposing their own narratives happens according to how they develop familiarity with technical equipment and more knowledge about audiovisual possibilities. "Narrating is always different. But up to now, what we've been doing is to adequate things to what we've learned traditionally," pointed out Quechua communicator Ana Vilacama.

I mean, we are adapting, and what is missing is to develop things from our own vision, from Quechua and Aymara narration forms, that's what we are not doing. I

think we need to learn more about image language to narrate. We need to make progress on image language itself.

Ana explains indigenous communicators' need to be conversant with "image language" or audiovisual existing conventions, including technical operation, in order to propose their own narrative forms. Aymara communicator Reynaldo Yujra timidly discussed this point in relation to authorship:

With the work of the National Plan of Audiovisual Communication developed by CEFREC and CAIB, people from communities themselves are getting trained. And they make video shooting, everything. But there is not yet a 100 percent appreciation according to indigenous communicators or videomakers' mission, there is no authorship. Because there is a little... there is always... a little imposition, like this: 'would you like to...?' 'No, I don't.' But other people see: 'No, this should be this way.' Then there is always authority that takes away your own authority over your material, about how you want to tell things. Then they operate under image language criteria and say: 'this shouldn't be this way, then we adapt a little.' There is not yet, we are not taking it a hundred percent, but a seventy or seventy-five percent of how we want the video to be.

He suggests that subtle imposition from instructors still restrains the possibilities for indigenous authorship. Reynaldo notes that instructors' appeal to "image language" functions as a source of authority for imposing ideas over videos. While Reynaldo explains that indigenous authorship is restrained precisely by the conventions that such

"image language" has already established, Ana suggests that indigenous videomakers need to be conversant with this "image language" in order to build upon it to create their own narratives.

Marcelina Cárdenas suggests that narrative styles are never static or homogeneous. "For example, everything they told me orally, I've written as it was told," she said about the need to adapt some elements of indigenous oral narrative from her community.

I just divided the story into scenes. Although yes, some things, for example in the video we added some things, some images. But the story, the general idea from the beginning to the end, all the story is what they told me. Then that's why I felt it was easy to write the script. Because I just took all the narration, then all I had to do was to organize images. Then the idea of the story, its structure, was maintained.

In reflecting about the structure of oral stories from her community, Marcelina compared them with narrative elements she learned in video workshops, such as the "climax" in linear narrative:

Stories have also a climax, not only films [laughter]. Then the climax makes you think, and then lower the tension. It's woven like this, that's why some tales have impact sometimes, because they are as if they were actually happening, as if one could see them. In general videos respect the structure, we can play, but the structure is respected, it doesn't change much. I only added to the story some things that happen in reality. But that's how it is told also in the community. These are stories told in different communities but not exactly the same way, they are always related

to a specific community. For example, the same story can be told in the Lowlands, but it will be related to the Lowlands' reality. That changes a little.

In this case, Marcelina finds the "Aristotelian structure" to be useful for organizing scripts for oral stories because of their similar dramatic structures. For her, what varies is the possibility to situate and adapt the story to a specific regional reality. This proves that conventional narrative forms can also be appropriated to tell indigenous stories.

In addition to the issue of narrative, a characteristic of the Plan Nacional is its specialization logic in which each participant has a specific function. For instance, approximately until 2004, most camera and editing operation was in charge of professional filmmakers or "técnicos" (technicians), who have long trajectories as film cinematographers and editors. "Then, what happens there? A video that passes through the shoulder and photography of César Pérez will always be a good video," observed communicator and leader Ariel Yáñez from the North of La Paz in 2006, just before the reformulation of training and production methodologies in that region.

And a video scripted by Francisco Cajías will be a good video. A video that passes through the hands of Milton Guzmán, will always be a good video. And we can continue naming cases, right? In terms of photography, if Max [Silva] is present, it will also be a good thing. Now, the proposal is that we, with them, will produce. I think it's a matter of methodology [...] But I think that now we will have more access to cameras and each of us will already assume challenges.

This other tension within the Plan Nacional is about the relationship between "técnicos" and indigenous communicators. While "técnicos" contribute to producing good quality videos in reasonable time, this possibility also implies that communicators have fewer chances to experiment and learn about technical operation. It is then delicate to define equipment operation as a "technical" job because many of the creative decisions to produce images are made at the moment of operating the camera, setting the scenes, and choosing the shots. Similarly, many of the creative decisions to tell stories are made when operating editing equipment. Even when the director or "responsable" is not directly in charge of operating equipment, it is necessary that she is familiar with their operation so she can work more in collaboration with specialists. "Then in a meeting we said: 'we need to know that as well because, how will we know if my editor is doing right or wrong?' Then, by doing we will know well," pointed out Patricio Luna.

How can we know if the cameraman is doing well or is wrong? Then we should know that as well. Even if I do wrong, I should practice, next time I will improve. Because if you have operated the camera: 'ah, then this is the mistake,' 'then you have to do it more carefully,' these are the kind of things that allow you to work. If not, how will I feel that the cameraman is doing good or wrong, if I have never operated it myself?

Acknowledging this problem, Plan Nacional trainers reflect about the methodological possibilities for communicators to appropriate the operation of equipment (Figure 16).



Figure 16. Video workshop in La Paz, 2002.
(Courtesy CEFREC-CAIB).

"Especially at the beginning they don't know what kind of an instrument it is," said instructor Francisco Cajías about the appropriation of video cameras.

They don't know it and when they do, they know it through other rules. I have seen some cases in Brazil, and here we also did some things, but sometimes there is too much pressure to finish, to complete a product. What was done? The camera was given to the person: 'here you turn it on, here you turn it off, bye.' That's it, without explaining or showing anything else. And the camera's movement is completely different, following the pace of who is walking. But this hasn't been allowed much. Let's say, something that happens a lot in the Andean world is that they like the whole image, the whole person, for them detailed shots are ugly, ugly. Then that would have to be also expressed in the camera. Or the narrative tendency to get back

to the same thing over and over again, then three people tell the same thing and that is not developed because there is an assumption that it won't be understood. So many things are left aside. But on the other hand things have grown so much, they have advanced so much that at the end they are doing it and they will be able to do it in a clearer way.

This account points to specific examples of technological appropriation, and explains some of the limitations that it faces in terms of economic and political "pressure to complete a product" and the "assumption that [videos] won't be understood." These two issues add to the challenges that indigenous videomakers have to overcome for developing their own narrative and aesthetic proposals. Hence, although communicators acknowledge the significance of their narrative and aesthetic contributions, many members of the Plan Nacional also acknowledge that they need to work more on issues such as developing their own audiovisual languages, for instance, in terms of camera movement and planes or shoots; or developing their own narrative proposals different, from instance, to Aristotelian linear structures that almost inevitably influence scripts. They also acknowledge the need for constructing of complex characters so they are not completely bad nor totally good; and for having a more direct appropriation of equipment technical operation. As this section has demonstrated, the question of how to translate "indigenous narratives" into an "audiovisual language" implies to understand that there is not a single indigenous narrative structure, nor a universal audiovisual language. Attempts to use elements of oral narrative in audiovisual production are rather contingent upon concrete production conditions such as economic and political pressures,

assumptions of how audiences will better understand videos, and an ongoing dependency of indigenous communicators on the expertise of "técnicos" and instructors. I explore this last issue more in detail in the next sub-section through the idea of authorship.

Authorship: collective and individual possibilities

Authorship is another topic related to the question of narrative and aesthetics that provokes a lot of debate within the Plan Nacional. The Plan defines those in charge of productions as "responsables" and not as "directors" or "filmmakers" in order to emphasize that production work is collective and does not rely on a specific individual or author. One of the strongest fears within the Plan Nacional is to create filmmakers and not indigenous communicators. "We didn't want to create a source of employment for communicators because that would imply a different sense: everybody would study to look for a job," explained Nicolás Ipamo.

Then we would be reproducing previous schemes, in that case universities already exist for people to go and get training. Because here we see a commitment that all organizations have to assume, to encourage communicators, to motivate them to go on. Because this kind of work is not commercial, it rather contributes a lot to transform philosophic, theoretical and political thought in favor of indigenous peoples.

This idea of prioritizing collective political commitment over personal benefit, discussed at length in Chapter 3, implies a non-personal conception of authorship. "I am

concerned about the idea of an individual, independent indigenous director," explained Franklin Gutiérrez against the idea of training individual filmmakers.

I ask myself how positive or negative that is. We would have to analyze that idea: 'my piece, my expression.' From my opinion this idea breaks with the essence of indigenusness, which is collectivity and community life. I think we can have certain levels of individuality, the Plan has them, but always linked to the community and culture.

While Nicolás argued against individual authorship underlining the political importance of their collective commitment, in his account Franklin stands against individual authorship with the essentialist argument that "this idea breaks with the essence of indigenusness." These kinds of arguments are often a mechanism to make a binary differentiation of the work of the Plan Nacional from industrial production dynamics that emphasize individual talents in terms of authorship as "film stars." In any case, the main concern against training "técnicos" without a political commitment is that will use their knowledge for personal or economic benefit. The goal, as discussed in Chapter 3, is to train people able to work organically with their communities and organizations. With this, the challenge is towards producing communication media with political commitment beyond individual interests in such a way that video materials express somehow "the voices of collectivities." This emphasis on collective authorship beyond personal creation echoes another principle of "imperfect cinema:"

Imperfect cinema rejects exhibitionism in both (literal) senses of the word, the narcissistic and the commercial (getting shown in established theaters and circuits). It

should be remembered that the death of the star-system turned out to be a positive thing for art. There is no reason to doubt that the disappearance of the director as star will fail to offer similar prospects. Imperfect cinema must start work now, in cooperation with sociologists, revolutionary leaders, psychologists, economists, etc. (García Espinosa 1979: 26).

In this respect, the Plan Nacional acknowledges that although there are teams composed of indigenous videomakers and non-indigenous "técnicos" in charge of productions who contribute with their own aesthetic and narrative criteria, the contributions by communities and political organizations that participate in the whole process are also undeniable.

The relationship between personal expression and collective authorship represents another tension within the Plan Nacional. Although most communicators work under this principle, there is always some ambiguity between personal learning and satisfaction that communicators feel, for instance, when finishing a video or when it wins awards at international festivals; and their commitment with all the people who made it possible. The emphasis on collective authorship introduces the question of how much a collective production strengthens or limits the creative possibilities of specific individuals, which the following section on narrative and aesthetic proposals discusses in detail.

Narrative and aesthetic proposals

Evoking indigenusness: uses of decoration, image and sound in video production

One aesthetic tendency within Plan Nacional productions is the intentional use of elements, images, sounds and situations that evoke indigeneity and cultural diversity in

Bolivia. For representing indigenous peoples from the Highlands, communicators often use images and artifacts that suggest traditional forms of Andean authority, such as pututus or horns, bastón de mando or authority staff, ponchos, chicotes or whips, and indigenous leaders in couples (man and woman) to represent the Chacha Warmi or the traditional Andean idea of a complementing, shared authority.⁴¹ Similarly, videos that represent indigenous peoples from the Lowlands and Amazonian region show artifacts like bows and arrows, tacus or wood mortars, and indigenous clothes made out of feathers and tree bark (Figures 17 and 18). In this section I use the case of Bolivia Constituyente, a Plan Nacional weekly television program created in August of 2006, to document and analyze the development of the Constituent Assembly and the participation of indigenous organizations and representatives in it.



Figure 17. Shooting documentary on traditional authorities, La Paz, 2005.
(Courtesy CEFREC-CAIB).

⁴¹ Andean regional indigenous organizations taking part in the National Council of Ayllus and Markas of Qullasuyo CONAMAQ (Consejo Nacional de Ayllus y Markas del Qullasuyo) have resurrected this form of authority to represent leadership in couples. Although this initiative is presented to balance leadership between men and women, it has been criticized because men are the ones who continue making most decisions, despite the fact that female leaders or *Mamat'allas* accompany them to meetings and political events.



Figure 18. Shooting fiction on Amazonian territories, Beni, 2006. (Courtesy CEFREC-CAIB).

Together with the TV program: *Entre Culturas*, which started broadcasting in public television around 2004, Bolivia Constituyente has to adjust narrative and aesthetic possibilities to television format, which is particularly strict in terms of productivity and effectivity. "Now they are already in television," explained César Pérez, a well-known sixty year-old Peruvian cameraman and trainer, emphasizing the differences between producing television and other audiovisual media.

I was trained myself in television, and understood that it was the best school to be effective in production. I mean, the base of direct television is: fast, good, and only once. There is no chance to fix things.

As César notes, the television format, especially live, does not allow for repeat shots or fixing mistakes, nor does it allow for open length, as video production does. Assuming this challenge, this TV program is offering innovative proposals aiming at building an indigenous presence in national television at various levels. For example, the clip that

identifies the TV program *Entre Culturas* shows a collage of landscapes, characters, sounds and artifacts as an attempt to represent the cultural diversity of the country. In this collage, images of highland landscapes appear with pututu or horn sounds, while images of women from the lowlands grinding rice in their tacú appear with the sound of traditional Andean drums and flutes. Elements that evoke indigenous diversity in Bolivia are also used for decoration in the TV set for the Bolivia Constituyente/*Entre Culturas* programs. The studio decoration uses Andean textiles and Eastern hammocks, morrales or bags, arrows, paintings and other handcrafts. The table around which program participants debate has a ceramic bowl offering coca leaves (Figure 19). "We looked for other ways of presenting: valorizing our handcrafts, our painting; we decorated although many people might not have the habit to see these things," observed Chiquitano communicator Nicolás Ipamo regarding the studio decoration.

They might say: 'Well, why do they hang that arrow, that vessel, why do they use that hammock, why don't they use plastic things, a square, something painted?' Because that's the way people from cities see. But, what do we say? For us the thing is to show, to make visible what is around us. Even under the trees we produce programs. We get out from the studio: we make the *mise-en-scène* next to a river, under a tree, or use motacú leaves for the scenario. Or we simulate a delivery as if our brother was somewhere else. That's how we seek for ideas so the program has more movement and becomes nicer. And that has created expectations among national population.



Figure 19. Set of Bolivia Constituyente / Entre Culturas television program, Sucre, 2006. (CEFREC-CAIB).

Nicolás points at the significance of "making visible" elements that are common in indigenous communities as a way to make their programs different, more appealing to people who "might not have the habit to see" those objects and landscapes in conventional television programs. While this kind of decoration and locations emphasizes an idea of cultural difference and diversity among non-indigenous audiences, it also intends to evoke familiarity among indigenous audiences and participants. For example, the Guaraní advisor for the Assembly of Guaraní Peoples APG (Asamblea del Pueblo Guaraní), Milton Chacay, has been invited frequently to talk at the program. "I think that has allowed me to see and be in total safety," he observed about the way in which the production team constituted by indigenous people, and even the studio decoration, made him feel like "at home."

It doesn't mean that I would feel uncomfortable in a different space, but the fact that next to me there is a "sister" [hermana] making the interview, a "brother" [hermano]

operating the camera, lights, sound and all that makes it special, gives a feeling of being at home, to be relax, to talk confidently to them.⁴² I think that's what happens.

[...]

What I understand is that they look for quality in debates. Now, as far as the studio, I don't think decoration is too heavy, I like it. Because when there are too many objects in the studio, maybe the interviewee can feel a bit uncomfortable. But since there is one single table with handcrafts, I think it's also interesting, I like it, it's light.

Milton pointed at two aspects of the program that felt "special" for him: its contents based on the "quality of debates," and its form, consisting of the presence of indigenous hosts and a light decoration with handcrafts. Hence, the ability of the Bolivia Constituyente program to present itself both as different to non-indigenous audiences, and as special or familiar to indigenous participants, relies on a balanced combination of contents and aesthetic presentation.

This program is one of the few spaces in Bolivian television where indigenous representatives can express their opinions. It is exclusively dedicated to debating and informing about the Constituent Assembly. "I think that it's the only program that we produce from our own perspective, saying what we want to say, to show, in images," argued main host of the program Sonia Chiri.

Besides that, there are no other communications media that disseminate what an indigenous or peasant constituent representative says, or a leader. Even when then tell us for instance: 'Ah, they can't speak Spanish correctly, they can't make

⁴² People self-identified as indigenous in Latin America usually refer to other indigenous peoples as "hermanos" and "hermanas."

themselves understand.' But that's about our way of speaking, because our ideas are clear. And we produce it. So our compañeros or hermanos from communities feel confident about us. There is a lot of material, maybe we need to continue opening more spaces.

This account underlines the role of the program to facilitate public debates among indigenous representatives in their own terms, "from their own perspective," with "confidence." This emphasis on serving as a space for indigenous peoples to speak up is supported by the fact that it is the only one produced and hosted by indigenous communicators. This aspect breaks with conventional television aesthetics. For example, the main host is an indigenous woman from Potosí who wears a traditional pollera skirt. This outfit is unusual in mainstream television programs that generally have as hosts men and women dressed up with fashionable clothing in an attempt to look professional, cosmopolitan, or sexually appealing. The program also proposes a more collective and consensual preparation and development of the topics. "What we also do before starting the program is that we meet with interviewees to discuss how we want to orient the discussion," explained Sonia Chiri.

Because sometimes when we ask something they respond with a different thing.

Then considering that the space we have lasts half an hour with advertisements and everything, then we want to take advantage of that time. Then: 'This is about this, we want to orient things this way, this is how we want the program to come out.' And that facilitates the achievement of the program's objective.

In this time we've gained a lot of confidence because now we have the demand for organizations to participate. There is support of 'técnicos' [consultants] working with organizations. We analyze together the script, what is missing, how we can guide the program, with which questions, if the guide is fine. Then they give us suggestions that we use to fix the script, to make corrections.

This possibility of preparing the script with program guests implies that the program serves to the common goal among hosts, guests, and producers, of presenting clear and accurate information about indigenous participation in the Constituent Assembly.

The experience of broadcasting a live television program for the first time posed several challenges to the production team because their mistakes were more visible, and because they felt insecure about hosting and developing topics on depth and even about operating equipment correctly. "I didn't even dare to think of producing a live program," acknowledged Sonia Chiri about the difficulty of assuming to be in charge of a live television program.

Because I thought: 'it must be the good ones, the ones who go to university, who can appear in the screen.' I have experience in radio production, but not in television. But once we start working, I think we improve little by little. But all people who see us, who know us, we meet and they always tell us that we are doing well, that it's a very professional program, a very deep program for indigenous peoples, and good to reflect on these topics.

Sonia points to their learning process and to audiences' recognition as elements that helped to break with the assumption that "only the ones who go to university" could produce a good television program. The insecurities they faced at first provoked tension within the production team, which for the first time on the history of the Plan Nacional was constituted mainly by indigenous communicators. Nevertheless, the team has overcome the tensions after assuming that the program is gaining audiences and prestige. They also assume the responsibility for the fact that the Bolivia Constituyente program has exclusive coverage, for instance, of the opinions of "organic" Constituent Assembly representatives and of topics that are relevant for indigenous peoples.⁴³ An aspect that granted prestige and popularity among social movement supporters was that the program included the participation of international activist intellectuals such as Héctor Díaz Polanco from Mexico and Boaventura De Sousa Santos from Portugal. The presence of international public figures in the program supporting the Constituent proposal of national confederations also served as a strategy for indigenous communicators and leaders to gain legitimacy and authority. Furthermore, the way in which main hosts introduce guests in the program symbolically challenged assumptions about the hierarchical gaps between "academic intellectuals" and "non-educated" indigenous leaders. For example, in interviewing De Sousa Santos, Sonia Chiri guided the debate in a confident and informal way, posing interesting questions and situating them in relation to the national context.

⁴³ Members of national peasant and indigenous confederations refer to Constituent representatives affiliated to their organizations as "organic" (*Constituyentes Orgánicos*) to differentiate them from representatives of political parties. In this case, the term "organic" suggests a particular commitment to organizations' bases.

Through these mechanisms, the TV program Bolivia Constituyente has constituted itself as an effective window to see debates and information that are not shown in other media and that allows for different voices to those expressed in other TV channels. It is a case that breaks not only with conventional aesthetics in terms of studio decoration and hosts presentation, but which also introduces a different form of preparing and conducting interviews and debates, aiming at establishing in-depth dialogues. Something similar happens with radio programs, which enjoy growing recognition from and participation by social organizations.

"Your life experience, trees, animals, the river, those are your raw materials."

Indigenous communicators' aesthetic proposals

Particularly during its first stage, the Plan Nacional developed narrative and aesthetic elements that combine community oral narrative with creative proposals that indigenous communicators have defined through their own experimentation. In this respect, trainers and "técnicos" mention some examples of narrative and aesthetic innovations by indigenous communicators. "From the beginning, in the first Plan workshops, Cástulo [Sejas] for instance was a great cameraman," said video trainer Milton Guzmán about the abilities that particular individuals have developed.

A cameraman not only in the aesthetic sense of operating the camera correctly, quietly, but also in terms of composition, or suggesting new things, interesting angles that hadn't been taught in the workshop. And that was because he saw reality that way.

Similarly, cameraman César Pérez described some of the communicators' abilities:

We have great narrators such as Marcelino Pinto who is a very good director and has still a lot to give. He has a very particular aesthetics, very refined. Marcelino has his own aesthetics. I don't know if such aesthetics is from his community, maybe yes, maybe not. But he does express it [...] They are talents hidden there by the social conditions in which they live. I think there is a great qualitative progress in this difficult area. Maybe we have influenced somehow. But we have never told them: 'This is the aesthetic we have to follow.'

Both accounts explain cases of indigenous videomakers' personal "talent" that might be related or not to their communities' culture. This appreciation challenges possible monolithic understandings of indigenous aesthetics as something intrinsic to a particular indigenous culture. Additionally, César notes that the expression of such "talents" is restrained by the socioeconomic conditions in which indigenous communicators live, a fact that the Plan Nacional acknowledges and fights through its work.

Besides those discussed in the first section of this Chapter in relation to topics, innovative aesthetic proposals within the Plan Nacional include the explicit presence of communicators in documentary videos to introduce the theme of the story. For example, the documentary *El Río de la Vida. El Pueblo Esse Ejja del Trópico Boliviano* (The River of Life. The Esse Ejja People from the Bolivian Tropic, 2002) starts with two indigenous communicators from different regions wearing their Plan Nacional press vests. While they are arriving on a boat to an Esse Ejja Community, they talk among themselves, and

occasionally refer to the camera/audience, about the particularities of the Esse Ejja people as a way to introduce the story. After the introduction they proceed to walk to the community to interview a family about the creation myth among their people. Although they use a conventional reportage style marked by their press vests and a clearly dramatized conversation, the striking or innovative aspect is that they introduce themselves as indigenous communicators and, unlike a conventional reporter, situate themselves within the story by making references and jokes about their own communities. Other documentaries like *Tarpurispa* (Seeding, 2004) also use the explicit presence of indigenous communicators to introduce and guide the story. *Tarpurispa* starts with a fiction scene where Marcelina, an indigenous communicator from Potosí, is sitting on a stone next to a path near her community. Sonia, another communicator, arrives to greet her and they start a conversation about the planting of barley in Sonia's region. Then Sonia invites Marcelina to visit her community to show how this product is produced, used and marketed. Here again, the fact that these two indigenous reporters are discussing through a fictional reenactment an aspect of about their own communities breaks with the apparently conventional reportage style. Similar strategies to introduce and guide the story are used in videos like *Ayllus en Paz* (*Ayllus in Peace*, 2003) about territorial boundaries in Oruro and Potosí communities, and *Allpachu Uywiri* (*Camelids in the Highlands*, 2003) about the productive possibilities of growing camelids (such as llama, vicuña, alpaca and guanaco). I suggest that the presence of indigenous videomakers in their own productions speaking in their own languages, often with press vests, dramatizing a casual conversation as a resource to introduce and guide their stories, relates to a film resource that Peter Wollen defined as "foregrounding," by "making of the

mechanic of the film and text visible and explicit." In this case, indigenous communicators provide contextual information about the process of indigenous communication within the Plan Nacional through their presence and dialogues (Nichols 1991: 257).

The creative use of natural locations is another characteristic of Plan Nacional's audiovisual proposals. For instance, in *Oro Maldito*, the production team adapted a metallic wire between two trees to produce a violent movement of the camera from a higher point, similar to but beyond what a crane would do. "Then for example I always remember an anecdote in the Chapare region," said cameraman and editor Max Silva about this example of adapting creatively the camera work to the production conditions.

We were shooting *Oro Maldito* and there was a kind of pulley for tourists. Then we hung the camera there, to simulate a crane. But it was incredible how the shot came out by pulling the cable. Then you adjust things to the existing conditions. For example landscapes are so diverse that there are proposals to make different shots, from their own language. [...] Obviously we have always tried to produce a hybrid that brings together existing audiovisual language and our own suggestions.

From their end, communicators also reflect upon their learning process and concerns. "Well, what the *compañeros* said was that my locations were very crazy," said Marcelino Pinto laughingly about his proposals for video locations.

Yes, because they were exotic, right? Water falls, hanging bridges, distant places, not nearby. And since I walk a lot in my region, I was the one who suggested the use of such places. I thought of locations. Because it's normal that somebody who produces

videos in urban areas uses a studio or shoots near where he lives. I didn't understand the logic of the studio, I didn't understand the tricks, but now I do. But I think it's better to do it with natural landscapes.

This testimony shows that communicators' attempts to develop their own narratives include using creatively elements from their surroundings to look appealing and different from "urban" and "studio" productions. This issue also implies using familiar elements as means to express feelings and experiences through video, as Aymara communicator Patricio Luna noted. "We have to work a lot on that, to make things understandable, because what matters is that people understand and watch with interest," he said about the need for going beyond documenting reality, in order to communicate emotional experiences through artistic expression.

How can we reach people? How can we make them feel? How can I feel what people from Beni experience? How can I feel what that person is, his sufferings, if it's hot there, what he feels? But we don't have that, we just have dramatic stories: abuses, similar problems that exist in different places. But to feel for example the weather is very difficult to express. And poverty, to make people feel the poverty in eastern Bolivia and the poverty in the western region. Those kinds of things haven't been done. We just make stories. But about my poverty, how can I make people from the Eastern region feel it? That I live with 10 pesos, how I live in my community. What my work is, the potato that I harvest in my field. And that harvest, how I do it, what I do with it, how my life experience is. And the same in the Eastern region, if I grow cassava, have two or three cows, how do they suffer the lack of water? We don't

achieve to transmit experience. Now, of course, we have worked in terms of leadership, or talking about the Constituent Assembly, all that. Of course it's important but at the end we still have a long way to go.

Patricio emphasizes his concern for audiovisual media to "reach" people through sharing experiences and provoking feelings beyond dialogues and dramatic structures. This concern also relates to going beyond a mere representation of reality in order to construct emotional messages that permit communicating specific ideas about indigenous situations. In response to a similar consideration, Chiquitano videomaker Nicolás Ipamo explained the possibility for developing artistic proposals through using their surroundings and experience as "raw materials:"

I used to produce video in my free time, and at night I did my art things, my designs, my painting. I already had some acknowledgment because I worked with Lorgio Vaca, a famous Latin American muralist painter. Then I know his techniques and I learned a lot with him: to value peoples' culture and art. Then he told me that: 'In Bolivia an artist can live, Nicolás.' And I compare that to film, to video. 'Why?' he said. 'Because we artists must do things differently from what comes from outside. Draw your culture, your life experience, trees, animals, the river, those are your raw materials... sometimes artists should be in the countryside.' And I compare that to film. Indigenous film is not to be made inside a studio or where everything is fake. Instead there is the environment: rivers, mountains, caves, trees, people. And that's something new for people here in the city.

According to Nicolás, the deployment of life experience and natural surroundings can help to express feelings, to value indigenous cultures, and to create products "different from what comes from outside." This reflection led him to analyze production and distribution possibilities for indigenous art, including indigenous video:

When we presented a hammock in the Casa de la Cultura painters who studied in Europe said: 'hey, this is not art, this is handcraft. Why is there an Ayoreo bag here at the museum?' And the same can happen with film: Why would an indigenous video be screened at a movie theater? 'Or in a museum?' one could say too. People think that indigenous peoples are by all means the worst: that they don't do things right, that their music and painting are silly. Because there is no valorizing of indigenous art. And the same happens with indigenous video. Why in the academic realm [films] have good illumination, good sound? Why? Because things are made in a studio. Let's see if the Hollywood people can do the same in Lomerío, where there is no electricity, no electric generator. Then one has to adapt to nature: sun light, from what time to what time can we illuminate. In terms of a stage, one has to look for a tree, a stone, all that. It's two different things.

Nicolás questions the distribution convention by which art and film are presented in galleries and theaters with no additional context, while videos, and indigenous art in general, are usually presented as "indigenous" and "handcrafts." In this regard, some Plan Nacional members are discussing the idea of preparing some already existing videos for distribution through regular commercial channels to see their impacts on wider publics without having to emphasize the production context as "indigenous."

Nicolás also notes that the tough production conditions in indigenous communities, with their natural resources, constitute at the same time an advantage. This debate on indigenous peoples' aesthetic references shows that their video production involves specific ways of relating to the landscape, ideas about time, and aesthetic references. For example, a first version of *Markasan Jucha Thakahuipa* started with an unusually long sequence of a general shot where a couple walks in wide Andean landscapes looking for their lost llamas. This version was screened for discussion and review with a group of forty indigenous communicators and leaders in order to gather comments for the final version. A general comment from the group was that the first scene was too long. Communicators from the highlands and the production team argued that they felt it to be a good scene because it gave an accurate sense of the length of walks that people usually make when they shepherd. "If they were looking for the llamas," somebody argued, "it is normal that they walk even for days in order to find them." Despite this argument, the final version used the device of a cinematographic ellipsis -or visual suggestion of temporal transition- through cutting this scene into various pieces that together convey a sense of a continuous action through a long time. Alternatively, in *Yujre* (We are Yuracaré People, 2005) a dynamic camera with no cuts closely follows the activities of characters when they eat together, walk, and fish in the forest.

The reference to indigenous aesthetics in film had already been developed by non-indigenous Bolivian filmmakers such as Jorge Sanjinés and the Grupo Ukamau, who created narrative and cinematographic styles as an attempt to represent references and situations common to Andean indigenous peoples. For instance, in his film *La Nación Clandestina* (The Clandestine Nation, 1989) Sanjinés used a non-linear, but rather

circular narrative structure. He also developed film formal mechanisms in order to cinematographically represent the film contents, for instance, through a shot he called sequence shot or plano secuencia, that is, a cinematographic continuous sequence with no cuts, shot on a wide frame:

When we decided to use sequence shots in our latest films, we were spurred on by the surging demands of the content. We had to use shots that integrated the participation of the viewer. Jumping right away to close-ups of the assassin –in *El Enemigo Principal* [The Principal Enemy, 1973] in the crowded plaza where the popular tribunal was held didn't serve our purposes, because the surprise that is always produced by directly cutting to a close-up was opposed to what we were trying to develop in the sequence shots, which was to engage the participation of the viewer by means of the internal power of the people's collective participation. The simple movement of the camera interpreted differing points of view, the dramatic demands of the viewer that would enable him to quit being a viewer so as to become an actual participant. Occasionally the sequence shots would lead us into a close-up, separating what distance is in fact possible in the approach, or else would open up the field between shoulders and heads in order to bring us physically closer to see and listen. To cut to a big close-up is to brutally impose the viewpoint of the filmmaker, his own interpretation of reality, in the viewer. To move from a general shot with other people in it to a closeup has a different meaning, embodies a different attitude, which is more coherent with what is taking place, with the actual content.

[...]

Put another way, there is the subjective treatment of things that goes hand-in-hand with the needs and attitudes of a certain individualist cinema as opposed to an objective, non-psychological, sensorial treatment that facilitates the participation and needs of popular cinema. (1997: 64-65)

Sanjinés' sequence shot intended to "integrate participation of the viewer" and to visually emphasize collective action. The sequence shot, together with other formal experimentation in Sanjinés' work, were attempts to develop formal mechanisms to avoid "imposing" the filmmaker's view and, instead, to create coherence "with what is taking place," and to "facilitate participation" of popular audiences.

I have discussed some examples in which Plan Nacional also has intended to cinematographically depict indigenous contexts and situations. For example, it has tried to make visible references to indigeneity through displaying indigenous objects in television sets, taking advantage of natural surroundings, or emphasizing the presence of indigenous communicators in documentaries. Nevertheless, it is worth mentioning as an aesthetic tendency that Plan Nacional productions have also sought to omit or to represent negatively aspects that could be pointed at as "polluting" or "indicators of a loss of indigenous identity," but that are undeniable aesthetic references of most communicators and communities. These referents, consumed intensively in peasant markets in provinces and cities, include *chicha* music;⁴⁴ comic TV shows that ridicule indigenous life like the Cholo Juanito; videoclips with folklorizing indigenous music and dances from different regions of Bolivia; and American or Asian action films. Although

⁴⁴ The popular *chicha* music simplifies and brings together traditional Andean rhythms like *huayno* and tropical rhythms like *cumbia* and *guaracha*.

indigenous communities are in intense interaction with these aesthetic references, the Plan Nacional videos rarely show them. When such elements appear in a film, they are used to accentuate the construction of urbanized characters who are losing their identity. By avoiding the reference to such elements or stressing their negative influence on indigenous cultures, the Plan Nacional also reproduces an essentialist idea of what indigenous cultures should be. As Chapter 6 discusses, these kinds of essentialist tendencies are also part of the contingent processes of self-representation among indigenous peoples.

Negotiating with time, quality standards and economic pressure

Previous sections have discussed thematic, narrative, and aesthetic proposals that have oriented the work of the Plan Nacional. These include those based on oral narratives; collective work between trainers, communities and national confederations during script writing and shooting; the use of new and conventional technical resources that communicators develop in the process; as well as innovations in terms of locations, camera work and narrative structures that relate more to the life experience and aesthetic references of indigenous communities in Bolivia.

Besides facing the challenges discussed in previous sections, the development of thematic, narrative and aesthetic proposals is contingent upon economic, quality and productivity pressures. Communicators point at the tensions between the learning process and the need to keep up with a specific rhythm and quality of productions. The need to develop their own forms of expression is often in tension with an assumption of how videos "should be" in order to be understood or even acknowledged internationally

among wider audiences as "quality" products. "Then we as indigenous communicators have to do different things, but they also have to be appealing, with a good quality," said Chiquitano communicator and painter Nicolás Ipamo.

If nowadays technology has progressed, it should help us reinforce indigenous peoples, to improve, that their image improves to the outside. As indigenous filmmakers we can't show mistakes like a dark video: 'the diaphragm was wrong, it didn't open fine,' or like 'the sound was bad,' 'the structure had no shape...'

This account reflects a concern about meeting specific quality standards in order to "improve" the image of indigenous peoples to the outside, which also suggests a way of proving themselves as "professional" producers. Although the aspect of technical quality is often important to express adequately a particular message, numerous video experimental tendencies have challenged the standard notions of "good quality" and "beauty" in order to convey a rejection of already established forms (García Espinosa 1979, González and Lerner 1998). In terms of indigenous video, Purepecha videomaker Dante Cerano from Michoacán, Mexico, has widely experimented with what, to regular audiences, would look as technical and narrative "mistakes." In his provocative video *Día 2* (Day 2, 2004), Cerano documents the day after a wedding in his community. In terms of contents, this video ironically shows the series of events within a day that "everybody thinks of as only drunkenness." In terms of aesthetics, the image is often dark, the sound unclear, the camera shaky, and the editing includes shots that would normally pass as "accidental." This video is everything but a technically clean or "good quality" piece. Nevertheless, this "dirty" aesthetics also constitutes a political statement that, together

with the film contents, conveys a complex response to essentialist audiences who expect to find in indigenous videos beautiful landscapes, local handcrafts, mud houses, traditional rituals, and harmonic community life, instead of the dusty streets, plastic gifts, cement houses, an after wedding celebration, drunk relatives lying on the floor, and the family tensions that Cerano humorously shows. It is worth noting that Cerano is able to play this representational game because he belongs to the community he is depicting, and can make fun of it without necessarily misrepresenting or putting down his neighbors and relatives –indeed, the video might seem funny to them as well. In contrast to Cerano's experimental work, Plan Nacional members are reluctant to produce videos that subvert quality standards.

In addition to technical quality, time constraints also constitute a pressure for some indigenous communicators in Bolivia. Quechua videomaker Alfredo Copa talked about the time limitations he faced when trying to cut *Desempolvando Nuestra Historia* (Dusting off our History, 1999) a video originally made for his community. "For me it was a surprise, because I had thought the video for my community," he said about the award his video won in an international festival in Mexico.⁴⁵

I even said: 'Fine, even if they don't want to screen it, it's fine,' because they told me that 'it was too complicated, too many topics, it won't come out, it will last about one hour, it won't fit into a 30 minute video.' But I assumed that challenge: 'If you want it for television we'll edit it for 20 minutes.' I edited the video for 20 minutes. But I didn't expect that surprise, I didn't think the video could be acknowledged

⁴⁵ Festival "Contra El Silencio Todas Las Voces," celebrated in Mexico City, Mexico, in 2000.

internationally, because I was breaking with television schemes, it was not made to screen outside. And it came out that the video won an award outside.

Time schemes broke because, for the video I wanted to do, I didn't pay attention to the length. For the community length doesn't matter. I was breaking with the linear idea of time that they [instructors] have. The format itself, mine was a bit different because I didn't base it on the format we are taught. That was just a reference: narrative, climax... They [instructors] said that I had to situate well the climax, but the video didn't.

Alfredo emphasized that he had in mind his community's audiences at the time of producing the video. He suggested that for viewers from his community, conventions like an average "length" or a linear narrative with "climax" were not so relevant. At the end Alfredo shortened the video to 30 minutes, but kept it in a non-conventional linear structure. The recognition of the video in an international festival proved to Alfredo and his colleagues that it was worthwhile daring to experiment beyond assumptions about possible audience responses.

In terms of quality, quantity and contents demands, communicators acknowledge that these elements are related to the possibility of maintaining the economic sustainability of the process:

Then if we had more dialogue with funders to tell them: 'look, we would like more space to practice.' Because if it's not a good product, or if we don't produce 10 videos, we will look bad. And probably CEFREC will be in difficulties: 'Are we

getting the money for you to do this?' Then economic limitations also demand to produce good things, to produce 10 programs on rights and things like that.

Or:

The other problem is external production structures, which shape much of what we have to do. For example: topics. Sometimes to get the [international] cooperation support you even have to make things up... I don't know, to produce a series in order to match their annual plans, for example. Or sometimes one tends to produce more political documentaries, or there was a trend to work on cultural value. Sometimes those things are a bit constrained by funding issues. Even by timing, sometimes. Then we start to produce in large quantities, like tac tac tac. Because sometimes that happens, that there is money only to pay one editor, and only for four days, so we have to make him 'fly,' a few ideas but then 'formula' and 'ready.' And well, many other things influence, not only funding.

Although the Plan Nacional has managed to maintain relatively unconditional funding for the Plan's activities, these accounts suggest that there is still a certain degree of pressure from financing institutions for productivity and quality. Since its creation, the Plan Nacional has received main funding from European international cooperation agencies, particularly from the Spanish Agency for International Cooperation AECI (Agencia Española de Cooperación Internacional), as well as from the Basque Non Governmental Organization Mugarik Gabe. The latter has strongly influenced for the Plan Nacional to obtain strong financial support from the Basque Government since 2004.

As detailed in Chapter 1, CEFREC is the organization in charge of the Plan Nacional management, a function that includes looking for funding and distributing budgets in salaries for office staff, technological equipment, infrastructure for the six regional offices, and training, organizing, and production-related expenses such as lodging and transportation. Although the Plan Nacional has maintained a stable financial support, CEFREC has been able to stretch it in order to cover a great variety of activities and needs. Yet this distribution of funding causes tensions and disagreement among some communicators who consider that they do not obtain a fair economic compensation to their work, as discussed in Chapter 3.

Another aspect that causes tensions is the fact that communicators often feel pressures for producing and disseminating video materials with specific quality standards and production rhythms that respond both to funding agencies' expectations and to the urgent needs of the political moment. "Here the question was: is it more important that indigenous people make their films by themselves, or that we all build together a transformation process?" explained CEFREC coordinator Iván Sanjinés.

Because it's true that some have taken more advantage of using the equipment, and also more initiative. We might have not been very attentive to that aspect because the work with national organizations is more focused on how to use this tool, to produce many things, to impact, to organize debates and to use communication as an element for transformation.

The Plan Nacional is not a space limited to artists, although it is artistic: beauty, feeling, all that is there, one can't take away the general cosmovision, love stories, everything. Every thing has it's own process and moment. The Plan has also

responded to moments of more experimentation, to affirm a way of producing, and to affirm its discourse. We are part of a reflection process. Not all Plan videos talk about cattle owners and oil owners and about the Goni [Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada] government, no. But everything has been important in this process of peoples' maturation, of internal affirmation, with a message like: 'we do this ourselves, we are in the screen, we are valuable and our language is spoken, it's there in television, we are important, we need to go on, we can do it, we have to make it.' The Plan Nacional has also contributed to that maturation process in general.

Here Iván makes reference to multiple uses and functions of indigenous video, such as self-affirmation, cultural practice, political work, and artistic experimentation. He suggests that instead of having to prioritize one of these functions over the others, they try to find a balance for all these needs and possibilities.

This balance mainly relies on two principles of the Plan Nacional: collectivity and negotiation. Both aspects prioritize a common political mission over the strengthening of individual initiatives or "talents." As discussed, this does not mean that individual proposals are denied, but rather that the Plan Nacional intends to bring them together through negotiation. The next section discusses the central role of negotiation for the Plan Nacional's functioning and for its progress toward specific political goals.

Negotiation and decolonization

The question of whether "indigenous" narrative forms can be translated or not into an audiovisual language should not rely on a dichotomy between a possible "occidental

vision" versus an "indigenous vision." The case of videos produced in the Plan Nacional shows rather that the collective work of indigenous communicators, with their complex and heterogeneous views on their own realities, together with the work of communities and trainers, offers multiple aesthetic and narrative possibilities that get created and transformed in the process of video production and distribution. Nevertheless, a central challenge they face is the tension for producing materials that contribute effectively to raising consciousness about Bolivia's political transformations, and that at the same time allow for indigenous communicators' creative expression and technical learning.

The production process has become even more complex since 2004, when productions centered on the idea of communicating specific political messages in national transformations. "It's like negotiating between what we want to say and what we don't want to say, but also having to adjust things to audiovisual narrative itself," noted trainer Franklin Gutiérrez remarked about the complex negotiation processes that communication materials go through.

Then what you adjust to during the process is to have the ability to balance narrative with everything that people want to tell. It's a learning process that you build in the way: to generate consent. I think audiovisual production results out of the ability to negotiate and achieve consent on what we want to tell and how we are going to tell it. And this happens between different groups: the original owner of the idea, the production team, and the community with which you work. And then at a larger level there are still the Confederations, in the case of the Communication Strategy, who have to decide if the message is right. Then the Communication Plan is a permanent process of negotiation, coordination and planning.

Franklin explains the significance of "negotiation" and "consent" as conditional aspects of collaboration within the Plan Nacional. The acknowledgment of these two elements elucidates the key power dynamic of this communication process. The intense negotiation on aspects related to video production, such as aesthetics, narrative, stylistic innovations, authorship and collective work prove that video production does not represent a coherent and common opinion of all its members. Yet it is possible to identify numerous objectives and battles at the moment of defining, for instance, how the story will be told, how should a character dress or how she should react upon specific situations. This negotiation process does not only take place within production team members, community people, leaders, "técnicos" and advisors. It also takes place inside everybody's minds when trying to define an idea, narrative structure, or aesthetic proposal as "indigenous," "own," or as "different from conventional media;" as well as when seeking to respond, from an "indigenous perspective," to the "dominant culture."

What is interesting about this struggle is that neither the "indigenous perspective," nor the "dominant culture" are stable concepts, but they are constantly redefined in the process of production negotiation and decision making. This redefinition brings together ideas, practices and symbols that are often contradictory: using simultaneously conventional and innovating narrative and audiovisual resources; adjusting to industrial formats with the purpose of widely disseminating collective and revolutionary messages; or even searching to express indigenous realities under "professional" quality standards.

Hence, video production becomes a field of political and symbolic struggles embedded in standards already set, that at the same time seek to "decolonize" the image

of indigenous peoples or to break with the "technical disciplining" that constrains conventional audiovisual production. The issue of "technical disciplining" can be exemplified through the following observation of Fernando Garcés, an advisor for the Unity Pact who has worked closely on the preparation of the Bolivia Constituyente TV programs. "Something that I think would be interesting to discuss among the compañeros is this issue of 'technical disciplining,'" Garcés noted.

It's not only something about communicators. It's something that happens with indigenous teachers, with indigenous "técnicos" working at the municipality, with communicators, or whoever involved in these training processes unintendedly entering into a Western logic of normalizing discipline.

The disciplining technique is this issue that in order to produce a good television or radio program you have to follow certain rules. I think it would be ideal to create such a space in which everybody creates their own rules, their own style. Of course, that would create a particular style of television, which would be a great challenge.

As much as there is a need to decolonize the epistemological, administrative and political world, I think there is also a need to decolonize the ways of producing communication. And I think that people at the Communication Strategy have everything in their hands to do it.

Garcés suggested that Bolivia's political transformations provide an ideal context for working toward "decolonizing" or breaking with existing dominant practices in various social areas, including communication. He went on to illustrate the tension of "technical

disciplining" within the production of a Bolivia Constituyente / Entre Culturas television program:

I feel that tension in the Entre Culturas program. I mean, Sonia [Chiri] gets out from the script. That's exactly the game and tension between your own conception of time, conversation, writing, orality and image: to discuss something and treating it with the efficiency required by the medium you are using. When we did a program in La Paz we couldn't follow the script because one thing is connected to the other. As much as we say: 'Here, I'm going to ask this' and 'I will answer that,' one thing related to another and we went back. So I feel that the technical equipment behind the stage suffers with this. I think it would be useful to make a whole reflection process about their conversational, interviewing, and production logic. And the tough thing is that you have to match all that with efficient parameters. Because in television, ten seconds are ten seconds.

In this case, Garcés also stresses the need to "break rules" and to experiment with diverse formal possibilities while having to negotiate "with the efficiency required by the medium you are using." Therefore, he underlines the importance of negotiation for decolonization processes.

In this respect, Freya Schiwy (2002) has explained the work of the Plan Nacional as a process of "decolonizing the frame." She suggests that video production is a successful and coherent form of indigenous representation against conventional, dominant or colonial images of indigenous peoples. My discussion differs from this perspective by focusing on negotiation as a key element of indigenous video production, as well as on its

internal tensions. I propose that the work of the Plan Nacional, as a decolonizing process, is embedded in contradiction, reproducing occasionally conventional parameters, and in an ongoing fight to redefine an "indigenous aesthetic" against industrial or conventional criteria. This tension is not exclusive to indigenous communication, but takes place within different indigenous sectors of Bolivia when intending to work on the issue of "decolonization," right as Quechua communicator Ana Vilacama explained:

We are like in the Educational Reform: [laughter] teaching in indigenous languages but within the Western system. Then with video things are more or less alike. We need to make progress with our own image language.

Hence, the issue of negotiation shows that there is not a binary equation where indigenous communication coherently resists a "dominant culture." Instead, as the discussion shows, "indigenous communication" is a series of practices of resistance that involve tensions, contradictions and deep self questioning –for instance regarding the possibilities for "translating" potential "indigenous narratives" into an "audiovisual language;" or about the eventual and unintended reproduction of dominant assumptions such as the need to work "professionally" or to produce videos with "technical quality." Self questioning also involves working toward innovative proposals to challenge aesthetic, narrative or thematic aspects of video production –for example, experimenting with natural locations and cinematographic resources, electing topics more related to indigenous peoples' life experience, including cultural references throughout the film, developing oral stories, and even avoiding popular culture aesthetic references that are doubtlessly part of indigenous people's life, but that rarely appear in Plan Nacional films.

Chapter 6. Indigenous video production: a negotiation within visual cultures



Figure 20. Indigenous communicators shooting images of the Puerta del Sol in the ruins of Tiwanaku, a celebrated symbol of ancient Andean peoples. (Courtesy CEFREC-CAIB).

"*Me avergüenzan tus polleras*" (I am ashamed of your traditional petticoat skirt), read a large sign in the Prado Avenue of La Paz announcing a popular play at the Municipal Theater. A billboard of a middle class *paceña* family drew attention to the older woman dressing in a *chola* or indigenous outfit, characterized by a *pollera* skirt, *manta* shawl, braids, and a hat. Together with the title, the picture would let one guess a melodramatic story of class and ethnic discrimination within mestizo urban families.

This popular image, produced after a theater play script by Juan Barrera (1998), also synthesizes a common reference to class and racial tensions in national imaginaries. This sign is one of the numerous references of indigeneity that are consumed in Bolivia as means for popular entertainment, as commercial attractions for tourists, as folkloric references to national belonging, or as attempts for cultural expression. These saturated, excessive and multiple possibilities to represent and consume indigeneity take active part in producing and transforming national imaginaries about indigenous peoples.

A central question of this chapter is how indigenous video, in its attempts to create different aesthetic and content forms in their videos, is at the same time embedded in a world saturated with images and other forms of representing indigeneity: How do indigenous media in Bolivia establish a conversation with all these depictions? How do indigenous media appropriate, incorporate, challenge, or subvert them? And, what are the contradictions and tensions implied in this process? Summarizing, how does indigenous video produced by the Plan Nacional relate to displays of indigeneity in Bolivia's everyday life? I suggest that the ways in which indigenous communicators appropriate,

contest or challenge such references of indigenusness provide important information to understand their use of communication to produce desirable ideas of the political future.

For the purpose of this Chapter it is important explaining the difference between what I refer to as "representation" and "symbol." I take the concept of "representation" as the action of presenting or displaying (re-presenting) a fixed object. For example, the technological quality of photography, film and video allows these media to re-present or capture concrete objects. Yet the social uses of these technologies go far beyond the act of representing. In the case of the Plan Nacional, the emphasis on "communication" permits explaining the active, transforming, future-oriented and ultimately political possibilities of such technologies. The concept of "symbol" is a key aspect of communication practices because, as opposed to "representation," it evokes or refers to changing ideas and concepts: it has no fixed meanings.

This Chapter provides an overview of visual images of indigenous peoples in Bolivian art, film, and media in different historical moments. It then presents responses from indigenous communicators and leaders to popular, commercial, tourist, and other common references of indigeneity. Finally, it discusses how in their search to innovate and to express their own audiovisual voice, communicators also borrow aesthetic, narrative, and dramatic elements from other audiovisual genres.

Indigeneity and national imagery

Indigenous people have been represented in numerous ways in Bolivia's history, often according to their relationship to national projects. For instance, the indigenous presence in literature, film, and painting from 1920 to the late 1940s was marked by

indigenista references to indigenous peoples as mysterious, pure, strong, mystical, or earthy (Vargas 2007). Examples of these kinds of works were *Raza de Bronce* written by Alcides Arguedas in 1919 and the literary work of Jesús Lara and Carlos Medinacelli among others (Figure 21). These authors were influenced by indigenista and mestizo nationalist theories developed by Bolivian authors like Franz Tamayo, who were also informed by other Latin American indigenista thinkers like José María Arguedas from Peru and Manuel Gamio, José Vasconcelos and Andrés Molina Enríquez from Mexico. These works portray the conditions of oppression that characterized Andean indigenous peoples' lives, as well as their struggles, during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. They depict indigenous characters as noble, brave and unfortunate people who have to fight continuously against the abuses of landlords. Detailed and idealized descriptions of Andean landscapes and communities in these pieces accentuate realism as a way to depict suffering.



Figure 21. Cover of Raza de Bronce

Also influenced by indigenista theories and literature, early film production in Bolivia addressed indigenous topics. Silent productions like *Corazón Aymara* (Aymara Heart, 1925), *La Profecía del Lago* (The Lake Prophecy, 1925), *La Gloria de la Raza* (The Glory of the Race, 1926), and *Wara Wara* (1930) portrayed indigenous stories, for instance through recreating a glorious past of Inca, Tiwanaku and Aymara cultures. Some of these films focused on hapless "encounters," often depicted through love stories, between indigenous cultures and Spanish conquerors as in *Wara Wara*; and indigenous servants with rich families as in *La Profecía del Lago* (Himpele 2008; Mesa 1985).

Bolivian anthropologist Miriam Vargas explains how indigenista painting from the 1930s by artists like Cecilio Guzmán de Rojas centered on representing Andean landscapes and indigenous bodies, often creating a visual combination of these two elements. For example, Indian faces with stylized racial features would evoke rocky Andean mountains, and rounded landscapes suggested a fusion with indigenous female forms. These kinds of characterizations of the Indian body as related to the landscape allowed for depicting an earthy image of Andean indigenous peoples (Vargas 2007).

From the 1940s to the early 1950s, Bolivian cinema was still influenced by indigenista approaches, although this period was characterized by ethnographic film styles developed, for example, in the extraordinary work of Jorge Ruiz. Documentaries like *Los Urus* (The Urus, 1951) about an isolated Andean people, and *Vuelve Sebastiana*, (Come Back Sebastiana, 1953) about the tensions between the Chipaya people and the predominant Aymara culture in the highlands. These tensions are illustrated through a fictional story of a Chipaya girl who befriends an Aymara boy and goes with him to his community provoking preoccupation in her family.

After the 1952 National Revolution, Vargas notes that earthy references to the Indian were replaced by images of the "peasant integrated in the national project" both in official discourses and in visual arts. As in influential Mexican mural painting loaded with socialist realist features, the subjects of Bolivian mural painting by Miguel Alandia Pantoja are workers, miners and peasants economically active in the nation. Such images transformed passive indigenista depictions into images of revolutionary action. In these murals, mythical symbols like the condor are used to represent revolutionary power. Another example Vargas analyzes is the muralist painting of Walter Solón Romero, which celebrates the revolutionary triumph through an integrationist vision of peasants from different regions unified by nationalist symbols. In Solón's murals, peasants with muscular bodies depicted with books, scientific objects, machines and legal documents provide a utopian image of a mestizo progressive nation (Vargas 2007). Through an analysis of the *Album Fotográfico de la Revolución*, Silvia Rivera-Cusicanqui also examines revolutionary references to indigenous images. She notes that in the Album's historical visual account, images of indigenous peoples and communities are used to depict a miserable past which, through the National Revolution, should be overcome by forging a single national mestizo race (Rivera-Cusicanqui 2004:84).

In film, the national revolutionary project also diminished the emphasis on documenting indigenous realities, especially after the consolidation of the Bolivian Film Institute ICB (Instituto Cinematográfico Boliviano) in 1953. Instead, as mural artists, filmmakers sought to portray the identities of the new revolutionary national project: peasants, miners and workers. Jorge Ruiz himself, together with José Antonio Valdivia, Oscar Soria, other Bolivian filmmakers, and even with Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada –then

filmmaker and later President of Bolivia from 2002 to 2003- were hired by the ICB to produce official films for the national revolutionary project. This is how films like *Las Montañas no Cambian* (Mountains Don't Change, 1962) represent, in a nationalist propaganda tone, the positive and hopeful changes that the National Revolution could bring to the lives of workers, miners and peasants (Valdivia 1998).

In response to film production as official propaganda, filmmakers like Oscar Soria and Jorge Sanjinés created in 1961 the Grupo Ukamau, producing a great number of films that brought back a dramatic and yet compelling image of revolutionary subjects such as miners, workers and peasants. Sanjinés and Grupo Ukamau emphasized the class and ethnic discrimination against these characters by situating them in the history of Bolivia. *El Coraje del Pueblo* (The Courage of the People, 1971) dramatically reconstructs the San Juan massacre that the government of dictator René Barrientos ordered against miners in the mining camp Siglo XX and neighboring town, Llallagua, in the Department of Potosí, in June of 1967. *Ukamau* (That's the way it is, 1966) is the story of an hacienda overseer that rapes an indigenous woman and then is avenged by the woman's husband. Both *Yawar Mallku* (Blood of the Condor, 1966), and *Fuera de Aquí!* (Get out of Here!, 1977) address United States campaigns of forced sterilization against indigenous population. The influential approach to indigenous realities cinematographically displayed through innovative narrative and aesthetic strategies situates the work of Jorge Sanjinés and Grupo Ukamau as one of the main representatives of the Latin American revolutionary film movement (Burton 1986; Himpele 2008; Mesa 1985).

Official references to indigenous peoples returned to the scene in governmental discourses from 1970. As Vargas explained, this happened through welfare and development campaigns that started to use naive, realistic, and cartoon images of the Indian for "educational" –or rather civilizing- materials such as flyers and booklets about hygiene, health, and agricultural and productive work. Vargas notes that images of indigenous people in these booklets reinforce racial, ethnic or gender stereotypes about indigenous people. For example, hygiene campaigns use flyers with illustrations of indigenous children with dirty clothes, messy hair, sick, and sitting on the floor; to contrast them with "clean" images to show how they would look after following hygiene methods (Vargas 2007a).

Another example of the presence of indigenous, and particularly mestizo peoples, in national politics from the late 1980s was the television program *Tribuna Libre* (Open Tribunal), where urban popular classes –often urban indigenous migrants from El Alto- would expose their problems, get the sympathetic support of viewers and show hosts, and even get some immediate solutions through the links between the program and the Condepa populist political party. This show was produced by El Compadre Carlos Palenque, a political representative of Condepa; and hosted, among others, by La Chola Remedios, a mestizo or Chola woman who also became an important representative of Condepa. As Himpele demonstrates in his detailed ethnography of this show, both Condepa and *Tribuna Libre* "appeared alongside the populism of official 'neoliberal multiculturalism' in the Law of Popular Participation, a decentralizing political reform that arguably honed the state's capacity to assimilate difference into ambient clientelist political structures" (2008: 36). This popular TV show, which remained on the air for

more than eighteen years, was a media display of the "alterity of indigeneity" through having a chola host and including monolingual Aymara- or Quechua-speaking guests discussing social problems. This media display permitted merging the heterogeneity of poor indigenous and urban mestizo classes into a popular, mestizo idea in order to reenact political culture and relate it to national imagery.

In dialogue with this variety of references by writers, filmmakers, painters, and television producers during the twentieth century, contemporary visual, sound, and performative displays in Bolivia have a strong presence of indigenous elements. These displays depict indigenous peoples caricaturized, exaggerated, ridiculed, or essentialized and as solemn, vulgar, ordinary, or sacred. As discussed in Chapter 2, especially from the late 1980s, "the return of the Indian within Bolivia's contemporary narrative of nation" (Bigenho 2002:5) took place both through official neoliberal discourses around the acknowledgment of indigenous plurality in the National Constitution, as well as through a growing indigenous participation in the social struggles and that led to Morales' government. During this time other visual depictions of indigeneity became more active in Bolivia's national imagery, acquiring a significant presence in daily life, popular culture, media, tourism, and politics. Such was the case of the Virgin of Urkupiña celebration, which after being an indigenous cult became the "Patron of National Integration" (Lagos 1993). Another example of how indigenous references have been appropriated at a national level is the enthusiastic participation of indigenous and non indigenous people in entradas or folkloric parades. As Lagos suggests, these "symbolic" processes take place within concrete power relations and struggles over meanings, values,

and practices within "a cultural arena of contestation in which [...] hegemony is constituted" through particular historical transformations (1993:66).

The following section explores how characterizations of indigeneity inhabit Bolivian cities, what are the power and historical relations that inform such references, and how indigenous media relate to them.

Excessive indigeneity: commercial, popular, tourist and folkloric images

A first way to approach the question of how indigenous media build upon other images of Indians was to gather responses to popular and everyday visual references of indigeneity from Plan Nacional members. I proposed developing a series of workshops with communicators and leaders to analyze together various kinds of images of indigenous peoples. They agreed and we organized two workshops during 2007: one of two days with around 20 young indigenous communicators from the eastern departments of Santa Cruz, Beni and Pando; and the other of one day in the city of Sucre as part of the Communication Strategy activities with around 50 experienced indigenous communicators and national indigenous leaders. The workshops proposed analyzing images of indigenous peoples in different historical and social scenarios: images of the Indian in scientific and ethnographic projects; gender and ethnic issues related to these pictures; uses of indigenous images in indigenista and nationalist projects; touristy images of the Indian; popular references to the Indian; ethnographic and collaborative photographic and film projects; and indigenous processes of media appropriation.

Workshop participants expressed a particular concern around consumption practices of indigenous images among the general public. An interesting realm of consumption of

these kinds of images is tourism. Tourist areas in cities are filled with indigenous-related references to attract international visitors: stores sell alpaca clothing, textiles, pottery, and other objects evoking, or stylizing indigenous handcrafts. Other tourist businesses sell postcards and posters of Aymara children posing with cute llamas (Figure 22). Travel agencies use large posters and photo collages combining indistinctly images of highland and lowland Indians, regional fauna, Andean and Amazonian landscapes. Workshop participants analyzed for example how such tourist images use portraits of native people for commercial purposes, objectifying them as part of natural landscapes and regional fauna (Figure 23).

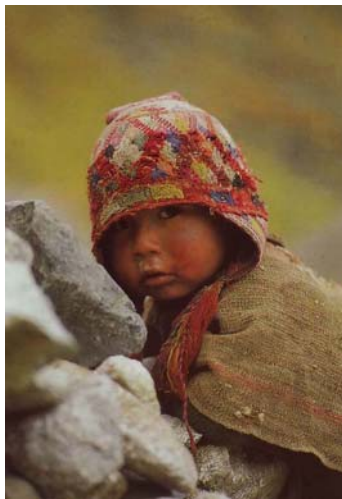


Figure 22. Postcard of indigenous child.



Figure 23. Tourist flyer (right)

Attractive images of indigenous people, an Aymara participant observed, "show the curiosity that indigenous people provoke in others." But he noted that these images are

often misrepresentations that reinforce negative stereotypes about them as "savage" and "promiscuous."

They show us indigenous peoples in attractive images. We have to analyze, to oppose images that show us as savages, as people who don't understand, as promiscuous women and families, all kind of negative things they say about us. Just now we start the process of changing things.

This comment interestingly explains the "curiosity" as a lack of knowledge about indigenous peoples, an aspect that contributes to the misinformed consumption of "negative stereotypes" about them. Specific comments about tourism or documentary images of native women focused on how images are used in discriminatory ways to sexualize women, or to show them obedient, miserable, or poor. A female communicator from Potosí commented on a picture of a bare-breasted indigenous woman grinding grain in the Bolivian lowlands:

Every image has different interpretations. I can understand from these pictures that it's the lowland Amazonian region, that women do their work with their available resources. But a macho view would rather be attracted by the fact that the compañera in the picture has no clothing. Stores use pictures of naked woman and of indigenous women. Women with ideal commercial body measures look firm, while indigenous women appear sitting, subdued. Images quickly impact us but it all depends on how each person interprets them. Sometimes we don't know how to analyze them.

This argument refers to the open-ending quality of photography, an aspect that escapes the image itself and which depends on particular consumption or circulation practices. Building on this comment, other female participants observed how images themselves are constructed in discriminatory ways by relating indigenous women to elements that evoke either misery or a sexualized view.

Another realm of consumption that workshop participants discussed was popular images of the Indian. They analyzed comic films, TV shows and public spectacles that both ridicule and sympathize with indigenous characters, such as Mexican films by La India María, theater comic plays produced by Tralala Company and actor David Santalla in Bolivia, recent female wrestling or cachascán spectacles by Las Cholitas del Ring in Bolivia, and particularly the highly consumed Cholo Juanito comic TV shows and public performances in Peru and Bolivia. For example, one of the clips screened at the workshop for discussion introduced a Cholo Juanito program with a simulation of a "Wanted!" poster that calls:

Wanted! This is the Cholo Juanito. Alias: the llama's armpit. Wanted: because his species is in danger. He has to go back to his town to reproduce himself. His town: originally from Chacachaca. His species: llama sapiens erectus. And he is very dangerous because he wants to become a President!

This clip plays with popular and "scientific" references to race. On the one hand, the alias reference to the Cholo Juanito as "llama's armpit" evokes the popular racist insult against Andean people as 'llama' or 'llama face' (cara de llama). On the other hand, it refers to him as belonging to a "species," as if he were an animal or belonged to a non-

human race. At the same time, this clip portrays the Cholo as a criminal sought by justice, warning society against the risk of his becoming a President (an oblique reference to Peruvian president Alejandro Toledo in Peru or Evo Morales in Bolivia.) While this reference appeals to humor through displaying racist claims, it might be also making fun of right-wing fears about indigenous peoples taking governmental power.

One of the questions for this workshop section was: how "indigenous video" in Bolivia describes itself as different from this Cholo Juanito series, which is also video acted by indigenous characters, often speaking Quechua, and produced in indigenous communities or urban areas. And, why is something that plays with racist or discriminatory stereotypes against indigenous people in order to be humorous so highly consumed by indigenous people themselves? Workshop participants discussed the commercial aspect of these kinds of shows, observing that people often consume things without thinking much how these can be discriminatory against themselves. Others commented that indigenous people producing series like Cholo Juanito do not necessarily believe or take seriously the discriminatory tone of their production, but that they use such elements to catch the attention of audiences to ultimately sell their videos. In this regard, one participant pointed at the political ambiguity of people who both participate in indigenous movements and yet consume discriminatory spectacles:

I get upset because there you see long lines of people waiting to spend their money to see, for example, Cholo Juanito. I wonder why people feel so attracted by those things, or by Palenque or La Chola Remedios TV shows [a populist melodramatic show called Open Tribunal linked to the Condepa populist political party.] That's something I've never understood. For example, it's like when people from El Alto

can take up arms, and at the same time vote for MIR [Revolutionary Left Movement] or other right-wing parties.⁴⁶ There is a lot of contradiction in that.

This comment questions the politics of indigenous audiences' consumption practices by asking "why people like" television shows that reproduce discriminatory stereotypes against indigenous people. This practice, they explained, denotes a politically contradictory action. Such observations reveal that visual representations, as well as political practices themselves, do not take place in a coherent reality. They rather exist in relation to contingent and contradictory social processes, as well as in relation to individual people's contradicting appreciations and ideas. Participants also argued that these kinds of images have motivated indigenous communicators to work toward breaking negative popular stereotypes. In this regard, another experienced Aymara communicator suggested that they themselves needed to be more critical in their consumption practices:

Sometimes we make fun of ourselves, without thinking. Indigeneity is not to make fun or to make a commercial message. And the worst thing is that we are the ones who buy and consume without even thinking.

These comments demonstrate that indigenous communication within the Plan Nacional is in dialogue with existing media characterizations of indigeneity, seeking to contest or depict differently those which denigrate their image. At the same time, these

⁴⁶ The Revolutionary Left Movement MIR (Movimiento de la Izquierda Revolucionaria) is an initially left party that later disassociated itself from class struggles to become conservative.

responses suggest that alternative depictions imply specific assumptions on issues like "authenticity," "authority," or "accuracy" about how to represent indigenous peoples in less negative ways. As I will discuss in the following sections, these assumptions risk falling in rather static, essentialist, or celebratory notions about the "right way" of representing indigeneity which are also present in Plan Nacional productions.

Another aspect that these comments refer to is the issue of humor. In contrast to tourist or folkloric representations of indigeneity based on solemn, ritual or exotic images; popular images tend to depict humorous, caricaturesque, or ridiculing images—in addition to melodramatic ones. As discussed in the case of the Cholo Juanito TV show, a trick of popular comedy to be funny is to simplify and bring together stereotypes and assumptions already existing in society, and to play with them through visual and narrative resources such as exaggeration, emphasis, or repetition. Although these comic resources reproduce issues like racial stereotypes against indigenous people, it is also true that in general they build complicity with popular and indigenous audiences. For example, the large number of films by La India María in Mexico narrate the adventures of an indigenous woman living and working in Mexico City. Like the Cholo Juanito, she is depicted as innocent, uneducated, unable to speak good Spanish because of her indigenous native language, and non-conversant with urban social codes. This depiction ridicules and exaggerates her way of speaking, her clothing, her innocence that often implies stupidity, and her provincial way of relating to the rich people whom she serves. All these features accentuate the racial, ethnic, class and gender stereotypes in Mexican society. At the same time, this depiction also makes La India María a popular hero. Through her innocent, provincial and well intended attitude she always ends up

unmasking thieves, corrupt businessmen and functionaries, or the ambitious relatives of the rich old people for whom she works. This narrative aspect engages popular audiences who live and face similar situations of discrimination and adaptation in urban life. In her films, not only La India María is ridiculed, but also rich people, corrupt functionaries, and ambitious urban characters living in Mexico City. This example shows that popular comic TV shows and theater are complex depictions of different social groups, and not monolithic negative images of indigenous people. As I will discuss later in this Chapter, although Plan Nacional videos include subtle humorous references, most narrative treatments are rather solemn, and have not experimented much with genres like comedy or with humorous references in general.

Another topic of interest among workshop participants was the discussion about folkloric manifestations that "appropriate" indigenous celebrations, clothing, music and dances, such as the folkloric parades and video-clips. Although they acknowledged the value of folkloric parades for making indigenous cultures visible, participants also discussed issues like cultural property, authenticity, the economic and status aspects of folkloric performances, the implications of performing culture as spectacle, and the eclecticism of folklore. "Once the Cholitas del Ring [indigenous female wrestlers] came to Potosí," recalled a female communicator.

I was admiring their paceño traditional dress from La Paz when I noticed that their braids were not well done, the hat was worn differently, and there I noticed that they were 'fake cholitas.' The Cholitas del Ring are 'transformers:' they are not really indigenous, they get disguised. They just dress like us to denigrate our image and to make us look ridiculous, to sell.

It is common among Andean women from different regions who normally dress in traditional clothing to pay attention to the differences of traditional dresses and accessories from other regions. The paceño dress, consisting mainly of long pollera skirt, colorful shawl and a small bowler hat, causes particular admiration among women from Potosí and Chuquisaca. Because of the attention they pay to traditional clothing, the communicator from Potosí noted that the Cholita del Ring clothing was "fake" or "a disguise" by the way she wore the hat and hairdo. Clothing becomes such a marker of identity that people often use it to make reference to women's ethnicity: "she was una señora de pollera" (a woman who wears traditional pollera skirt) is usually used to describe indigenous women in opposition to "es una señora de vestido" (a woman who wears a regular dress), term used to refer to mestizo women. The term "transformer" is used to describe those people –particularly women- who usually wear regular vestido or Western clothes, and who dress or "disguise themselves" in traditional indigenous clothing for particular situations. In the Cholitas del Ring example, the communicator meant that female wrestlers do not normally dress in traditional clothing, but only do it to be attractive and to ultimately sell by looking funny doing acrobatics in indigenous clothing. As I discuss later in this Chapter, all these complex visual details link the issue of "authority," by questioning who speaks for indigenous groups, to the issue of "authenticity," by discussing whether the Cholitas del Ring are truly engaged with an indigenous identity –expressed in their daily clothing- or not. Although the relationship between authority and authenticity risks falling in essentialist assumptions, in this case

these two issues function to take a critical stand against exploiting a reference that can be clearly identified as "indigenous" for commercial purposes.

The discussion about authenticity also relates to the question of "cultural property." While some communicators argued that folkloric expressions "appropriated" "traditional" dances like morenada or diablada, others voiced their concern about the new status and economic meanings that such cultural expressions are acquiring, as a young communicator from Cochabamba explained:

Morenada dancing in La Paz is a display of economic power, since 1993 it has acquired a different meaning. A cholita dancer has on her more than 120 dollars, so this is not any more about saving indigenous culture. The pollera traditional skirt is an invention of the Spanish Colony. The Gran Poder folkloric celebration has become stronger because there is an economic movement that supports it.

These comments refer to the discussion on the power relations in which traditional celebrations take place. While some people suggest that indigenous cultures have certain ownership of morenada and diablada dances, others are more attentive to how the reappropriation of these traditions among wealthier social groups transforms their initial "traditional" meaning. Indeed, these appropriations are not at all totalizing. As in Lagos' (1993) example of the Virgin of Urkupiña, folkloric parades have become an "arena of contestation" where many different social groups struggle over their meanings.

The claims of ownership that these indigenous communicators make constitute a contesting practice in different regions of Bolivia, as a Chiquitano leader from Eastern Bolivia noted:

In the city [Santa Cruz] there are folkloric festivals with theater and dances. For instance, the Festival Elay Pue has stylized dances with rhythm and choreography, but it atrophies the name of the Chiquitano dance. As when people talk in the name of the Chiquitano people without even knowing them. That's where the issue of indigenous rights comes up.

In relation to folkloric manifestations, another Aymara communicator observed that folkloric video-clips relate to a process of reconstructing "authenticity" without being "authentic."

What I see in those videos is hybrid. One notes that they use indigenous elements to give flavor, for example, with a cholita who is not really cholita, with a kitchen that looks like rural but is not... those are references to authenticity, but they are not authentic.

Both comments argue that folkloric manifestations take dances and symbolic elements "to give flavor," meaning, to look beautiful, appealing, or colorful, yet these are detached from the culture and context in which they were created. As participants note, this transformation often implies to lose particular cultural meanings. For this reason, the first comment relates the folklorization of Chiquitano dances to the issue of "indigenous rights," suggesting cultural ownership as a right of indigenous peoples. Although it is hard to measure or demonstrate how "indigenous" or "traditional" a cultural expression is, it is interesting that such issue is now considered in legal terms as a cultural right. In this

case, legal terms start to be mobilized as one more strategy of contestation over cultural expressions.

In addition to consumption practices around indigenous images, workshop discussions often led to interesting debates on "tradition," "authenticity," and "hybridity" in which young participants in particular struggled to define ideas that are common identity politics-based discourses such as "getting back to our roots," "losing our culture," "getting back to our indigenous identity," or "ancestral cosmovision." While some participants argued for "getting back to their autochthonous [originario] identity and traditions," an idea that suggests an imaginary return to a fix past, most of them acknowledged that "there are no isolated, authentic cultures;" and that every depiction uses mixed and often contradictory indigenous and non-indigenous elements. Finally, they agreed that culture is not stable, and that the search for identity often risks misrepresenting indigeneity either in negative or romantic ways.

In the discussion, a young Guaraní communicator observed that culture is not exclusive to an indigenous identity through the following comment:

Customs get practiced everyday, also at school. If people think culture will get lost, or if we don't have traditional customs anymore, that's also part of our culture. That's why we have to try and understand more of ourselves, to understand our country more.

This argument interestingly challenges static and essentialist views of culture as attached to fixed and monolithic ideas of indigenous tradition and past. Adding to this argument, a young indigenous communicator living in the city of Cochabamba explained:

I see that a culture gets created, for instance, by people who go to university, and that's where they define a more stylized way of doing films. I sometimes ask myself if there is something authentically indigenous, or if it's better to assume that there are no isolated cultures because we live in globalization. Then I think that richness is based on acknowledging that there are diverse manifestations, that things should not be only one way. If we young people listen to Metallica or reggaetón, how far can we go back to reaffirm indigeneity? For many people from my generation, this is the third generation of indigenous people who have migrated to the city. And that's why I ask myself, how can we talk about going back to our own identity?

Although this communicator acknowledges the existence of a dominant culture through comments like the existence of "a culture that gets created by people who goes to university," he suggests that global cultural references like "Metallica or reggaetón" are not necessarily bad for indigenous peoples. Furthermore, he questions if there is a possible way to "get back to his own [indigenous] identity" after having grown up in interaction with so many other cultural references. Another Chiquitano communicator agreed with this argument by saying:

I think it's hard to think about how to get back to our roots when everything is already too mixed, when we receive information from so many different places.

In response, a Guaraní leader defended the need to protect indigenous forms of knowledge without having to "get back" or stop being who they are now:

I say that it's not about getting back, but about maintaining, moving forward. What I mean is that we want to be included as we are now, to protect our culture. It's true that our dressing changes, all that, but our cosmovision is there, and it's important to take our knowledge back.

This leader also implies an understanding of culture as dynamic, but positions himself in favor of "protecting" and "moving forward" with existing indigenous cultures and knowledges. As opposed to the meaning of fixed past suggested by other participants' references for "going back" to their roots, the idea of "moving forward" suggests an active imagination of possible futures. Another Guaraní participant supported this argument through the example of technological appropriation and indigenous audiovisual media:

This is all about knowledge related to an ancestral cosmovision that has remained for generations. We can show our lives now, appropriate new technologies because others also take advantage of indigenous richness. Our culture can be adapted to new technology. It's also a search, when we think about identity we try to represent in images something too pure, and then we fall in exaggeration, exotization, and also we fall in idealist or purist imaginaries.

While other workshop participants focused on the ways in which people have appropriated indigenous images and traditions in order to commercialize them or to create a sense of regional and national belonging; this participant proposes to appropriate a non-indigenous element, audiovisual technology, precisely as a medium to "take

advantage of indigenous richness." This debate among indigenous communicators and leaders about existing depictions of indigenous peoples proves that their communication work involves assuming a critical role as consumers and producers of images. This positioning is one more element that permits identifying the meaning of politics in indigenous communication as a series of practices that aim at transforming the national understandings and imaginaries of indigeneity in Bolivia.

The challenges of media appropriation

A major challenge that workshop participants noted was to critically read images of indigenous people, and to understand how these images are also part of their own thinking. These kinds of concerns were more present in workshops with older leaders and political representatives. Ideas about "strengthening our identity" and working to break stereotypes through communication and political work were explained as options to overcome such challenges. "Discrimination was very strong when I came to the city to work as a domestic worker, I was criticized about my clothing," explained a constituent representative.

Then I entered the organization and started to become conscious, to value. To realize that people have destroyed us, broken us in pieces, they have changed our names, they even discriminate against us because of our last names. Education in school is discriminatory. That's why we need to recover our identity. We never talk about indigenous people, but we seek to live differently, we don't speak our languages anymore. When we see how history about us is told, it's from a different vision, based on images that have colonized us. That's why our sister said that we are

ashamed of what we are. We should strengthen our identity and what we are in order to change colonial mentality. We are the result of colonialism and discrimination. Furthermore, we have discriminated against ourselves, for instance, when we go to college we stop wearing our traditional pollera skirts. This shows that we are colonized in our minds. Hopefully these images will help us think about strengthening our identity.

In response to this comment, an Aymara videomaker provided some examples through which the Plan Nacional communication work can help to challenge discriminatory images of indigenous peoples:

We have been working as communicators because we want to show a different face, the other face, our face. That's why our process is collective and our materials focus on how we will represent ourselves. We work with the community, with people's voice and testimonials about their situation. It's a labor that seeks to recover historical memory, in which leaders from each national organization participate. Then the process belongs to organizations, communities, peoples, and we count on the technical support of our compañeros.

This account exemplifies the communication strategies deployed, such as collective work with communities, organizations, and "técnicos" as well as an emphasis on indigenous peoples' historical memory. In response to this mission, participants discussed the challenges that discriminatory visual depictions pose to "indigenous communication," and the possibilities that the political context since the 2000 social movements can offer

to overcome them. "I see that part of the challenge is to propose from our own view," said an indigenous leader from Oruro.

Because, what does it mean to exoticize? To look from the outside, like a stranger.

And sometimes we reproduce that view unintentionally. Since we are building forms of seeing we should also think about that.

He explained that this goal carries the permanent risk of reproducing exaggerated or negative stereotypes of indigenous peoples, an aspect that the following sections will discuss in depth.

As this section has described, workshop debates on visual depictions of indigenous peoples acknowledge two main challenges. One is to promote critical consumption practices of popular, commercial, and media images of the Indian both among indigenous and general audiences. The second one is to produce, as indigenous communicators, quality and original images that break with colonial, discriminatory, or even essentialist characterizations. This kind of debate does not only take place in formal workshops: it is always present among indigenous videomakers. The following section discusses how the issue of presentation emerges in everyday working activities at the Plan Nacional.

Accuracy and fairness: the traps of media appropriation

During intensive three-week communication workshops organized by the Plan Nacional, participants often listen to chicha music or watch folkloric video-clips in their spare time. One morning in the Cochabamba training center of the Plan Nacional, one of the communicators arrived with a new pirated DVD of Grupo Alborada, a popular

Peruvian group that uses Inca and Apache-like clothing, musical instruments, and ritual objects. The group members sing ballads and imitate shamanic chants in Quechua and Spanish in scenarios that project video landscapes of Andean mountains, Lake Titicaca, and Andean animals like condors, in order to produce a loaded musical spectacle. A couple of communicators surrounded the large monitor with curiosity, and started chatting about the video. Some of them saw the spectacle as a genuine expression of indigenous culture because of clothing, language, and landscapes. As the discussion went on, some communicators noted that it was not an "authentic" Inca dance. The DVD owner argued that he liked it precisely because it shows some Native American (i.e., Apache) instruments and clothing. But others thought that the dance, based on jumping around the scene, was exaggerated. Somebody else noted that lighting and colors made the spectacle appealing but quite fake. The discussion went on with examples that communicators used to argue that the Kharkhas Bolivian group was more "authentic" and that it produced "actual" quality music; or that Rijchari had more interesting words.

This situation, together with the examples cited in the previous section, expresses casual and formal debates among indigenous communicators about the challenge of representing indigeneity fairly and critically. Communicators do not miss the opportunity to comment among themselves when they notice exaggerated or "non-real" images of indigeneity in videos, and even in their colleagues' public presentation. By discussing these and other examples, this section presents the kinds of questions, situations and challenges that indigenous videomakers face in their attempts to develop their own depictions about indigenous peoples.

Media appropriation and personal appearance

Indigenous communicators often joke among themselves about somebody who participated in an international film festival and "disguised" himself with a chullo or indigenous hat and a poncho; or talk about a videomaker working and living in the city who introduces himself to an audience as a modest peasant. At the same time it was interesting to note the weight that communicators gave to receiving Plan Nacional press IDs and vests –which communicators wear neatly and proudly at every public event or videotaped program (Figure 24). Such accessories not only meant for communicators practical access to exclusive official press spaces, but also a symbolic possibility to authenticate them as serious "professionals" by visually displaying their indigenous clothing and physical appearance next to "professional" media people.



Figure 24. CAIB communicators promoting information campaigns at a national television channel, La Paz, July 2006. (Courtesy CEFREC-CAIB).

Various authors have analyzed the role of personal appearance in media appropriation processes. For instance, Turner notes that "representation has a performative function" when Kayapo videomakers from Brazil make "ostentatious use of their own video cameras to record the same events being filmed by representatives of the national and international media" (2002: 85). In a similar line of thinking, Himpele observes that indigenous videomakers from Bolivia "perform the role of videographers" while documenting their events at international screenings (2008: 206). The fact that a communicator attends and videotapes events "wearing his photographer's vest and holding an impressive Canon XLI digital video camera with its uniquely prominent lens on his shoulder," Himpele argues, demonstrates communicators being "active subjects of cultures in motion," against the idea of indigenous cultures as "singular," "past" and "static" (2008:188).

The public use and display of indigenous artifacts like gala ponchos, textiles, hats, or feather adornments is often combined with the operation of modern technological objects like video or photographic cameras and laptop computers, and with the use of professional elements like press IDs and vests. This presentation contrasts with stereotypical images that represent the Indian as passive, rural, or non professional. On the one hand, these practices imply an undeniable issue of pride, access, and status. On the other hand, these practices, that other authors would explain as "strategic essentialism" (Warren and Jackson 2002) or "strategic indigenisme de parcours" (Ramos 1998: 117), are also a political mechanism of self-presentation to reinforce the image of indigenous peoples as active, modern, and technologically savvy political subjects.

Therefore, as Turner argues, these mechanisms of self-representation accomplish a "performative" function.

Nevertheless, the examples mentioned above demonstrate that this "performative" function is not a coherent strategy that communicators use for positioning themselves, but rather a contentious mechanism of political action. Edelman addresses a similar issue in his discussion on peasants and modernity by discussing whether "peasant leaders" are really peasants (1999). He suggests that beyond an issue of authenticating peoples' peasant-ness, these questions pose the challenge of approaching "'peasant-ness' as a claim loaded with political and cultural significance," which requires analyzing "the moments in which the claim is largely accepted and those in which it becomes a focus of contention" (1999: 195-6).

The examples mentioned in this section show that indigenous communicators display additional indigenous references through their personal presentation, often together with professional or technological elements that present them to others as active subjects of indigenous movements in Bolivia. It is worth noting that there is also an internal awareness of "exaggeration" or "reenactment" that manifests itself through jokes or comments that take part in an active, contentious debate among indigenous communicators on how to represent indigeneity, and how to represent themselves as political subjects.

Producing and certifying accuracy: the "expert" view

Sitting in community video screenings next to a communicator or to a community member I would usually receive a rich stream of commentary on the film. As the first

scene started I would feel a soft tap on my elbow, then the person on my side would lean toward me to whisper about the main character: "You see? We couldn't find a pollera from Chuquisaca, so she's wearing one from Potosí." The comments would go on and on about an exaggerated dress, a fake textile, a hat worn the wrong way, an acted, non-real yatiri reading coca leaves, a forced native accent, a non-regional music, a reenacted celebration, a potato harvest in the wrong time of the year, and so on. All these details that escape the attention of most urban spectators are loudly discussed in community screenings, and are a source of humor that often breaks into general laughter. The emphasis on details constitutes a kind of authority or cultural "policing" that has a strong weight for establishing symbolic boundaries about how "right" depictions should look according to insiders.

As happens with every viewer's attention to non-authentic and implausible elements in films, during video screenings it was common to see communicators pointing at details of things that might look funny because they are acted or not realistic. For example, once a video showed a videomaker acting as a nut collector in the Amazonian region. But the videomaker was from the highlands, and he had not worked in agricultural activities for a long time. Therefore, at the moment of carrying a heavy sac filled with nuts, his gestures denote a visible physical effort, and he looks as if he sinks to the ground because of the heavy load. This scene remained a joke for all his colleagues, who laughingly commented and pointed at his image every time the video was screened: "look, he is really sinking to the ground, good thing the camera cut on time, otherwise he would've disappeared."

When videomakers talk critically about some video production they often fall into debates about how a particular adaptation of an oral story had misrepresented or

misunderstood a key part of the "original" one. Similar evaluations of accuracy take place when working collectively on a script, and during the production process itself. For instance, a shot would be repeated because somebody noticed that the main heroic character carried a bag with a visible American label: "put it backwards," somebody would note, to hide the label for a "cleaner" or more "authentic," image of a non-Westernized protagonist. These concerns for producing "cleaner" depictions of indigeneity have been present throughout the history of images about indigenous peoples.⁴⁷

In another production, someone acting as a community leader hit the church bell with the wrong call: "No, this call we use for a regular meeting, you gotta call for an emergency situation," a man remarked. Similar observations take place about actors doing something "wrong" while cooking, or hunting, or healing, or working the land. This way, beyond acting work, production shots are filled with complex details, unreadable to an external person, that finally construct a code with which community audiences will interact, approve or disapprove, believe or laugh at. This permanent dialogue on authenticity builds upon common knowledges and codes that at the end constitute negotiated, ambiguous, but still common mechanisms of self-presentation.

As discussed in Chapter 5, Plan Nacional videos generally avoid or attribute a negative value to references that might threaten or "pollute" specific ideas about indigenous cultures. The rare occasions on which such elements appear in a film, they are used to accentuate the construction of urbanized characters who are losing their identity.

⁴⁷ In photography, a classic example of this is the influential work of Edward Curtis on Native Americans in the early twentieth century, which presents Native Americans as pure, mysterious, and wise people as if "untouched" by modernity.

Such is the case of Antonio, one of the main characters in *Ángeles de la Tierra* (Angels of the Earth, 1997). Antonio's parents sent him from an indigenous community to live in the city when he was still a child. Many years later, his brother Cinchi travelled to look for him. During Cinchi's stay in the city he was accused of participating in a store robbery and put in jail. When policemen called Antonio to post bail for his brother's release, he denied their relationship in order to hide his indigenous origins. After denying his brother, he went to a *chicha* bar and drank himself almost to death.

The characterization of Antonio addresses "polluting" references that menace the "strength of indigenous cultures." These include urban, non-traditional indigenous clothing, and listening to chicha music at the bar. Antonio's antagonistic character is his brother "Cinchi," a name that means "strong" in Quechua. This character is instead loaded with indigenous references in his clothing, language, and lack of familiarity with urban life. Alfredo Copa, the actor for Cinchi, explained proudly that he used his authentic Ayllu clothing, which he only uses in special situations or celebrations, for the interpretation (Figure 25).



Figure 25. Alfredo Copa interpreting Cinchi in Ángeles de la Tierra, Cochabamba, 2003. (Courtesy CEFREC-CAIB).

While many decisions over characterization result out of long debates, others are not even consciously made. Sometimes, videos unintentionally reproduce conventional images and aesthetics when, for example, an editor saturates the frame with words, superimposed images and editing effects; when a cameraman uses conventional melodramatic resources such as slowly zooming in somebody's face when she is crying; or when a program host imitates the loud voice and attitude of conventional TV hosts.

Attempts to oppose conventional stereotypes can also result in exaggerated, essentializing, romantic, exotic, or polarized images of indigenous people as heroic, wise, politically coherent, solidary, natural, and so on. Sometimes indigenous communicators tend to construct images of the Indian as Other, according to specific ideas of what "the accurate," "real," or "autochthonous (originario)" Indian should look like. For example, Bolivia's indigeneity is generally represented through Aymara and Quechua people from the highlands. Only in the early 1990s around thirty different indigenous peoples from the lowlands or Amazonian region started to be more present in national politics, mainly through the national march for land and dignity they organized through their regional organizations. But before that, and even today, indigenous peoples from the lowlands are often addressed by highlanders as *chunchus* or "forest savages," a term originally used by Quechua and Aymara people to describe forest people. In folkloric parades and celebrations in the highlands, dances of *Chunchus* and *Tobas* are simplified versions of what lowland people look like for Andeans: lots of feathers, painted bodies, and jumping around. Indigenous communicators from the highlands also tend to be surprised by "how

autochthonous (*originario*)" people from the lowlands are. For example, Marcelino Pinto, a Quechua migrant living in the Chapare region worked as a school teacher in neighboring Yuracaré communities for four years. He has produced a couple of videos on the Yuracaré people, and often expresses his admiration toward them as being "more autochthonous (*originario*)" or because they have more knowledge of nature. Other videomakers from the Chapare region note that in their communities, populated mostly by Quechua-speaking migrant settlers, Yuracaré people were often discriminated against, or seen as savages. Similarly, Aymara or Quechua-speaking communicators often observe how different their culture is from horticultural, hunting, or fishing practices among Yuracaré, Yuqui, Esse Ejja, or Chácobo forest people. These observations suggest that indigenous peoples in Bolivia are just starting to know each other. Furthermore, comments such as an indigenous group being "more autochthonous (*originario*)," reveal that the encounter between indigenous peoples from different regions is permeated by ideas of otherness that also inform self-presentation processes.

Objects that become symbolic of indigeneity, and especially emblematic of indigenous struggles, are frequently used in videos to accentuate characters and situations. A good example of a video loaded with references to indigenous, and especially Andean indigenous-struggles, is *¿Ahora de Quién es la Verdad?* (Now Whose is the Truth?, 2006), an educational fiction work about the reasons that indigenous organizations had to demand the installation of a Constituent Assembly. Although this video tried to represent with accuracy the history and struggles of indigenous peoples from Bolivia, its production became polemical within the Plan Nacional because it touched on one of the main tensions between lowland and highland indigenous

representatives. Indigenous communicators from the lowlands, affiliated with organizations like the Bolivian Indigenous Peoples' Confederation CIDOB (Confederación de Pueblos Indígenas de Bolivia) and Assembly of Guaraní Peoples APG (Asamblea del Pueblo Guaraní) argued that the video was only representative of Andean or highland peoples. This is an ongoing debate within national peasant and indigenous organizations, particularly between CIDOB --grouping peoples from the lowlands, and National Council of Ayllus and Markas of Qullasuyo CONAMAQ (Consejo Nacional de Ayllus y Markas del Qollasuyo). Lowland organizations do not agree with being represented through Andean symbols that have been "imposed" as emblematic of indigenous struggles in Bolivia, and even as national symbols. When discussing the proposals for the Constituent Assembly, these kinds of issues were intensely debated. This happened for instance, when CONAMAQ argued for changing the name of Bolivia to Tawantinsuyu, a territorial term that, according to lowland representatives, did not include nor represent at all lowland territories.⁴⁸ This issue even came out in Constituent Assembly meetings on national symbols, where lowland indigenous representatives proposed changing the Bolivian national coat of arms because it only had Andean references: a llama, a mountain, and a condor.

The polemic about whether *¿Ahora de Quién es la Verdad?* represented indigenous struggles and achievements in Bolivia resulted in a new video proposal from lowland communicators: *Un Nuevo Camino, un Nuevo País* (A New Path, a New Country, 2006). This story depicted people from neighboring communities organizing around a road

⁴⁸ Tawantinsuyu was the name that the Inca Empire assigned to its territory, which consisted mainly of the Andean regions of Peru and Bolivia. The word literally means four territories or *suyus*, which included Chinchaysuyu or northern territory, Quntisuyu or Western territory, Antisuyu or Eastern territory, and Qullasuyu or Southern territory.

collapse that affected all of them, an event that metaphorically explained the need to work together in order to reform the national political project through the Constituent Assembly. This video is performed in a lowland territory, mostly by people from the lowlands, which includes highland Aymara and Quechua migrants living in the area. In contrast to *¿Ahora de Quién es la Verdad?*, almost no Andean symbols appear. This video instead shows representative objects of lowland indigenous peoples, such as the tacu or wood grinder and wooden carts. The last scene shows a crowd carrying sowing tools like picks and shovels to fix the road together, a scene that evokes a different image of collective action than the ones depicted in Andean videos.

Another video that provoked debate among communicators was *Markasan Jucha Thakahuipa* (Justice of Our Peoples, 2005). In 2005, a group of young communicators produced this fictional video about community justice by reenacting the procedures that llama owners and community members followed to punish a llama robbery. This video inspired Aymara communicator Patricio Luna to produce another fictional story on the same topic: *Justicia Comunitaria* (Community Justice, 2006), which reenacted a conflict on land borders between two communities. When Patricio showed me the video, he explained that he chose to work on this topic because, in his opinion, the previous video *Markasan Jucha Thakahuipa* did not represent some important aspects of this process. His piece, instead, solemnly reenacted and documented the whole discussion as a legal process with all its subtleties. I found the first video, *Markasan Jucha Thakahuipa*, to be more entertaining and a better summary of how community justice works. For example, the conflict was addressed with more humor when the llama owners declared their loss to the police officer and he typed the report with difficulty, using only one finger, just as

happens in actual police stations in Bolivia. In another scene, the llama robbers humorously exaggerate their suffering while accomplishing the punishment that the community assigned them to build 1000 adobe bricks for the school. This first video is also more agile in terms of editing and narration. In spite of being less entertaining, Justicia Comunitaria is far more illustrative in legal terms because its dialogues reproduce the large and complex arguments that community representatives deploy in order to arrive at an agreement.

The possibility of responding to each other through producing videos that attempt to depict situations more fairly becomes an interesting dialogue among indigenous communicators. On the one hand, this issue can certainly be read as a competitive attitude about, for example, who can "do things best," what production demonstrates more traditional knowledge, which one is more "authentic" looking, and so on. As in any other working activity, competition between indigenous communicators is present in many ways. For example, I uncomfortably witnessed many debates among communicators from the same region trying to prove to themselves -and most probably to me-, how one's community was more autochthonous (originario), with less presence of haciendas and sindicatos or state-sponsored unions, or with deeper traditions and political organization – as if indigeneity could be quantified.

On the other hand, communicators' concern for fair or accurate depictions is also a matter of political commitment to those whom they represent. The emphasis on producing clear and accurate messages responds to the pedagogical and political goals of the Plan Nacional. This happens for example with their musical videos. Most of their musical video-clips respond to the highly popular production of folkloric video-clips in

Bolivia. Videos like *Waka Tinti* (1998), *Macheteros del Beni* (Beni Macheteros, 1998) and *Arioxtee Piexta* (Farewell to the Party, 2000) have been produced with the proud participation of whole communities playing their instruments, wearing special and complex clothing for the occasion, and carefully performing dances for the camera. Communicators, for their part, take care to choose the right photographic angle, adequate natural lighting, and natural landscapes and to record with good sound quality. Musical videos produced by indigenous communicators in collaboration with communities achieve, then, neat documentary images and sounds, showing an effort to detail the richness and quality of clothing, music, and dances. Their style is far from commercial folkloric video-clips which are generally saturated with superimposed images and effects, and loaded with random combinations of instruments, regional clothing and dance steps. Plan Nacional video-clips do not show stylized dances or continuous shots of hips and legs of women with short skirts and abundant make up. Seen as a response to folkloric video-clips, musical videos produced at the Plan Nacional are attempts to differentiate "tradition" from "popular folklore," as indigenous communicators observed at the workshops described in the previous section. What is interesting here is not whether "indigenous videos" are more authentic or valid than commercial ones, but that there is a clear and collective intentionality, research, and production work, to perform and videotape traditional music and dances in a way that they believe fair and dignifying. The documentary character of musical videos and the full involvement –and knowledge- of the community in performing dances achieve more modest and sober images of indigeneity, than the exaggerated, loaded, or sexualized images that often appear in folkloric video-clips.

Other fictional videos mobilize elements that have become representative of recent indigenous struggles. For example, the video *Cocanchej Sutimpy* (In the Name of Our Coca Leaves, 2005) attempts to accurately depict the political situation of the Chapare region. Humberto Claros, the responsible for the video direction intentionally included elements that identify the Chapare as a region acknowledged for its extraordinary organization and achievements, including the political career and leadership of President Morales. The story's events are guided by the radio station Radio Soberanía, La Voz del Cocalero, a regional reference of resistance and struggle. The video also includes militant songs of indigenous peoples, by groups like Rijchchari, a fusion band that combines contesting songs with traditional music. Finally, it shows people getting organized for a march, using whiphala flags and signs that read slogans like "Coca y soberanía" and "No a la militarización del Chapare."

These examples indicate intentional and non-intentional uses of elements that make reference to indigeneity or to indigenous struggles in Bolivia. As noted, the fact that some references are invoked and others avoided generates debate and negotiation among indigenous communicators. In such debates, the issue of authenticity and the ambiguities around its definition constitute a central element in the search for creating pedagogical, messages through "indigenous" video production.

Authenticity and media appropriation

Indigenous peoples in Bolivia have historically interacted with visual images about them: sometimes consuming them, other times posing for a foreign picture or film that they will never see. The three previous sections discuss different processes through which

indigenous communicators debate the ways in which images of indigeneity are produced and circulated. One details some indigenous communicators' analytical responses to popular, commercial, tourist, and other everyday references to indigeneity. Another illustrates how this question is present in everyday activities within the Plan Nacional, including formal and non formal debates, jokes, and comments on videos and on communicators' behavior. Finally, the last section discusses how the issue of media appropriation permeates video production itself. In all these processes, the presence of an "expert" eye -either of indigenous communicators or community members- seems to certify the accuracy of every detail.

One of the main purposes of indigenous video production is to contest and challenge discriminatory images of themselves through negotiating decisions about details that could be unnoticed by others such as: "In the chichería scene we could use what in reality happens in most chicha bars: chicha music, Mexican norteño music, or Argentinian cumbia villera. We could, instead, take the opportunity of the chichería scene to address traditional costumes by showing some people playing charango, singing coplas in Quechua, and dancing zapateado, which also happens in real chicherías, although less and less frequently." The emphasis on detail is an element that contributes to the didactic goal of the Plan Nacional to depict indigenous life and struggles realistically. For this reason, its production decisions add, omit, or accentuate details in the story, in the scene preparation, and even in the screening of works. Such decisions make additional visual or sound comments that reinforce the attempts for expressing indigenous voices in different ways or, as Poole explains about the Guelaguetza folkloric festival in Oaxaca, Mexico, to expand the limits of "what can be uttered, imagined, or felt" (2005: 153).

These examples show that indigenous communicators are in permanent dialogue and disagreement about how to produce images that speak about their realities. Sometimes this dialogue happens through jokes because humor is an effective political resource, as demonstrated by the funny characterization of the policeman typewriting with one finger in *Markasan Jucha Thakahuipa* and the roguish depiction of the Priest in *El Diablo Nunca Duerme* (*The Devil Never Sleeps*, 1999). In such cases, humor contributes to make political comments on real life events through de-familiarizing assumptions about specific situations, building complicity with audiences, and motivating people to reflect on details that normally pass unnoticed. Other times the debate takes more solemn serious tones, or it becomes a political issue that, for example, inspires the production of other videos that attempt to show things more accurately, as in the case of the two videos on the Constituent Assembly, and the two videos on community justice.

The ways in which Plan Nacional members certify the accuracy and detail of their videos are, more than comments on authenticity itself, comments on the ways indigenous life is being, and should be represented. A key aspect of this whole process is the idea that indigenous people should not be depicted as "others" anymore, but that they are experiencing an internal process of "self" depiction. Their mechanisms of certification might be rooted in a common knowledge or "grammar" that, as Poole suggests, relies on "what feels right," on moral ideals, but also on attempts to contest "from within" conventional and often discriminatory depictions of the Indian (2005). Attempts of media appropriation also grant a certain degree of "authority" over materials. This "authority" might function both for indigenous audiences who inevitably "certify" whether the videos

are realistic or not; and among non-indigenous audiences who can find in productions realities that are not usually available to them.

I suggest that in the process of media appropriation, the scrutiny with which communicators and community members "survey" and "certify" the authenticity, fairness or accuracy for depicting indigeneity constitutes a mechanism for commenting or intervening in reality --instead of just "representing" it. Through ongoing disagreement and debate, communicators arrive to produce videos that make visible desirable ideas and imaginaries about Bolivia's political future. For example, the Plan Nacional visually supports indigenous claims for a plurinational state through its extended production of videos that depict in detail the lives and struggles of indigenous peoples in different regions. These videos contest the many hegemonic images of indigeneity that inhabit national imaginaries, while often unintentionally reproducing them.

Indigenous communicators' debates are about how real life objects and practices that make reference to indigeneity are reappropriated by organizations, social movements, and political parties to make themselves visible in "fair" ways. This is why such images can also be read as threatening and menacing to dominant power, as happened during the many conflicts that took place in Sucre, the city that hosted the Constituent Assembly from August 6, 2006 to December 12, 2007.⁴⁹ Visual and other cultural referents, such as indigenous languages, were a source of evident discrimination when, for example, indigenous communicators and leaders dressed in pollera and traditional clothing would

⁴⁹ The city of Sucre hosted most of the Constituent Assembly work until mid November 2007, when oppositional movements violently occupied streets and meeting locations demanding, among other things, to assign of Sucre as the government site in the new Constitution. After violent clashes, the *Asamblea* was transferred to the city of Oruro, where it concluded on December 12, 2007.

have to cross the main Plaza while right-wing university students threatened them and screamed “Indias de Mierda!” These discriminatory practices reached a high point during September to November of 2007 when university students and authorities, and crowds affiliated the right-wing "civic committees" would go around the city with torches looking for whiphala flags, polleras, braids, hats, aguayos, ponchos, Movimiento Al Socialismo flags, or any other visual evidence that indicated the presence of indigenous Constituent Assembly representatives, leaders, and communicators, in order to burn their houses and offices or chase them around. These and many other direct attacks on indigenous people during 2008 prove that images and symbols are rooted in concrete historical relations and practices.

This discussion of authenticity moves away from any attempt to "certify" whether video production within the Plan Nacional is "genuinely" produced by indigenous peoples or not. If instead we understand "indigeneity" as a political claim that gets constructed, challenged or reinforced in relation to specific historical and power processes, then the objects and symbols used to represent it are sites of struggle that are reappropriated and displayed in different ways to acquire new meanings: to make demands, to make visible, to stress, to accentuate. Hence, indigenous videomakers' “accurate” or "authentic" depictions of indigeneity constitute a contested dialogue, not a homogeneous interpretation of their reality.

Chapter 7. Politics of distribution: reaching rural, urban, and transnational audiences



Figure 26. Transporting video equipment in Beni, 2006.
(Courtesy CEFREC-CAIB).

During the last ten years video technologies have become incredibly versatile. Videos are now easily reproducible and circulating objects. A DVD can play either in a personal computer, in a cheap DVD player plugged to a rural community's electricity generator, or in a high quality DVD player projecting in a prestigious theater. Videos flexibly occupy public, ordinary spaces such as buses, restaurants, markets, and improvised home movie theaters. They also take life in commercial movie theaters, museums, and schools. They inhabit the domestic intimacy of kitchens, bedrooms and living rooms. And they navigate virtual nets to be forwarded or downloaded on the internet.

Reproducible technologies have also allowed for piracy to flood Bolivia and the rest of Latin America, and cheap video copies as ordinary, loud commodities are present almost everywhere. Hollywood action and love films, American and Asian cartoons, Mexican classic movies, and national productions alternate with folkloric musical clips and Peruvian comic shows. The versatility of video technologies allows formal and non-formal video industries to saturate public spaces in complex ways. These possibilities, often seen as open channels for cultural "pollution," have also permitted unimagined access for indigenous and other subordinate subjects to gain visibility and to build their own communication networks through their video production.

Within the Plan Nacional, most indigenous communicators consider circulation and distribution as important as other aspects of video production. In agreement with the political goals of indigenous communication, most screening scenarios become sites for political debate or educational and informational events about indigenous peoples in Bolivia. In such spaces, films are generally introduced by videomakers in order to situate

the historical context of production. These specific conditions differentiate indigenous video distribution from conventional distribution practices which place films as objects in disperse markets for their consumption.

This Chapter analyzes the diversified and ingenious distribution strategies through which indigenous communicators engage their audiences as a process that permits rendering concrete the political goals of indigenous communication.

It examines how technological audiovisual qualities allow for the circulation of videos in concrete social contexts, as well as the different economic and political contexts and conditions for video distribution. This Chapter also analyzes the tensions involved in the distribution process, such as the prevention of piracy, unresolved attempts to distribute economic benefits, commitment to expectations of funding providers, and the election of technological and narrative elements to meet specific industry standards that in many ways "discipline" the production and distribution processes.

Technological and social aspects of video distribution

At the beginning of this Chapter I outlined the multiple distribution practices that video technologies now make possible. All of them are grounded in the technological qualities that allow for massive and multiple film reproduction. Long before the development of versatile video technologies, Walter Benjamin noted that film technological qualities such as transportability through time and space and the possibility for enlarging image and sound through a film projector and loudspeakers, allow for film to reproduce a unique "massive," "simultaneous collective experience" (1968: 232).

Benjamin also explained that the mediation of the film camera allows viewers to temporally and spatially "detach" the representation from the original situation. This quality, which makes film reproduction "separable" from actors and the production team, and "transportable" to the public, conveys a "feeling of strangeness" both in actors and audiences (1968: 229). Such strangeness, Benjamin argues, relates to the fact that consumption practices of the film will be "beyond the reach" of actors (1968: 232).

Benjamin suggests that once they have performed, actors do not have any control of the consuming practices that "constitute the [audience] market." Other researchers of visual representations have expressed different ideas about how images escape "the reach" of their producers through the analysis of "excess." Scholars such as Pinney and Peterson (2003), Poole (2005a) and Nichols (1991) have analyzed the ways in which photography and film, because of their indexical attachment to reality, include "an excess" of visual information in addition to the central aspect that images intended to portray. For example, Poole argues that while the intention of early anthropological portraiture was to visually document "racial" features, these historical images provide additional visual information about the power relations that framed the "photographic encounter" –for example through the attitude and pose of the photographed subject and the background or surrounding details (Poole 2005a). Benjamin and these contemporary authors explain "estrangement" and "excess" as elements intrinsic to visual technologies that exceed or escape the reach of those who produced them. As I discuss in the following sections, the Plan Nacional makes a creative use of these three technological aspects of video distribution (reproduction possibilities, estrangement and excess) in order to develop its distribution strategies for political purposes.

In terms of the social aspect of media distribution, there are a number of perspectives through which anthropologists and media studies scholars have analyzed the significance of circulation and consumption (Himpele 2008). For instance, analyzing media circulation implies studying the "mediations" that allow for their mobility among different social and cultural contexts (Martín-Barbero 1993), to understand the significance of media for cultural production (Turner 2002), and as means for asserting identities and national imaginaries (Ginsburg 1992). Media circulation also has helped scholars to explain connections of media to specific social contexts (Ginsburg 1995).

Video circulation is related to economic funding and other strategies for economic compensation, as well as to exchange processes through local, regional and international channels of distribution which at the same time constitute political alliances. In this regard, Poole's concept of "visual economies" is useful for situating the power relations in which media circulation and exchange processes take place. Poole explains that the concept of "visual economy" permits "think[ing] more clearly on the global channels through which images –and discourses about them- have flowed" (1997:8). Visual economies, she suggests, have three levels of organization: production, circulation of images as objects, and cultural and social systems in which images "accrue value" (1997:9-10). The understanding of media distribution as part of a "visual economy" permits not only analyzing the circulation of images as objects --and the technologies that make this possible,- but also the different social and political contexts through which they are presented and acquire value.

These approaches to media circulation are useful to understand the key role of distribution within The Plan Nacional, which has developed various strategies to reach a

great diversity of audiences.⁵⁰ The main circulation mechanism is community screenings through thematic "distribution campaigns" that take place numerous times a year throughout Bolivia. Distribution campaigns also include screenings and debates in the main cities of the country. Additionally, there is a weekly space of three hours on the national television channel "Canal 7", where two different TV programs produced by the Plan Nacional are broadcast. Finally, the Plan Nacional's productions circulate extensively within Latin America, North America and Europe through regional and international festivals and other kinds of film events. Despite the public's high demand for these materials, at the moment there are still no distribution strategies to sell videos because videomakers and producers have not arrived at an agreement on how to distribute the profits. This aspect is controversial because of the collective authorship of the productions.

Watching movies in Bolivia

Humberto, an indigenous communicator from the Chapare region invited me one Sunday in 2006 to watch a movie at El Barrio Chino in La Paz. At the busy neighborhood I was distractingly following him through the improvised posts selling used clothes, electrical appliances, cheap jewelry, and toys. As Humberto had mentioned, people referred to this neighborhood as Barrio Chino because they associated the cheap, pirated, or robbed variety of things for sale, with the abundant, cheap and pirated Chinese products intensively consumed throughout the world.

⁵⁰ Audience responses cited in this Chapter recover informal interviews and comments in video screenings and festivals with varied audiences in cities in Bolivia, Mexico, and the United States.

The buildings that surround the market were large, old, in bad shape. Humberto stopped in front of a building entrance to show me the movie offer. A board with aligned DVD covers (visibly pirated) listed action, children, love, terror, and suspense films, including titles that had not even premiered in Bolivia. At the board's bottom, the price of 5 bolivianos, one-fifth the cost of a regular movie ticket in La Paz, was colorfully announced. We paid our 10 bolivianos to the seller, he solemnly gave us two tickets, and we walked through a heavy and mysterious blue curtain.

We walked by an ample room with a large TV on the front and seven rows of woods arranged as benches, where families with babies and children ate sweets, attentively watching a Disney cartoon. We then went upstairs to watch an American suspense film that had already started. The room was much larger than the children's one, and about 10 rows of wood planks arranged as two lanes of seats allowed space for about 100 viewers. The film was projected on the large white wall, and the sound was amplified with bad quality loud speakers. There were at least 30 people: couples, men alone, some young kids. Every once in a while, a vendor would walk through the rows, offering coffee, sweets, empanadas, salteñas or ice cream. After enduring a ten-minute scene of a man torturing a woman in a forest, I asked Humberto if we could visit another room. Every theater had its own arrangement of seats, screen, and entrance, as well as its particular audiences.

There are at least ten illegal movie theaters in the Barrio Chino, as well as many others in different sections of La Paz. The city of El Alto has many more. Humberto, like other people attending these improvised but well organized theaters, is from a rural area.

Not having much family to visit on weekends, he has spent many Sundays watching the unending programming of the Barrio Chino theaters.

The multicinema at the Barrio Chino is one of the many informal scenarios in which one can watch a movie in Bolivia. Videos also play in restaurants, markets, and buses. DVD movies are sold for one, two or three dollars (depending on the quality) at informal stands in the streets and markets. There are even special market areas assigned to pirated movies, such as the Uyustus Street, where movie vendors are already organized by genre. Homes and modest restaurants in suburban and rural areas with electricity usually have a TV and DVD player in some visible corner, and a large stock of musical DVDs or movies that owners will regularly play for the family or visitors. Even some communities with no electricity use generators to satisfy their basic electricity needs and to feed a couple of hours of entertainment at the local karaoke, where videos are of course a central element of the party.

Before this more personalized industry existed thanks to the cheap reproducibility of DVDs, people in rural areas would still have access to pirated betamax tapes in cities; would create modest video rental stores to compile a variety of titles and genres, or would attend traveling movie screenings which, like the circus, used to tour rural areas that had no access to cinema. "Before, movie theaters used to arrive to communities," recalled Marcelino Pinto, a thirty-five year old Quechua videomaker from the Chapare region.

Movie theaters arrived announcing themselves with large loudspeakers. And nobody missed the movie, because it was like when the circus comes to the communities.

Since then I started liking movies a lot, I would watch any movie. They brought Vietnam war movies, the Mexican ones, those kind of things. And I was a movie fan.

Then, when I used to visit my aunt at the city of Cochabamba, she had a black and white television and it was the new thing, but in those times there were not too many programs. As a young man I used to attend video screenings. Then everybody started to buy their VHS players, the new thing, everybody. And I did not want to stay behind, I insisted that my dad buy one. And I started collecting videos, it became a source of income, a hobby: I had a videoclub. I watched many movies... so many that I learned them by heart.

Many argue with reason that the technological possibilities for reproduction have favored piracy and contributed to the decline of the cinema industry in countries like Bolivia. Older people living in cities nostalgically evoke the times when one could attend cheap movie theaters with good quality programming from the 1950s to the 1980s. Especially since Bolivia's economic crisis in the early 1980s and the popularization of commercial television, movie theaters started going broke, and buildings were rented or bought by Protestant churches to develop their well attended weekend ceremonies (Himpele 2008: 19). As Himpele extensively demonstrates, although the film industry has dramatically declined since the 1980s, formal distribution strategies still reveal spatializing practices that "reproduce social asymmetries" mainly in urban centers (2008: 68).

Although there are plans for larger investment in commercial multicinemas in wealthier cities like Santa Cruz and Cochabamba, up to 2008 there were only around 20 movie theaters in the country (Himpele 2008). La Paz, the capital city, only has about eight private movie theaters where shows cost from 20 to 40 bolivianos (three to five

dollars), and the Ministry of Culture has recently opened with great effort a municipal movie theater, Cine 6 de Agosto and, after five years of renovation work, reopened the gorgeous Bolivian Cinemateca, with international, low-cost programming.

These general references to how movies and videos circulate and are consumed in Bolivia help us to understand the context that surrounds indigenous video distribution within Bolivia, as well as to note that most of the urban and rural people who constitute indigenous video audiences already have some degree of familiarity with film and video. After Humberto and I left the Barrio Chino cinemas that evening, I jokingly asked him if they, as indigenous communicators from the Indigenous Audiovisual Coordinating Body from Bolivia CAIB (Coordinadora Audiovisual Indígena Originaria de Bolivia), had not thought of screening their films at the Barrio Chino. "Are you kidding?" He solemnly responded. Like all other indigenous communicators and staff of the Film Training and Production Center CEFREC (Centro de Estudios, Formación y Realización Cinematográfica), he is totally worried about their productions falling in the hands of pirates. This has already happened a couple of times, as Aymara actor and communicator Reynaldo Yujra discovered once when he visited El Alto market and saw a compilation of three of the Plan Nacional hits on a pirated DVD. "But you would have great audiences, a lot of people would see CAIB productions," I went on still in a joking tone. Although I was joking and I understood the concern for leaving the few economic gains in pirates' hands, I also found pirate strategies quite effective in terms of reaching audiences. The proof was that Humberto, a quite politically conscious indigenous videomaker, would himself attend regularly the Barrio Chino cinemas because they were cheaper, accessible, and entertaining. Humberto proceeded to explain the political,

economic and ethical dilemmas of distribution, namely, the risk for Plan Nacional videos to be used for commercial purposes –instead of being used for the political objective for which they were created. This dilemma, present always at the Plan Nacional debates, addresses the concerns and possibilities that indigenous communicators and CEFREC staff have for creating effective, alternative distribution networks around the baroque and saturated world of images that already inhabits Bolivia.

CEFREC founding member and promoter Franklin Gutiérrez told me in 2007 that their idea of reediting some of the Plan Nacional "hits," such as *Venciendo el Miedo* (Conquering Fear, 2004), to distribute them in regular or alternative movie theaters as "Bolivian films." He told me so as we walked one evening in Prado Street in La Paz after coming out of the prestigious Cine 16 de Julio where we watched *Los Andes no Creen en Dios* (The Andes Don't Believe in God, 2006), a Bolivian film by Antonio Eguino which was later the only Bolivian film nominated for the Goya awards in 2007. "We would like to see what happens if we take off the 'label' of indigenous videos, if we present our productions outside political events, as films by themselves," he explained. He mentioned that sometimes the "label" of indigenous video already presents Plan Nacional productions as different, as if they needed to excuse themselves, or to be considered apart, for being "indigenous." Franklin was outraged by the romanticized depiction that *Los Andes no Creen en Dios* made of mining camps through picturesque characters like Claudina or Misqui Simi a "fake" but sexy cholita or indigenous woman who acts a prostitute. Having himself grown up in a mining camp, Franklin considered the movie's beautification of places and characters as an offense to miners. In this respect, Franklin insisted that at the moment, Plan Nacional productions are at a good level in terms of

quality and contents in relation to other recent Bolivian films. He added that presenting Bolivian films at urban movie theaters would imply publicizing them through TV spots, posters, newspapers, banners, premiere night and so on, and to have the public pay a ticket to see them. In other words, they want to try a distribution strategy that has never been done in Bolivia for Plan Nacional productions. Nevertheless, commercial distribution of indigenous productions has been successfully developed in movie theaters, for instance, in the Basque Country as part of funding and education campaigns on indigenous peoples that the political organization and foundation Mugarik Gabe has developed with diverse indigenous media organizations from Latin America. As I will discuss later, some international film festivals also screen indigenous productions as part of their programming in prestigious movie theaters, although most of the times they are still differentiated as "indigenous films."

Despite the high productivity of the Plan Nacional in relation to other producing houses and organizations of Bolivia, its films are not yet visible or considered "national cinema." This situation is changing, among other things, through the project mentioned by Franklin Gutiérrez, and through the development of the Ninth International Festival of Indigenous Film and Video organized by the Latin American Council of Indigenous Peoples' Film and Communication CLACPI (Consejo Latinoamericano de Cine y Comunicación de Pueblos Indígenas,) celebrated in Bolivia in 2008. The preparations for this Festival include opening with the premiere of *El Grito de la Selva* (A Cry from the Forest, 2008), the first indigenous feature film in Bolivia about lowland indigenous communities confronting lumber companies in the Amazonian forest. The Festival also showcased numerous Latin American indigenous productions at the newly opened

Bolivian Cinemateca, as well as full programming in this and other commercial and alternative movie theaters in cities like La Paz, Cochabamba, and Santa Cruz during the Festival, in September of 2008.⁵¹

Traveling cinema: community screenings and regional distribution campaigns

In May 2006, two months before the national referendum to vote for the installation of the Constituent Assembly, the Plan Nacional organized a video disseminating campaign to simultaneously tour communities and cities in all regions of Bolivia with six different teams. Each team was in charge of organizing informational workshops in every visited community, and in charge of screening videos to provoke discussions about the Constituent Assembly. The Plan Nacional effectively appropriated this community touring model from Latin American experiences with militant cinema and theater during the 1970s.

I joined the team planning to tour the Amazonian region, which would have to travel by little planes, buses, boats, taxis, and the fashionable scooters or mototaxis of Beni. Of course, the campaign schedule was modified according to weather, transportation, or coordination problems, but at least 80 percent of the ambitious regional itinerary was successfully covered. This happened probably because of the strong coordination with

⁵¹ Although the Festival was originally programmed to take place in the cities of Santa Cruz and La Paz, the first part had to be cancelled in Santa Cruz because of violent action led by Eastern right-wing departmental governments gathered in the National Democratic Council CONALDE (Consejo Nacional Democrático). Organizations like the Santa Cruz Civic Committee and Santa Cruz Youth Union UJC (Unión Juvenil Cruceñista), attacked governmental institutions and indigenous organizations. During this conflict, the offices of the Bolivian Indigenous Peoples' Confederation CIDOB (Confederación de Pueblos Indígenas de Bolivia) where the Plan Nacional had an office and a television studio, were destroyed.

regional and local organizations, and because most regions covered had strong local teams of trained communicators.

In a first team meeting, Edgar Suxo, the CEFREC coordinator for this region, explained some of the difficulties of this area. "Here people are really misinformed", he said. "But paradoxically, this is where we need to work the most." Geographic dispersion, the strong historical presence of hacienda landlords, forest and oil companies in the region, as well as of right-wing political parties, together with corruption within indigenous and peasant organizations have been aspects that weaken organizing possibilities. After a radio presentation in the city of Riberalta, we prepared the trip to the surrounding communities. Preparations included buying gasoline for the electricity generator and putting together delicate machines like the video projector, the DVD player, and the audio monitor in a portable ice box to protect them from dust, water, humidity and bugs.

The next morning, after a complicated scooter and boat ride, we arrived to the first planned community in the Riberalta region. People were already gathered in the community Assembly house: a large room with high ceilings and large windows with no glass. As usual, seats were large thin woods supported by trunks. The thirty-people attendance included adult women, some of them breastfeeding babies; men; some children running around. The local organization leader introduced the team and explained the situation they are facing in the region: how many representatives they had, the confusion around the claim for autonomies, the attempts of right-wing PODEMOS movement to buy leaders. Then the three local communicators made a historical review of the emergence of the first National Constitution, and the reasons why indigenous

organizations were demanding a new one. Participation in the room was animated, local authorities intervened with additional information, insisting that the Constituent Assembly was an opportunity for indigenous peoples to participate for the first time in national decisions.

After the discussion, the workshop paused to obscure the room for a video projection. Men climbed the large windows to hang bed covers and large pieces of clothe. Outside, two communicators struggled to make the noisy electricity generator work. Once the room was a bit darker, the large frontal wall became a blue screen that briefly introduced a first video that the Plan Nacional has made on the Constituent Assembly: *¿Ahora de Quién es la Verdad?* (Now Whose is the Truth?, 2006). People watched the half an hour documentary with attention, and after it ended they started a heated debate about how to unite better as indigenous peoples in order to fight for their rights. They commented about organizing techniques among highland Aymara and Quechua people, and noted that they should get more information, because they hardly get any in their communities. The workshop ended with a plenary session where attendants shared their general opinions on the proposals.

After the workshop ended, the communication team diligently picked up the equipment and went to bed. We all knew that a two-hour trip on scooter awaited us next morning to visit Agua Dulce, a smaller community situated on the other side of the other side of the river, where a very similar journey would take place.

As in this area, distribution campaigns tour different regions through teams composed of CEFREC and CAIB members, local and regional organization leaders, and local communicators. Campaigns are organized around specific topics: in the case

described above, the campaign was on the Constituent Assembly, but others are about gender, natural resources, or other relevant topics related to indigenous struggles and rights. Audiences for these screenings are mostly members affiliated with local or regional indigenous and peasant organizations that back the Movement Toward Socialism MAS government. This implies that the main function of videos in these campaigns is to educate and motivate (*animar*) people who already have a political position in indigenous struggles (*Figure 27*).



Figure 27. Distribution campaign in Potosí communities, 2005.
(Courtesy CEFREC-CAIB).

In addition to formal distribution campaigns around communities, there are continuous initiatives to organize video screenings in workshops, community festivals, or organization gatherings. These initiatives come from indigenous local or regional leaders who ask for video screenings in specific organization events. In this context, videos are seen as an educational tool that can help people think about certain topics or situations. Unlike workshops and assemblies, communicators argue that videos help to understand

situations through making people sensitive about a specific problem exemplified or dramatized in a video. When watching situations of discrimination or violence against indigenous people, audiences react with enthusiasm for continuing organizing or fighting. This is one of the reasons why videomakers feel that video distribution is useful to initiate discussion, reflection, and even political action. "That's why I feel that videos contribute a lot, they make people sensitive," explained Quechua speaker communicator Alfredo Copa.

If you use it well it's a powerful weapon, if it gets shown and makes people realize things. Can you imagine? What they understood when I screened the video in my region, I guarantee it would take them at least one or two weeks, writing in papers, talking... and some would not even understand at all. But the video already dramatized, it grabs them, they want to know what will happen, what will happen, that happened to us as well... ucha, then they get it!

As discussed in Chapter 4, the technological possibilities of film permit building a *sensorial* experience through visual and sound effects produced through camerawork, editing, and the projection itself. In this account Alfredo exemplifies how this *sensorial* resource is useful for people to "realize things" in a more experiential way.

Another strategy for video distribution in communities is the organization of video festivals that include programming video tours and special public awards voted by community juries. Such is the case of the biannual festival "Anaconda Award" for videos produced in the Amazonian region (Premio Anaconda al Video Indígena Amazónico, del Chaco y los Bosques Tropicales de América Latina y el Caribe). Most

of this festival is developed by touring indigenous communities, and has only a few screenings in cities. Another international video Festival that includes community screenings is the Latin American Indigenous Film and Video Festival organized by the Latin American Council of Indigenous Peoples' Film and Communication CLACPI in different Latin American countries. Finally, the Film and Video Center of the National Museum of the American Indian, Smithsonian Institution, has also organized U.S. video tours of indigenous films from Bolivia (2002), Mexico (2003), and Brazil (2008) around Native American and migrant communities in the United States.

Community screenings constitute a key and original distribution strategy that requires high economic costs and good local coordination. Through its ten years of work, the Plan Nacional has maintained community screenings as a priority probably over urban distribution activities. Every video produced in an indigenous community is premiered there, sometimes as a first version to get feedback for the final copy.

Community audiences (as discussed in Chapters 4 and 6), although heterogeneous, have their own readings of videos, paying attention to aspects that might be unnoticed by urban audiences, for instance, details on agricultural work techniques, plants, animals, food, celebrations, dances, clothing, music, and language games.

Indigenous film at urban theaters

Lights discretely turned on to illuminate the front part of the theater as the final credits ended. Nicolás and Alejandro, two CAIB communicators from the lowland region walked up to the stage in silence, waiting for the loud applause to finish. Nicolás then took the microphone to ask the public if they had any questions. The Auditorium of

Spanish Agency of International Cooperation AECI (Agencia Española de Cooperación Internacional) was packed. It was the third consecutive night of screenings in the City of Santa Cruz to celebrate an international event of indigenous communication in February 2006. Most audience interventions were to congratulate the production team for the film and to emphasize the importance of these kinds of works to learn about the political situation of indigenous peoples in Bolivia. The film that just ended was *Renacer: Historia de un Movima* (To be Born Again: The Story of a Movima Man, 2005) a fictional production from the lowland region on labor exploitation on haciendas.

After a couple of comments, a short woman sitting alone, silently, at the back of the auditorium, raised her hand to ask for the microphone. Like other participants, she started out by congratulating the filmmakers and by thanking them for recovering such a strong story. But as she went on, her voice started to tremble, producing an uncomfortable silence in the room. She reiterated her gratitude and then broke into tears while she narrated the similarity of the film story with her own life: “I felt like it was a movie about my own life, it tells my own story. I am an orphan like the main character, and had to work for the Patrón without knowing where I was from or who my family was. This movie really tells what our life is about.” She went on explaining that these stories are invisible in cities. She mentioned that working as a school teacher in the city, she hardly ever talks about her past. She explained that watching the film made her evoke her life as a young woman, and it was moving for her to feel that other people in the room could learn through the video about the reality of indigenous peoples living unfair situations in the Bolivian lowlands. Afterwards, a group of college students asked if they could have access to the Plan Nacional materials so they could include them in political and

informational workshops that they were developing in urban neighborhoods. Then the question and answer session continued with a debate on the key role of indigenous peoples in national politics, and about the need for alternative communication strategies in places like Santa Cruz, where private media leave almost no space for other sources of information.

As this case illustrates, distribution strategies include periodical screenings in Bolivian cities. These include video exhibitions, public forums and political-cultural events in coordination with other institutions, universities, organizations, and cultural centers. Most of the time, video screenings in cities motivate long and hot discussions about the topic addressed. Urban audiences in Bolivia are mainly composed of professional and working people from rural areas living in cities, university students, and urban people affiliated with neighborhood organizations and urban unions. Few people involved with film production and arts in Bolivia, middle class intellectuals, regular consumers of independent cinema, and international tourists occasionally attend Plan Nacional film screenings in cities. Urban audiences vary according to screening sites, which range from auditoriums at institutions that serve for political debate, to universities where the main audiences are students and teachers; and from independent cinema theaters to neighborhood organizations' meeting rooms (Figure 28).⁵²

⁵² For instance, supporting organizations and screening sites for urban events include the Universidad Autónoma Tomás Frías in Potosí, Universidad Técnica de Oruro (UTO), Oficialía Mayor de la Casa de la Cultura, *the Tambo Quirquincho* artistic center, and Radio Wayna Tambo in the city of La Paz; Centro Pedagógico y Cultural Simón I. Patiño and Centro de Documentación e Información Bolivia (CEDIB) in the city of Cochabamba; Universidad NUR and Centro de Formación de la Cooperación Española (ICI-AECI) in Santa Cruz.



Figure 28. Distribution campaign in the City of Santa Cruz. April 2006.
(Courtesy CEFREC-CAIB).

Responses of urban audiences vary. There are cases, such as the school teacher mentioned above, where people from the audience feel directly identified with or moved by the stories. In other instances, middle-class urban audiences comment that Plan Nacional productions are good because they address little known topics about the reality of indigenous peoples, and because they manage to present them "from within." People find these productions useful in the political context in Bolivia in which indigenous peoples are so central but also little known. There is a feeling that videos allow people to learn about diverse peoples and regions from Bolivia, and there is a special interest to see non-professional indigenous actors recreating their own situations and stories. Audiences also appreciate that indigenous videos portray internal conflicts and forms of organization to solve their problems.

Other kinds of responses include disbelief that the videos are "completely produced by indigenous people." Although this can be a racist opinion that assumes that indigenous

people can not develop technical capacities, it is also true that this opinion relates to the problem (addressed in Chapter 5) regarding a dependency on technical or "professional" criteria of quality. Another critique of indigenous videos is that some topics and treatments feel too "institutional," especially when they echo NGO discourses or international cooperation concerns, for instance, when addressing topics such as gender or indigenous rights. Finally, some urban audiences note that certain indigenous fictions tend to reproduce a dichotomized view of society where indigenous peoples are "the good ones" and other non-indigenous sectors are depicted as "the bad ones," without addressing further the complexities of characters and situations. There are also opinions that some stories overdramatize the suffering of characters, falling into melodramatic or exaggerated styles.

Distributing through national and regional television

It was nine o'clock at night, time to start. Everybody was fully concentrated at their posts: they all knew that live programs allow for no mistakes or repetitions. Max Silva, a CEFREC editor, played the introductory clip, and then slowly mixed to the studio while he whispered instructions on his microphone for Marcelino Pinto's camera to zoom out from Sonia Chiri's face. Sonia initiated greeting in Quechua and Spanish with a soft, yet confident voice. She was relaxed, well versed in conduction after ten months of being the main program host. She wore her usual Potosí black hat, her brown shawl, a green sweater of the same color of her bright pollera or traditional skirt. Max then instructed Vicente Mamani to shoot the full studio, while Sonia greeted and introduced Jesús Tapia, the other commentator, and the guests of the day, whom she addresses as "hermanos."

The conversation started with guests explaining that they came from Paraguay to attend an international event on constituent processes in Latin America. Then they went on in a fluid conversation with Jesús and Sonia about indigenous struggles in Paraguay, about the procedures they have followed to successfully make international legal demands for indigenous peoples, and about their opinions on the constituent process in Bolivia. The two cameras moved slowly, zooming in and out, following the conversation in coordination with the editor's instructions.

On May 2007, at the middle of the heated Constituent Assembly process, this Plan Nacional television team was broadcasting nationwide one of their weekly emissions of Bolivia Constituyente, the only TV live program that regularly documented the progress of the Constituent Assembly sessions in the city of Sucre.

Marcelina Cárdenas, in charge of the program direction, was behind the cameras following every movement of the set, looking often at her watch and exchanging written signs that indicated the timing and rhythm to the program hosts: "FALTAN 5 MINUTOS," "DESPEDIDA!" As the time to end approached, tension concentrated outside the set (Figure 29).



Figure 29. Production of Bolivia Constituyente television program, Sucre, 2006. (Courtesy CEFREC-CAIB).

As soon as Marcelina pulled up the "DESPEDIDA" sign, Sonia glanced at it and gently started closing up the conversation and thanking the guests. She finally looked at the camera to say farewell to the audience, announcing next week's program. After she finished speaking, Vicente's camera slowly zoomed in a small ceramic at the table containing coca leaves. Max mixed this image with the closing clip, and suddenly everybody seemed to breathe again. They cheered, stood up, joked, and drank soda. And then, as at the end of every weekly program, they gathered at the set to take the usual photo with the guests and the production team.

The production of television and radio programs like *Entre Culturas* and *Bolivia Constituyente* and their transmission in available channels and stations is another important distribution strategy. Since 2004, the Plan Nacional established an agreement with National TV Channel 7 to broadcast weekly 30-minute programs from the Plan Nacional series *Entre Culturas*. These programs are produced in different regions, addressing all kind of

issues related to indigenous life: culture, struggles, conflicts, oral stories, agricultural production. *Entre Culturas* programs are usually hosted by one or two indigenous communicators, who occasionally have invited guests such as lawyers, indigenous leaders, ecologists or sociologists to comment on the topic addressed.

In addition to *Entre Culturas*, a new TV program, *Bolivia Constituyente*, started broadcasting with the inauguration of the Constituent Assembly in August of 2006, and has continued following up Constituent related topics after the Assembly ended in December 2007. This program broadcasts in prime time evening schedule, on Thursdays from 9 to 10pm, also on National TV Channel 7. *Bolivia Constituyente* has become one of the only television spaces that informs and discusses regularly the Constituent Assembly, particularly in relation to indigenous claims, and providing an important space for indigenous representatives and leaders to express their voices.

While the program *Entre Culturas* still has limited audiences, *Bolivia Constituyente* has gained popularity and is well identified among an urban and rural public who want to have regular and non conventional information on the constituent process. Nevertheless, this audience is still limited in comparison to the wider range of television viewers in Bolivia used to regular news programs in private TV networks like UNITEL (*Universal de Televisión*).

In addition to this regular programming in National TV Channel 7, Plan Nacional TV and radio programs have been arranged into "communication packages" and distributed among indigenous communicators and organization leaders. Through communication campaigns and other distribution activities, these communicators and leaders are in charge of establishing local and regional alliances with community media, channels and networks,

in order to broadcast programs in different regions. This distribution strategy based on "communication packages" has proved to be a quite effective and original use of video technologies because packages are easy to carry, and contain DVDs and CDs compiling television and radio programs that can be simply played at local TV channels and radio stations.⁵³

Going international: indigenous video at international film festivals

The public slowly occupied the seats of the main Auditorium of the National Museum of the American Indian in New York. Aymara communicator María Morales caught the audience's attention as she slowly walked to the front seats. She was wearing her gala paceña outfit consisting of a small bowler hat leaning to one side, a yellow shawl with shining embroidery, and a long, paceña pollera skirt. Quechua-speaking communicator Humberto Claros and CEFREC coordinator Iván Sanjinés entered the room next to her. They were the three people presenting from Bolivia at the 13th Native American Film and Video Festival in December 2006.

A few moments later the lights turned off and Elizabeth Weatherford, the Festival coordinator and founder, walked up the stage to introduce filmmakers. In 1986, Weatherford founded this well established and unique biannual Film Festival that brings together indigenous media makers --or "filmmakers" as they are addressed here, from Latin and North America to meet with each other, to present their productions, and to exchange experiences.

⁵³ Each package contains a booklet with general information on indigenous peoples' demands for the Constituent Assembly, one DVD with four videos and one CD with four radio programs produced by the Plan Nacional, and a guide for communicators to orient discussions at community and city screenings.

After front lights were turned off, the screen invaded the room with an overwhelming Andean landscape and soft charango music. Projected in this context, on a cinema screen and with high quality equipment, these neat images and sounds from Andean communities felt as if they had traveled a long way. I had seen this video on domestic violence, and women organizing numerous times in Bolivian communities and cities, projected in television monitors, sheets turned into screens at open air community projections, and cultural centers. And in every different place this felt like a new film... what details would strike, move, bore, or make this new audience laugh?

After *Venciendo el Miedo* ended, the screen paused for a moment, and then *Cocanchej Sutimpy* inhabited the screen and the full space, bringing rivers and thick vegetation from the tropical Chapare forest. Characters this time spoke Quechua. The story was about a young man from the place conscripted into the Bolivian Army who was then sent back to fight his own community on a coca leaf eradication campaign. Then final credits rolled up and the lights turned on.

During the question and answer session, a woman asked María why did she choose to represent the topic of domestic violence and women's rights, and how much is the story based on real-life situations? María answered that the script gathers stories from various women of her community, and that she and the production team chose to do the film in order to show possibilities for women to organize around issues like domestic violence and land ownership. Then a young student, probably a political activist evidently aware of political conflicts around the coca leaf, asked Humberto why coca leaf eradication plans are so problematic for indigenous people in Bolivia, and how is this related to US policies for Latin America? Humberto eloquently explained the role of coca

leaf in the recent history of Bolivia, the organizing processes of coca leaf producers, and the implications of eradication and "sustainable development" campaigns promoted by United States policies, for Bolivia's sovereignty. After two more questions the session was over.

Since the Plan Nacional started, indigenous videomakers from Bolivia and other Latin American countries have participated in international film festivals that are increasingly interested in indigenous productions. The Native American Film and Video Festival just described above was one of the first ones fully dedicated to indigenous productions, and probably the most prestigious. It not only works as a space for film exhibition and international distribution, but also as a key space for native filmmakers and media organizations to meet and discuss their experiences and projects.

Festival Name	Region / Country
Festivals with a focus on native film and video productions:	
International Film and Video Festival of Indigenous Peoples (organized by the Latin American Council of Indigenous Peoples' Film and Communication, CLACPI)	Latin America (rotating)
Premio Anaconda al Vídeo Indígena Amazónico del Chaco y los Bosques Tropicales de América Latina y el Caribe	Latin America
ImagineNATIVE Film and Media Arts Festival	Canada
First Peoples' Festival Film and Video Showcase / Présence Autochtone	Canada
Native American Film and Video Festival	United States
American Indian Film Festival	United States

All Roads Film Festival	United States
Film festivals that include native programming	
The Margaret Mead Film and Video Festival	United States
Sundance Film Festival	United States
Tribeca Film Festival	United States
Taos Talking Pictures Film Festival	United States
Human Rights Watch International Film Festival	United States
Sámi Film Festival	Norway
Toronto International Film Festival	Canada
Cannes Film Festival	France
Rencontres Cinémas d'Amérique Latine de Toulouse	France
Berlinale/Berlin International Film Festival	Germany
Morelia International Film Festival	Mexico
Forumdoc	Brazil

*Figure 30. Festivals with emphasis on indigenous audiovisual production.*⁵⁴

International distribution also includes one-time or periodical indigenous film showcases like First Nations / First Features in New York City, Muestras de Cine y Cooperación in the Basque Country, and Indigenous Film and Video showcases at the

⁵⁴ For an exhaustive list of film festivals including native programming see the Native Networks website (Native Networks, accessed September 20, 2008) and the Fundación del Nuevo Cine Latinoamericano website (Fundación del Nuevo Cine Latinoamericano, accessed September 20, 2008).

Casa de las Américas in Madrid. Finally, there have been also initiatives of touring indigenous video showcases, such as the Eye of the Condor, which in 2002 toured indigenous film from Bolivia around US native and Latin American migrant communities (Native Networks) (Figure 31).



Figure 31. Marcelina Cárdenas and Jesús Tapia during the Eye of the Condor US tour in Washington D.C., 2002.
(Courtesy CEFREC-CAIB).

Hence, the wide Plan Nacional audiovisual production is present in numerous international venues within Latin America, North America, Europe, and eventually in Australia. The quality, contents, and unique production process of these videos usually have a strong impact on international audiences. These include mainly urban, politically progressive and well-educated people willing to learn about the political situation in Latin America; students and professors, political activists, and some film-related people such as

filmmakers, producers and distributors. Members of migrant organizations and Latin American students are also usually present at international film festivals with indigenous programming. The composition of audiences also depends on the specificity of screening venues.

Particularly within the political transformations of Bolivia since 2000, indigenous videos are appreciated as a window for learning about one of the most notable experiences of indigenous struggle within Latin America. And of course, screenings in every region have their specific impacts and particularities.

For instance, showcases in other Latin American countries and with some Native American US and Canada communities work mostly as exchanges of experiences that permit sharing and strengthening the possibilities of indigenous communication for political transformation. This explains the involvement of political, peasant, and indigenous organizations in the coordination of such audiovisual events.

International screenings of indigenous video from Bolivia and other Latin American countries in places like North America and Europe work to support struggles and facilitate the solidary exchange of experiences with other political organizations that sympathize with indigenous and peasant struggles. "Travels for me have meant a lot because they allow me to talk about our experience," said Quechua-speaking communicator Humberto Claros.

Also because they help me get a clearer context of what we do and how this relates to foreign countries. Sometimes we think: "yes, gringos are mean," but inside that country there are people really working and supporting. And trips also help me understand the world movement better: what kinds of policies govern things, why is

Bolivia here, and why other people live different situations in other places. When you travel you need to know very well your context, because people want to know more about us, because there are a lot of people who don't know our reality. Travels teach you to be more open, more friendly. And to have a wider vision of what happens here in Bolivia.

International screenings also intend to work as spaces to politically "sensitize" and "educate first world audiences" about the causes of "bad development." "From our perspective there is a principle that the role of cooperation for development is not to attack the consequences, but the causes of bad development," explained Jesús Gonzáles Pasos, founding member and coordinator of Latin American programs of the Basque Non-Governmental Organization for the Development of Peoples Mugarik Gabe.

Then you find that the structural causes for 'underdevelopment' in Southern countries reside in Northern countries. This is why we at Mugarik Gabe work on education for development within Basque society. And all the process of indigenous communication here in Bolivia has given us a lot, because it allows us to show issues on indigenous rights there. We organize every two years a showcase of indigenous film and video where we try to include information and political contents, as well as the presence of communicators from Latin America. And showcases include conferences and media work in radio, press and television. And the impacts... well, we are not going to change the entire situation, but as small as it might be, I think we are achieving a lot of things.

International audiences are mostly students, academic scholars, regular film viewers, political activists, migrant and native communities and organizations, as well as Bolivian or Latin American institutions such as embassies and cultural centers. In these contexts, indigenous videos acquire particular value as a source of knowledge about the political situation in Bolivia and as mechanisms that permit developing or strengthening political alliances and networks with international social movements. As I will detail later in this section, such mechanisms are not free from contradictions in terms of politics, funding, and representation.

A concrete example of how indigenous video showcases contribute to strengthening international political alliances was the series of events that took place after some indigenous productions from Oaxaca, Mexico, were screened at the *Native American Film and Video Festival* in New York City in December of 2006. Most participating productions from Oaxaca focused on documenting the struggles of the Popular Assembly of Peoples from Oaxaca APPO (*Asamblea Popular de los Pueblos de Oaxaca*), as well as the harsh government repression that was going on for more than six months. At the Festival there were about five indigenous videomakers from Oaxaca presenting their videos. While they were at the Festival, they learned that the Oaxacan Government had just issued an arrest warrant against two of them and against three other colleagues in Oaxaca. They also learned that their production office in Oaxaca City had been closed because of its communication activities. At that point, their media collective *Mal de Ojo Comunicación* was the only one documenting mobilizations after most international and national press had left following the assassination of Brad Will, an American journalist working for Indymedia. Some of the audiences who attended the Festival to watch the Oaxaca

screenings were familiar with the conflict, so they immediately began to mobilize and network with New York activists to organize an informational and funding campaign in their support. After the Festival was over, the two participants from Oaxaca named in the arrest warrants were invited to speak about the situation on radio programs (such as WBAI's *Wake Up Call* and *Democracy Now*), and to screen their videos to inform and obtain funding for communication activities in Oaxaca at places like CUNY's Hunter College, New York University, and the Manhattan Neighborhood Network. They returned to Mexico after a few weeks, once they learned they could go back safely.

In addition to these impacts on international audiences, it is worthwhile mentioning an undeniable audience expectation that indigenous videos will bring forward images and situations that reinforce romantic ideas about Latin America's revolutionary or insurgent character. Other people from the audience expect to find in indigenous productions a visual interpellation to New Age tendencies that overmystify indigenous people's connection to "Mother Earth," asking specific questions about how ritual offering scenes, or people chewing coca leaves, contribute to their communication with nature. Finally, some audiences pay attention to the meaning of specific objects or situations displayed in videos, asking for example if there is a specific reason for men to wear the *chullo* or hat straight or bent down.

All these different approaches and readings of indigenous videos by international audiences constitute mechanisms that resituate productions' messages through acquiring new meanings or underlining the existing ones. Intentionally or not, indigenous productions fulfill certain audience expectations that make them attractive or valuable, and that contribute to making consumption possible. These new readings and audience emphasis on

certain details also allow communicators to realize what international audiences find attractive, and might influence them to mobilize more consciously some of these elements in new productions.

Furthermore, at international Film Festivals and events, indigenous communicators become familiar with new roles attributed to them as *filmmakers*, artists, indigenous representatives, and as speakers about their national reality. It is worth noting the tension between terms used to address indigenous communicators: while in Bolivia they identify themselves as *communicators*, at international events they are usually referred to as *filmmakers*, *videomakers*, or *media makers*. As discussed in Chapter 3, the term *communicator* implies more collective and political work, while *filmmaker* implies a more individual sense, which is also charged with an artistic status. Nevertheless, when they are addressed as *filmmakers* or *videomakers* at international venues, communicators feel an acknowledgement of their work as "professional." Many communicators also explain that when they participate in international events they are expected to speak about the political situation in Bolivia and to address issues relevant to international audiences, such as gender, indigenous rights and natural resources.

In other contexts, communicators have to interact as national representatives. Such was the case of indigenous communicators Patricio Luna's and Marcelina Cárdenas' visit to the Bolivian Embassy in Washington DC as part of their activities to publicize their participation at the *First Nations / First Features* showcase of world indigenous cinema. This visit took place in May 2005, two months before neoliberal Bolivian President Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada was toppled by social and indigenous mobilizations. At this visit, Patricio and Marcelina were surprised to be welcomed as national artists by official

governmental authorities from Bolivia, such as the ambassador, especially since their videos were clearly in support of indigenous struggles against the government of the time. Embassy officials had the mission to welcome them as invited Bolivian artists in the United States, promote their activities, attend screenings, and demonstrate pride about their visit. In this case, possible political tensions were concealed by the emphasis on the *cultural* and *artistic* character of the Festival. Alternatively, during this US visit, Marcelina and Patricio established a different relationship with migrant communities from Bolivia.

Networking within transnational communities

During the First Nations / First Features showcase of world indigenous cinema in New York and Washington DC in May 2005, a group of Bolivian immigrants living in Virginia enthusiastically invited Latin American Festival participants Crisanto Manzano (Mexico), Patricio Luna and Marcelina Cárdenas (Bolivia), to show their films at local community organizations. I, together with another festival organizer, accompanied the team as part of the Festival staff. As we arrived at the elementary school in Arlington where the event would take place we were directed to an ample busy room where, to the surprise of Patricio and Marcelina, children were animatedly rehearsing Morenada and Caporal folkloric Bolivian dances for a forthcoming parade.

As the rehearsal ended, people turned the dancing room into a movie theater: they arranged the chairs in front of a large television, and sat to watch the videos. Marcelina played *Llanthupi Munakuy* (Loving Each Other in the Shadows, 2001) a love story developed in an Andean community of Potosí. The video copy was spoken in Quechua and had English subtitles. The public immediately got engaged with the story. Adults at

times explained to their children details about the carnival celebration, about the food or clothing, or even about Quechua language. As they explained to us later, many of the children present were born and raised in the United States, and only some of them had visited Bolivia for short periods of time. After this video was over, Patricio played *Wiñay Qaman Pacha* (Indigenous Peoples' Cosmovision, 2004), a video he had just produced about Aymara religious life and recent indigenous struggles.

A long conversation followed the screening. People in the audience explained the importance for them, as migrant communities, of having access to cultural expressions from their country, and of being able to maintain them through activities they organize such as national parades, folkloric dances, and courses on indigenous languages like Quechua. They also talked about their lives as migrants: while some have been fortunate to get good jobs, it means a great effort to live in a different place, to communicate in a different language, and to live away from home and family members. They explained these issues as motors for organizing and developing cultural and sometimes political activities that bring them together.

On the way back to the hotel, Elmer, one of the main Virginia organizers, asked Patricio, Marcelina, and Crisanto, if they would be interested in producing a video about Bolivian migrants living in Virginia. Elmer mentioned that he had discussed this possibility with his organization, *Jach'a Aru*, and they had agreed to offer them some money, plane tickets, and food and lodging during the production time. The videomakers showed a lot of enthusiasm about this project, and they had additional meetings with Elmer during their stay to discuss their ideas.

In contrast to screenings with indigenous audiences in Bolivia, where the emphasis relies on indigenous politics, screenings with migrant communities abroad have a stronger focus on cultural references that evoke national identity. In screenings with migrants, audiences are not necessarily indigenous people, nor do they necessarily identify or sympathize with indigenous struggles. They are mostly first-generation adult migrants with both "legal" and "undocumented" jobs in restaurants, stores, domestic service, child and elder care, manufacturing, gardening, and the home building industry. Some middle-class professionals manage to obtain jobs in educational institutions, Latino media, and social organizations.

Due to the diversity within migrant communities in terms of origins and political affiliation, indigenous communicators strive to make themselves legible to migrant audiences mostly through national references. In addition, communicators' dialogue with migrant organizations with more political profiles, like Jach'a Aru, might result in political alliances to develop other kinds of transnational projects, as the video production that Elmer suggested on Bolivian immigrants in Virginia. Although by 2008 the video has not yet been produced, it has already been discussed within the Plan Nacional and the possibility remains open. In this respect, Marcelina mentioned in late 2007 that she would still like to produce the video on migrant communities, but would like to include those living in Spain and Argentina, problematizing economic, labor and family issues around international migration.

Negotiating with distributors and founders

Indigenous filmmakers participating at the First Nations / First Features showcase were invited in May 2005 to the New York University Library to discuss with Festival organizers film distribution and preservation possibilities. Filmmakers attended from places like New Zealand, Australia, Russia, Canada, the United States, Mexico and Bolivia. Punctually at nine o'clock, they entered in group into the twelve-floor gorgeous building that preserves extensive collections of books, journals, periodicals, documents, media, and music. Visitors looked at the interior of the impressive building in silence as they walked to take the elevators to the eleventh floor, where the library's offices were. Directors and staff of the Film and Video Center of the National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI), the Culture and Media Program of the New York University (NYU), and the New York Museum of Modern Art (MOMA), had organized this meeting with the New York University Library. I attended the meeting as part of the NMAI organizing staff, accompanying and translating for Latin American participants.

After people's introduction, Festival organizers explained that the purpose of the meeting was to discuss the possibility for building an indigenous video collection at the Library. They also talked about the digital possibilities of preservation for creating a digital video library. Then they turned to the filmmakers to ask if they have video archives in their countries, and what kind of formats they use. After briefly discussing format particularities, one of the filmmakers asked who had access to the Library collections, and how would they address copyright issues. Representatives of each institution responded: at MOMA they work film distribution under contract for Museum use only, and always with filmmakers' permission; at NYU films are used for educational

purposes for their students and faculty; and the Museum of the American Indian collects native archives mostly for the use of native communities and for general education on indigenous peoples.

Then Aymara videomaker Patricio Luna, from Bolivia, assuming that NYU is a private university, asked who would have access to the NYU collection, and how distribution would be made. The Library representative argued that the collection would "help academics to discover media," and to improve research on specific topics addressed by indigenous media. Abenakiu videomaker Alanis Obomsawin from Canada mentioned that although the use of films is important for educational purposes, they would need to discuss how, under which laws this kind of distribution could be done.

Faye Ginsburg, director of the NYU's Culture and Media Program suggested that videomakers could give advice or guidance on how distribution works in other places, noting for instance that educational institutions in Australia have arrived at agreements with indigenous media makers to use their work. Videomakers responded to this question with different examples that proved the use of their images with no permission of filmmakers or represented people. For instance, Maori filmmaker Merata Mita from New Zealand talked about the issues that Maori people have about the existence of certain sacred images in the public domain. Alanis Obomsawin added: "you might think we are making too much trouble," and explained that this question had to do with their history of appropriating images as indigenous peoples, and with a history of their images being misused.

After most filmmakers provided examples of their historically troubled relationship with the use of indigenous peoples' images, and without a possibility of concrete

distribution outcomes at that point, the meeting concluded with some ideas for the future, such as producing a booklet on issues related to the particularities of indigenous film distribution. Then Festival hosts requested filmmakers to discuss within their organizations and communities the possibility of donating their works to an indigenous video collection in New York City hosted by the Festival's organizing institutions.

As this case shows, the issue of indigenous video distribution is far from being resolved. Similarly, meetings to discuss distribution strategies within the Plan Nacional hardly arrive at concrete agreements. Indeed, this seems to be the most problematic aspect to negotiate within Plan Nacional members, partly because they can not decide how to distribute possible distribution profit: If a part should go to communities, to which ones should it go? And, to whom in those communities? To the authorities? To actors? If a part goes to organizations, how to make sure that it will benefit a group of people and not single leaders? If it goes to communicators, how to distribute money evenly? How to measure work and participation in economic terms? If the money is used to buy equipment, how or who will decide the right uses and distribution of such equipment? And, how to economically compensate political commitment? Although money is necessary to develop each small part of the communication work, the link of the project to a common political mission brings more attention to the "polluting" or corrupting risks of economic benefit. Some alternatives about using distribution profits include investing in actions that strengthen the activities and structure of CAIB; purchasing equipment; investing in communication training; and building an economically self-sustainable distribution system. Another alternative is to add possible incomes to the already existing management structure to invest in the existing activities in order to, eventually, free

themselves from external funding. Until November of 2008, Plan Nacional members had not yet resolved this complex question.

At the same time, the questions and issues raised by indigenous videomakers in the debate on distribution at the NYU Library indicate their awareness and caution against a possible commercial or symbolic exploitation of their images. They also intended to explain additional sacred, ceremonial, or political values and uses of their films beyond their significance for educational, artistic, or entertaining purposes within academic and urban audiences. In this case, Festival organizing institutions were well aware of filmmakers' concerns, and indeed most of their work attempts to create alternative mechanisms of distribution.

These issues, which require a great deal of cultural and political translation, constitute the main difficulties for indigenous videomakers to negotiate with distributing and funding agencies which usually have already their established transaction mechanisms. For instance, in recent times many grant programs and video festivals have created special awards for indigenous filmmakers or for indigenous productions. These awards are a great stimulus and also offer videomakers the possibility to continue working without much economic pressure. Nevertheless, their character as individual grants also complicates the internal dynamic within projects like the Plan Nacional, which prioritize the collective character of the process over individual success or recognition. Additionally, these grants are often a source of distrust among local organizations. The fact that international institutions provide important amounts of money creates the impression that indigenous communicators are "getting rich" out of

people's images, as Wortham explains in her analysis of the Mixe media organization TV Tamix in Oaxaca, Mexico (2005).

Issues and tensions around film distribution also take place in terms of funding possibilities for indigenous video production. CAIB and CEFREC members often mentioned the difficulty for developing relationships with funding institutions without having to adjust to their own programs and priorities or to their lack of understanding of the realities they attempt to work with. For example, once the Plan Nacional received a 10,000 dollar donation from a well-known international institution to develop a series of video workshops with a new communication team. When CEFREC presented the videos produced in such workshops, the founders replied that the videos did not have the expected quality, especially in comparison to other Plan Nacional productions. Despite their disappointment, the founding institution reproduced some of the videos in an elegant package with videos by other indigenous video experiences in the world. When a foundation representative made an evaluation visit to CEFREC's office, CEFREC staff found out that the representative did not speak any Spanish and had to find a volunteer translator to facilitate the conversation. Plan Nacional members commented to me that they felt this particular donation had been too demanding in terms of video quality – especially when funders knew that the money would be used to train a new, inexperienced communication team; and in terms of evaluation procedures –by sending somebody who could hardly communicate directly with beneficiaries. Furthermore, Plan Nacional members felt that the videos were mainly used to publicize the funding institution. After this experience they have been more careful about establishing other forms of collaboration with the mentioned institution.

In this respect, the uniqueness of the Plan Nacional has allowed its members to build more respectful and long term relationships, particularly with the organization Mugarik Gabe from the Basque Country, and with International Cooperation Agencies like the Spanish Agency of International Cooperation. These kinds of entities have supported the work of the Plan Nacional since its start without conditioning funding to their own needs, and opening collaboration with creative initiatives like the production of materials by indigenous videomakers from Bolivia documenting the political reality of European countries. Examples of these videos are *Miradas Cruzadas* (Crossing Sights, 2001) and *Cambiando Actitudes, Generando Equidad* (Changing Attitudes, Generating Equality, 2005), both of them produced by indigenous communicators from Bolivia in the Basque Country, in co-production with Mugarik Gabe.

Politics of distribution

The distribution situations discussed in this Chapter point to the technological and political possibilities of indigenous video in diverse venues. In terms of distribution technology, the examples presented provide different contexts and audiences in which Plan Nacional videos have created a "simultaneous collective experience." The versatility of video technologies permits adapting a movie theater in all kinds of spaces as long as the image and sound can be amplified for a group of people. Despite the diversity of people within one audience, the fact that the projection is a "simultaneous" and "collective" among all of them facilitates to address and discuss specific situations as if all audience members had experienced them. This possibility conveys a key political use to video distribution.

Despite the didactic intention of the Plan Nacional to produce clear single messages, this Chapter shows the ways in which videos still escape the reach of indigenous communicators both because they are detached from the original context, and because their "excessive" quality allows for audiences to create their own meanings. While a video can mean an urgent call to political action in the Amazonian forest, the same piece can mean an ethnographic description of Moxeño traditional healing practices in Beni. Both elements are contained in the film, opened for the viewer's attention. Nevertheless, this openness is somehow directed toward a political reading because videos are not circulated as single objects, but their presentation is always accompanied by the presence of indigenous communicators who engage different audiences to debate about the particular political contexts alluded in videos. Communicators' efforts to keep the videos out of piracy networks and the fact that videos are not distributed as commodities into markets demonstrate that, although Plan Nacional members take advantages of video technology to define distribution strategies, they also limit reproduction possibilities in order to keep some control over the consumption of their materials.

The technological possibilities for "simultaneous collective experience" and "visual excess," as well as the Plan Nacional strategies for emphasizing the political contents of its productions, convey contesting and heterogeneous uses of video distribution which engage the social and political context where they take place.

In terms of political possibilities, I suggest that mechanisms for distributing indigenous video at national and international venues have contributed to bridge social movements. They have done so within national borders through distribution campaigns in rural communities and cities in Bolivia; as well as beyond national borders through the

active participation of Plan Nacional productions at a variety of international venues. Of course, such mechanisms are not free from tensions and contradictions. These are similar to the difficulties that peasant organizations and transnational networks find in terms of developing autonomous relations with international funding agencies and film distributors, stretching of commitments and overloading leaders with responsibilities at numerous political levels, the possibility for corruption, and the problematic competition for funds among local organizations.

Alternatively, the dialogue that indigenous communicators develop with international audiences, international activists, film industry people like distributors, producers, founders, and festival organizers, and even with national official authorities like embassy representatives, puts into play issues of status, sense of personal and political possibility, actual political alliances, as well as unexpected interactions with political antagonists. At community and urban screenings, indigenous communicators establish other kinds of dialogues that promote issues like intercultural knowledge and national unity. While becoming conversant in all these different, and sometimes unexpected scenarios, indigenous communicators might also develop, as Ramos would say about Brazilian Indians, "effective means to conduct their struggle for recognition as legitimate Others" (Ramos 1998:139). Ramos uses the figure of "interethnic Indian" to explain the mechanisms that indigenous peoples develop to interact and negotiate with non-indigenous agents in order to make themselves visible, by emphasizing at the same time their national belonging and their difference (1998). Similarly, by describing the various situations that indigenous communicators experience at international events as artists or *filmmakers*, political representatives, and as indigenous peoples, I intend to demonstrate that both their

videos and their personal presentation imply developing mechanisms for being legible as different, but also for demonstrating to be legitimate videomakers, political activists, and representatives of Bolivia.

Conclusions: "*That's our job!*" Challenges for reimagining politics

During a three-month stay in Potosí in 2007, one cold October evening I received an unexpected visit from Ana Vilacama. She is a founding member of the Indigenous Audiovisual Coordinating Body from Bolivia CAIB (Coordinadora Audiovisual Indígena Originaria de Bolivia) and a Northern Potosí leader. I invited her to drink tea and she stayed for a couple of hours. Since this encounter happened only two months before Evo Morales was elected, our conversation inevitably led to the heated electoral debate. What could happen if Morales won the election, what would be the difficulties, where could things head. Ana told me, almost as a secret, some of her thoughts about possible collaborations between Morales' government and the Plan Nacional. For example, one of her ideas was that if Evo Morales won the elections, perhaps the Plan Nacional could take over the leadership of the state television channel: "If there is an indigenous president, and if indigenous peoples are a majority, why can't we imagine then that indigenous peoples could direct the state channel too?" Then we spoke about the Telesur project in Venezuela, discussing the possible advantages and limitations to work within the government: how critical could it be? We continued imagining scenarios for strengthening indigenous communication. There was an intimate tone in the conversation, and for the first time I could briefly visualize from a closer point the magnitude of the current historical moment in Bolivia, the kind of decisions and possibilities that are disputed, as well as the fragility of political projects. We wondered what would happen if, instead, Jorge "Tuto" Quiroga, the right-wing candidate campaigning for Social Democratic Power PODEMOS (Poder Democrático Social) took the power. Ana answered without hesitating: "lo sacaremos pues! Con marchas y con lucha... en el fondo ese es nuestro trabajo..." "Ese es nuestro trabajo" ("We'll take him out! With

demonstrations and with struggle... at the end that's our job..." "That's our job"), she insisted on repeating this last phrase to herself.

Two months after these events, Evo Morales won the presidential election. This opened numerous possibilities and great expectations. People from different social groups were curious to hear about the new government cabinet and other governmental functions, about which sectors would be represented and how these would correspond to people who had previously participated in social struggles. People were also curious about the new relation between the government and the sectors and organizations that had brought it to power and that up to that moment had acted as the political opposition.

Within the Plan Nacional, communicators and staff also discussed formally and informally how their role would change with the new government. While some thought that they could get a direct responsibility within a government institution, many others figured that it would be better to remain autonomous from the government, working more closely with national organizations. They considered that working for state institutions would imply redirecting their efforts to manage a national, bureaucratic structure, and probably to offer uncritical support to the government. On the government side, there was never a direct attempt to consider inviting the Plan Nacional as a whole to work inside governmental institutions, although some individual members were asked to work at the state television channel and on other state communications initiatives. Over time, however, there have been experiences of collaboration with state communication initiatives, such as the agreement to assign three hours a week on the state TV channel, Canal 9, for the Plan Nacional to broadcast its television programs, as well as similar agreements with the state's rural radio stations to broadcast Plan Nacional programs.

As it turned out, the Plan Nacional has remained autonomous from the new government and from any state funding, as it had been since it was created. As discussed in Chapters 4 and 7, the emergence of the Plan Nacional as a process autonomous from state institutions or funding differs from other processes of indigenous communication in Latin America. For instance, in both Brazil and Mexico, indigenous communications projects first emerged within indigenista state institutions (Wortham 2002 and 2004). Nevertheless, the new role of social organizations in state politics also led to redefine the Plan Nacional working strategies. After the electoral triumph of Morales, the collaboration of national peasant organizations in state politics happened in many ways. First, some indigenous and peasant leaders became state functionaries and representatives (i.e., ministers, deputies, senators). Second, many organization leaders were elected Constituent Assembly representatives.⁵⁵ Third, national indigenous and peasant organizations took the extraordinary initiative to build together a constituent proposal to present to the Assembly. And forth, these national organizations declared that they were monitoring government actions, and that they would defend state processes that indigenous and social movements have achieved through their struggles, such as the Constituent Assembly.

In this reconfiguration of political actors, the Plan Nacional strategically focused its efforts to accompany the other national organizations, particularly in relation to the constituent process. As Chapters 1 and 5 discuss, the Plan Nacional shifted from producing videos with an emphasis on indigenous peoples' cultural aspects, to creating a

⁵⁵ Although many people expected that the call for the Constituent Assembly would allow candidacies by indigenous groups or alternative forms of representation, the document only established representation through political parties. Social movements were very critical of this governmental decision.

concrete Communication Strategy with a focus on indigenous rights that aims at building a national indigenous communication system. In this second period, the Plan Nacional has been working since 2005 in the production of videos, television and radio programs, and distribution campaigns to inform and discuss indigenous rights issues that would later become part of major demands about the new Constitution. It has also trained indigenous communicators –who are themselves, local leaders of national organizations- on indigenous rights and processes. All this work has been done in coordination with national organizations within their Pact of Unity.

The rearrangement of the Plan Nacional around the new configuration of political relations within Morales' government shows that despite their autonomy from governmental institutions or funding, Plan Nacional members feel that they are taking part in the construction of the national project. Indigenous communicators affirm that since the creation of the Plan Nacional, their work has significantly contributed to the struggles that led to the current reconfiguration of Bolivian politics. Furthermore, they feel a strong commitment to continue participating in national political life, which involves taking action on state-building processes, such as the preparation, development and approval of the new Constitution, which has included many of the claims expressed by national indigenous and peasant organizations.

Hence, although not taking part in the state, Plan Nacional members, together with many other sectors, actively engage in political transformations. Considering civil society as a "space" and "set of values" where "people come together in projects of all kinds to make their collective histories" (Chandhoke 2002: 45), indigenous communication in Bolivia constitutes an innovating mode of civil society by developing a notable site of

politics, namely, a unique space to spark engagement, dispute, and imaginaries about the presence of indigenous peoples in national politics.

This mode of nourishing civil society illuminates the intertwined and contentious relationship between social movements and the state, and demonstrates that these two fields are not binary counterparts, but that they are constantly reworked according to complex power-based struggles. This case also permits understanding the contradictions and tensions involved in the challenging task of generating politics.

Politics, video, and indigenous struggles

Throughout its history, the Plan Nacional has dedicated itself to producing video and to other communication activities, adding to the repertoire of subaltern forms of struggle against neoliberal governments in Bolivia since the late 1990s. As explained in the Introduction, this time period is characterized by an increased "indianization" of political practices and symbols since the 1970s indianista ideologies and the 1990s march of lowland indigenous peoples to La Paz, through which objects, mythical features, and general references to indigenous culture, struggle, and life have been mobilized to resignify social movements.

Especially during its 2005 electoral campaign, the Movement Toward Socialism MAS (Movimiento al Socialismo) effectively appropriated and used such symbols together with leftist and nationalist icons. Once it won the elections, the government of President Evo Morales attributed new meanings to these symbols and practices that used to mean opposition and subalternity, making them part of the "official" nationalist discourse. Such are the cases of the national "indigenous" parade; Morales' unofficial

inauguration or, as Silvia Rivera-Cusicanqui calls it, "Evo's coronation" in the archeological site of Tiwanaku; and Morales' quoting Aymara leader Tupac Katari and Mexican Zapatista Subcomandante Marcos during his presidential celebration at the Plaza San Francisco of La Paz.

Many other governments after the 1952 National Revolution, and during Bolivia's "multicultural democratic" period from 1982 to 2005, "folklorized" indigenous and popular references in their official discourses and practices, as Lagos (1993) and Himpele (2008) detail through the example of President Jaime Paz Zamora landing in a helicopter by the festivity of the Virgen de Urkupiña as a way to appropriate this syncretic icon as the "Patroness of National Integration." Nevertheless, in contrast to these ostentatious uses of indigenous and popular icons by previous governments, Himpele explains that "the 2005 election of Evo Morales promised an agenda for full participatory citizenship for all Bolivians, as articulated by potent images of a return to indigenous self-determination" (Himpele 2008: xv). Although current official displays of indigeness also are often ostentatious, these claims are articulated by subjects who have been active in subaltern struggles, and who claim to enunciate an indigenous discourse "from within" their own ethnic and class condition. As I have discussed in Chapter 4, Evo Morales and many other leaders mobilize their own life experience as indigenous men or women who have embodied both discrimination and subaltern struggles, to articulate powerful political discourses. In this context, the appropriation and mobilization of indigenous symbols within official discourses and practices might constitute an additional mechanism to gain authority in the attempts to build an alternative hegemonic project.

Situated in a moment in which indigenous images and symbols have accrued greater significance for indigenous struggles, this dissertation has analyzed the ways in which the Plan Nacional has contributed to building alternative political imaginaries and to reinforcing the participation of peasants and indigenous peoples in the emerging national project.

The previous chapters have pointed out that most indigenous communicators perceive their own work as a significant contribution to national transformations which, in their view, go beyond electoral triumphs or political parties. I have demonstrated the political function of video for raising consciousness through "showing in images" the struggles of indigenous people; and have explained their appropriation of video technologies as a "tool to defend ourselves," through facilitating discussion in rural and urban regions about indigenous issues. In this context, video production adds to creating a commonsensical or normalized idea of indigenous peoples in national politics which did not exist before.

I have also detailed the significance of producing indigenous communication together with national organizations during this new political process, underlining the sense of political urgency and possibility that contribute to feeding the passion and confidence of the communicators' work. Although the Plan Nacional has been careful about not taking sides with any political party, many national leaders and members of CAIB affirm that it has been key for the electoral triumph of Morales. They argue that this happened because communications work has created conditions for informing and discussing issues related to indigenous realities within communities and cities. But beyond the triumph of Morales, many people participating within the Plan Nacional see

the 2000-2008 period as one more step toward what some explain as a "historical moment for indigenous peoples." This process includes the Constituent Assembly as a mechanism to write a new national constitution and, with it, to symbolically re-found the nation within a Pachakuti or cyclic moment of historical renovation. I have also discussed how indigenous communication in the Plan Nacional has been a key educational resource for community leaders who have no access to formal educational institutions, as well as a space for indigenous communicators to acquire a stronger sense of personal and political possibility.

All these elements contribute to defining the Plan Nacional not as a single project but as a process which generates, more than identity or cultural claims, images and imaginaries to contest a common history of oppression and which develops according to previous learning and emerging political needs.

The development of this communication process has involved a strategic use of audiovisual technologies. Videos permit to "intervene" in reality through camera-work, to reenact it through the collective preparation and shooting of scenes, and to organize it through video editing. The "indexical quality" of audiovisual media, through which representations are inevitably attached to real people and places, also creates a feeling of reality and an audiovisual "excess" of information that escape the production context and allow for multiple audience readings. Versatile and low-cost reproduction and distribution technologies contribute to the possibility of turning almost any space into a "movie theater" in order to motivate "simultaneous collective experiences" in varied venues with heterogeneous community, urban, and international audiences.

Finally, I have pointed out many of the structural limitations, internal conflicts and contradictions that communicators face while attempting to take part in major national transformations. These include the economic tensions around ideas of "political commitment" versus "salaries;" the negotiations of topics, narrative styles, aesthetic proposals and schedules with funding agencies; the debates around local and international distribution; the pressures for accomplishing "professional," "good quality," or "politically effective" materials; the unintended reproduction of racial or gender discriminating practices among communicators; and the contradictions between collective and individual authorship.

Possible futures: envisioning a "Plurinational State"

As a concluding remark I outline the challenges of indigenous communication in light of the transformation of the Bolivian state. Particularly since the 1980s, social movements' debates, struggles and claims have taken place within the frame of a democratic state model. For example, as an alternative to the neoliberal state crisis, social mobilizations have put forward the installation of a Constituent Assembly as main demand; they have actively participated in creating a coalition for the electoral, democratic triumph of Morales; their demands are stated in the language of universal and indigenous rights; and many social movement leaders are now acting as government functionaries and representatives.

Such acknowledgment of the state as a legal and political framework for transformations poses tough challenges. On the one hand, subaltern political leaders are aware of the contradictions intrinsic to the modern state, such as its colonial and Liberal

hierarchical roots and structures, its coercive nature, or its tendency to prioritize relationships with political parties over other possible collective political subjects. On the other hand, social mobilizations refer to the state as a legitimate body that can respond to their demands, many of which address indigenous issues.

After many debates, the Pact of Unity of national indigenous and peasant organizations proposed a "Plurinational and Unitary State" as a possible way to overcome some of the contradictions of the Bolivian state and as a mechanism for Indigenous peoples' self-determination. After long debates, the Unitary Plurinational State was defined in the new Constitution's text as an intercultural and plural unified system.⁵⁶ The new definition of the Bolivian state acknowledges and encourages ethnic and cultural diversity; proposes to decolonize governmental practices, to fight bureaucracy and corruption, to redefine the property and use of natural resources, and to acknowledge diverse forms of social, economic, political and religious organization. This complex exercise of imagination by constituent representatives and many other political subjects has meant searching into the past, bringing together mythical and political references, and acknowledging the contentious coexistence of liberal, colonial and indigenous practices within Bolivian history. The new Constitution's text provides fascinating examples of how the moment of "national refoundation" is charged with complex negotiations in which political institutions and practices, moral principles, symbols and mandates get adapted, contested, reappropriated, combined and transformed in order to rethink the

⁵⁶ "Art. 1. Bolivia constitutes itself into a Unitarian Social State of Community-based Plurinational Law. It is free, autonomous and decentralized, independent, sovereign, democratic and intercultural. It is based on political, economic, juridical, cultural and linguistic pluralism, within the country's integration process (Asamblea Constituyente de Bolivia 2007:2). The new Constitution text is programmed to be voted in a referendum in January 2009.

meaning of political life of Bolivia and the mission of its state. By remarking the negotiating character of this text, I argue against possible readings of these pieces as "hybrid" expressions of the emerging state and underscore their existence in power relation processes.

I take the example of the eclectic and sometimes contradictory text of the new Constitution to reflect on how the imaginative quality of videos helps to generate political imaginaries, oppositional practices and claims on the state in the current efforts to "re-found" it. In Chapters 5 and 6 I discussed how indigenous video narratives and aesthetic trends are built in a contingent process of negotiation among different political subjects; in relation to conventional audiovisual narrative and aesthetic criteria; and in dialogue with a great diversity of popular, revolutionary, commercial, and Indianista representations of indigenusness.

In its attempts to portray indigenous realities as an active part of the Bolivian nation, the Plan Nacional adds to the many other symbolic transformations that are taking place in Bolivian political culture. Many of these imply a sort of "indigenized indigenismo" (Himpele 2008:212) through which indigenous peoples produce, appropriate, contest and rework visual representations of themselves. Such images include exacerbated, solemn, romantic, or essentialist images of indigenusness that document internal conflicts, the difficulties of interethnic diversity, colonial legacies, and social struggles in an attempt to project an image of a unified, yet diverse emerging nation.

This case of indigenous communication makes it possible to suggest that these processes of production and circulation of audiovisual materials are actively contributing, together with other governmental and social movements' efforts, to include indigenous

references in political culture; and to build a hegemonic project in which indigenous peoples occupy a more central role. This process is clearly marked by contradiction, complex negotiation mechanisms, and by political violence that often manifests itself in struggles over symbols. Both the conspicuous participation of indigenous peoples in the national independence day parade, which can be read as an official visual display of a pluricultural nation, and racist events in Sucre in November 2007 and May 2008, where the right-wing Civic Committee chased and humiliated indigenous leaders by burning their wiphala flags, ponchos, and other symbols of indigenous authority, exemplify the weight of struggles over symbolic and visual representations within current political practices.⁵⁷

⁵⁷ These kinds of events took place both in November of 2007 to obstruct the approval of the new Constitution, as well as on May 24 of 2008, when Civic Committee members prevented the participation of President Morales in Chuquisaca civic events. Although September 2008 civic committee attacks led by CONALDE were far more violent, the ones in Sucre concretely humiliated people by burning and attacking at "indigenous" symbols.

Acronyms and Organizations

ACLO. Loyola Cultural Action (Acción Cultural Loyola).

ADN. Nationalist Democratic Action (Acción Democrática Nacionalista).

AECI. Spanish Agency for International Cooperation (Agencia Española de Cooperación Internacional).

APCOB. Support to Indigenous Peasants from Eastern Bolivia. (Apoyo al Campesino. Indígena del Oriente Boliviano).

APG. Assembly of Guaraní Peoples (Asamblea del Pueblo Guaraní).

ARTECAMPO. Cruceño Handicrafts from the Countryside (Artesanía Cruceña del Campo).

CAIB. Indigenous Audiovisual Coordinating Body from Bolivia (Coordinadora Audiovisual Indígena Originaria de Bolivia).

CAOP. Council of Originario Ayllus of Potosí. (Consejo de Ayllus Originarios de Potosí).

C-CAL. Latin American Filmmakers Committee. (Comité de Cineastas de América Latina).

CEFREC. Film Training and Production Center (Centro de Estudios, Formación y Realización Cinematográfica).

CIDOB. Bolivian Indigenous Peoples' Confederation (Confederación de Pueblos Indígenas de Bolivia).

CIPOAB. Indigenous Union of Originario People from the Pando Amazon. (Central Indígena de Pueblos Originarios de la Amazonía de Pando).

CLACPI. Latin American Council of Indigenous Peoples' Film and Communication. (Consejo Latinoamericano de Cine y Comunicación de Pueblos Indígenas).

COB. Bolivian Workers Central. (Central Obrera Boliviana).

COICA. Coordinating Body of Indigenous Communities of the Amazon Basin. (Coordinadora Indígena de la Cuenca Amazónica).

CONACINE. National Film Council (Consejo Nacional de Cine).

CONAIE. Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador (Confederación de Nacionalidades Indígenas del Ecuador).

CONALDE. National Democratic Council (Consejo Nacional Democrático).

CONAMAQ. National Council of Ayllus and Markas of Qullasuyo (Consejo Nacional de Ayllus y Markas del Qollasuyo).

CPEMB. Union of Moxeño Ethnic Peoples from Beni (Central de Pueblos Étnicos Mojeños del Beni).

CPIB. Union of Indigenous Peoples from Beni (Central de Pueblos Indígenas del Beni).

CPILAB. Union of Indigenous Peoples from La Paz (Central de Pueblos Indígenas de La Paz).

CSCB. Union Confederation of Migrant Settlers of Bolivia (Confederación Sindical de Colonizadores de Bolivia).

CSUTCB. Trade Union Confederation of Bolivian Peasant Workers (Confederación Sindical Única de Trabajadores Campesinos de Bolivia).

FAIs. Indigenous Audiovisual Facilitators (Facilitadores Audiovisuales Indígenas).

FETCTC. Special Federation of Peasant Workers from the Tropic of Cochabamba (Federación Especial de Trabajadores Campesinos del Trópico de Cochabamba).

FNMCIQB-BS. Bartolina Sisa National Federation of Indigenous and Peasant Women of Bolivia (Federación Nacional de Mujeres Campesinas Indígenas y Originarias de Bolivia Bartolina Sisa).

FORMASOL. Solidary Formation (Formación Solidaria).

FSTMB. Trade Union Federation of Bolivian Mine Workers (Federación Sindical de Trabajadores Mineros de Bolivia).

ICB. Bolivian Film Institute (Instituto Cinematográfico Boliviano).

ILO. International Labour Organization.

IPSP. Political Instrument for People's Sovereignty (Instrumento Político por la Soberanía de los Pueblos).

IU. United Left (Izquierda Unida).

MAS. Movement Toward Socialism (Movimiento Al Socialismo).

MIP. Pachakuti Indigenous Movement (Movimiento Indígena Pachakuti).

MIR. Revolutionary Left Movement (Movimiento de la Izquierda Revolucionaria).

MITKA. Tupac Katari Revolutionary Indian Movement. (Movimiento Indio Tupac Katari).

MNCVB. New Bolivian Film and Video Movement. (Movimiento de Nuevo Cine y Video Boliviano).

MNR. National Revolutionary Movement. (Movimiento Nacionalista Revolucionario).

NMAI. National Museum of the American Indian (Museo Nacional del Indígena Americano).

OIN. Native Instruments Orchestra (Orquesta de Instrumentos Nativos).

OITA. Tacana Peoples' Organization (Organización del Pueblo Tacana).

ORKAWETA. Organization of Wenayeeek Captainship in Tarija (Organización de la Capitanía Wenayeeek en Tarija).

PIB. Bolivian Indian Party (Partido Indio de Bolivia).

PODEMOS. Social Democratic Power (Poder Democrático Social).

THOA. Workshop of Andean Oral History (Taller de Historia Oral Andina).

UJC. Santa Cruz Youth Union (Unión Juvenil Cruceñista).

UNDP. United Nations Development Programme (PNUD. Programa de las Naciones Unidas para el Desarrollo).

UNESCO. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (Organización de las Naciones Unidas para la Educación, la Ciencia y la Cultura).

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