

**Seeing Like a NGO:  
Encountering Development and Indigenous Politics in the Andes**

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**Abstract:**

Drawing inspiration from the critical literature on “post-development,” this paper explores the global and local nature of Indigenous politics through a comparative historical and ethnographic analysis of “development encounters” between Indigenous peoples and their international supporters. Based on field research in Bolivia and Peru, this paper examines the role of US and European non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in Indigenous politics, and of Indigenous organizations in NGO politics. Examining international cooperation (*cooperación internacional*) as a “contact zone,” I argue that network and structural theories of transnational politics should be complemented by cultural analyses of the very terms of “local-global” encounters. While boomerang effects are crucial for Indigenous politics, this paper argues that we must apprehend their constitutive effects (allowing the emergence of new kinds of Indigenous identities and actors) in addition to their causal ones (helping certain actors at certain times more than others). Paying attention to both kinds of impacts can help us understand how progressive NGOs both enable transnational networks of solidarity and activism and (re)produce tensions between and among Indigenous communities and their transnational advocates.

“The [Oxfam America] South America regional program maintains an office in Lima, Peru, where it is recognized in the region for helping local organizations revitalize Indigenous knowledge and culture, restoring pride in their customs and traditions.”

Oxfam America

“Good global politics do not always make good local politics.”

Beth Conklin

Indigenous peoples have become accustomed to a sense of paradox in the Americas. Ideologies, museums and textbooks place them at the very center of Latin American histories; yet enduring poverty and racism push them to the margins of contemporary societies. Indigenous identities are rooted in local traditions and lands; yet they are defined and defended with the help of international law and transnational development agencies. Central yet marginal, local and global, the state of Indigenous politics today offers an opportunity to take stock of the impact, scales, and stakes of transnational activism.

Throughout the region since the 1960s, Indigenous people have reconstituted themselves politically through powerful acts of organization, mobilization, and other forms of self-representation both locally and globally. As many scholars have noted, an important part of this political construction of indigeneity has involved non-Indigenous networks that include transnational actors like churches, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and international development agencies (e.g. Albó, 1991; Brysk, 1994; García 2005; Jackson 1995; Lucero 2008; Yashar, 2005). As Arturo Escobar notes, it is in this way that “development operates as an arena for cultural contestation and identity construction” (Escobar 1995: 15).

This paper explores how international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) and Indigenous actors negotiate the meanings of indigeneity and “international cooperation.” This study pays special attention to the experiences of Oxfam America, an especially important funder of Indigenous political activity in Latin America. While its grants are relatively modest compared

to multilateral programs, as one of the earliest funders of Indigenous activism, lessons from its “Indigenous encounter” are especially important. Additionally, Oxfam America is an especially interesting case as it has received careful and insightful attention from other scholars (especially Spalding 2010, 2011; Huber 2007; Smith 1985). Spalding (2010, 2011) characterizes Oxfam America as a “domesticating INGO,” one that helps root politics in domestic soil and “scale downward” to engage local causes and contexts. I am in broad agreement with Spalding’s argument and description. This paper suggests that in addition to “domesticating,” INGOs also serve “authenticating” roles, serving as part of the complex process of legitimizing certain identities (and thus, delegitimizing others). This paper examines different moments in the interactive process of legitimation between INGOs such as Oxfam America and Indigenous political organizations in Peru and Bolivia, as actors on both sides of the development encounter shape discourses over the meanings of development and indigeneity across local and global scales. While this is a dialogical process, this paper takes special interest in the view from the INGO side of the development “contact zone” and asks questions about INGO “ways of seeing.” Though I hasten to add that there is no single INGO (or even Oxfam) view-of-the-world, keeping an ethnographic eye on what following Said we might call the “imaginary geographies” produced by INGO regional and programmatic specializations. This kind of close examination can shed light on both the *constitutive* effects of development (i.e. the construction and authorization of certain actors and identities) as well as *causal* relationships between transnational funders and local movements (which enable certain outcomes and foreclose others).

### **Seeing Like a State/ Seeing Like an NGO: Transnational Contact Zones**

James Scott (1998), building on the insights of Michel Foucault and others, has argued that statecraft is, among other things, a project of legibility. Working like forest scientists or urban planners, state-making agents simplify and standardize often chaotic and complex societies. All state formation, in Scott's view, resembles a kind of “civilizing mission.” As Scott (1998: 82)

puts it, “The builders of the modern nation-state do not merely describe, observe, and map; they strive to shape a people and landscape that will fit their technique of observation.” Like most definitions of the state (including Max Weber’s influential one), this one identifies an ideal more than a robust empirical pattern. Indeed, as many scholars note, Latin American states (and African ones, and perhaps the majority of states in the world) have an incredibly uneven reach across their national territories. Indeed, in many areas of the Amazonian and Andean rural countryside, the state (as bureaucracy or law) is notably absent. As O’Donnell argues in an influential essay that proposed a color-coded map of “stateness”, one finds fewer schools and courts the further one travels from the state-dense “blue zones” of capital cities to the state-light “brown zones” or rural hinterlands (O’Donnell 1993; see also Yashar 2005). While the national state may not be there, I would argue that it is a mistake to characterize Indigenous territories as “ungoverned spaces” (to invoke a popular and current national-security formulation).

Looking at Andean communities in Ecuador, Rudi Collaredo-Mansfeld (2009) argues that Scott’s *Seeing Like a State* dualisms (big simplifying state vs. small resisting community, high-modernism vs. local *metis*) mislead us by suggesting that the local community is “outside of” and opposed to the state. Turning Scott’s argument on its head, Collaredo-Mansfeld suggests that the state’s categories and practices (like the mapping and registration of Indigenous *comunas* with state ministries) make possible the “massing” and scaling-up of Indigenous mobilization. He urges us to see how the seemingly prosaic elements of Indigenous community life—marking jurisdictional lines, having lists for communal labor, and the work of local councils—are not separate and opposed to the state; they are forms of “vernacular statecraft.” The term “vernacular,” is borrowed not from linguistics but from architecture in which “builders imitate and appropriate standard elements of widely used design, adapting them for local conditions” (Collaredo-Mansfeld 2009: 17). This is a remarkably persuasive argument. The only criticism I would make is that in the process of dissolving the dualism of national state and local community, Collaredo-Mansfeld has left untroubled the distinctions between local and global.

Ethnographies of community governance from a variety of sites—e.g. Jean Jackson’s (1995) work in Colombia, Tania Li’s (2000) on Indonesia, James Ferguson’s (2006) on Zambia Andolina et al.’s (2009) comparative work in the Andes (to name only a few)—reveal that instead of reproducing the dichotomies of society/state and local/global, we should consider how thoroughly (if unevenly) transnational the tasks of disciplining and governing are in much of the world. The “civilizing mission” Scott describes has been carried out by a variety of actors that includes local elites and community assemblies, transnational corporation, churches, and of course, non-governmental organizations. Rather than think about vast swaths of national spaces throughout the world that are “ungoverned,” one should consider that these spaces are characterized by a shifting constellations of what Ferguson (2006: 103) calls “transnational governmentality,” an apparatus of power that “does not *replace* the old systems of nation-states... but overlays it and coexists with it.” Rather than looking for stark boundaries and frontiers between local and global, we are in a more complex transnational “contact zone” (Pratt 1992).

In these contact zones, INGO and Indigenous organizations play a crucial role. Both kinds of INGOs that Spalding identifies (global node and domesticating) have funded Indigenous organizations and NGOs in a variety of projects on multiple scales that involve the surveying, documenting, and shaping of certain spaces and people. This collaboration of “outside” funders with “grassroots” actors involve practices and discourses across a terrain made up of uneven power relations. Yet, rather than see them as imperial impositions (*pace* James Petras), it is perhaps best to see these actors as part of a set of cultural and material resources that are used by local actors to re-fashion and re-position themselves within often hostile political environments (Li 2000). It is important to note that these are not faceless or nameless actors. INGOs and Indigenous organizations are lead and staffed by individuals with rich sets of experiences, preferences, and ideologies. As “cultural brokers” or “imagineers”, these individuals can exert significant influence in the ways in which economic and cultural capital are made available to some actors and not to others.

As kinds of “switchmen” INGO professionals and Indigenous movement leaders can play important roles at “critical junctures.” Understanding critical junctures, as the Colliers’ suggest, obligates us to identify antecedent conditions, moments of crisis or opportunity, and mechanisms which reproduce certain legacies. Additionally, it also required us to be attentive to the “imaginative geographies” that are produced by shared and competing visions of “local-global” projects. Indeed, the metaphor of junctures may be too restrictive as agents do not simply help select this path or that one, but rather they help produce the kind of political relationships that make possible Indigenous mobilizations and movements. Accordingly, to understand how INGO and Indigenous actors “see” and shape a certain social landscape, one must know something about the ideas that guide INGO interventions and the historical and political context in which they operate. The experiences of Oxfam America in Peru and Bolivia offer excellent opportunities to do just that.

### **Oxfam America: Searching for Unity Within Diversity?**

Support for Indigenous organizations marked a trend that began in the early 1980s when Oxfam America began to fund Indigenous organizations as part of its “rights-based” approach to addressing social problems of poverty and social exclusion. Oxfam America is one of twelve Oxfam International affiliates, a network of non-profit agencies that trace their beginning to the Oxford Committee for Famine Relief, founded in 1942 in response to the plight of Greek war refugees. In the early 1970s, a group of volunteers founded Oxfam America (with support from Oxfam Great Britain) in response to humanitarian crises that accompanied the struggle for independence in Bangladesh ([www.oxfamamerica.org](http://www.oxfamamerica.org)). In the 1980s, under the direction of U.S. anthropologist Richard Chase Smith, Oxfam America’s newly formed South American Regional Program focused its humanitarian and political work specifically towards Indigenous people (Wright 1988; Anonymous Interviews at offices of Oxfam America, IBIS, Lima, Peru and La Paz Bolivia 2006-2007).

Smith had conducted much research surveying the landscape of Indigenous politics in the Andean/Amazonian region and presented his view of Indigenous politics in an oft-cited paper titled “Searching for Unity within Diversity.” Smith called for an analytical distinction between three types of Indigenous organizations: *campesino* labor unions, *indianista* groups, and ethnic federations.<sup>1</sup> His typology was structured along the dimensions of identity, autonomy, and representativity. The collective identities of “campesino” and “indianista” organizations operated in terms of ideological oppositions of class analysis, in the case of campesinos (workers vs. capital) and of anti-colonialism, in the case of indianistas (colonizers vs. colonized). Ethnic federations were less tied to grand theories and sought to articulate local identifications. In terms of autonomy, all organizations responded to some degree of “outside” interests. Campesino organizations were often closely connected to political parties of the left, and ethnic federations counted on close NGO ties. While indianistas were most vocal in refusing “to make any alliance with outside groups which may be ‘tinged’ with non-Indian domination,” in practice they too often received funds from friendly European NGOs (Smith 1983: 34). Smith’s last criteria concerning representativity, suggested that modern, Indigenous organizations should be independent from the rigid ideologies and the tutelage of political parties or outside actors, and should connect leaders at the top with communities at the base, and Smith saw indianista groups as the least representative of all types.

This conceptual view grew out of a variety of negative interactions that Smith had had with members of indianista organizations like the CISA (*el Consejo Indio Sud-Americano*, the South American Indian Council). CISA was seen by Smith as a divisive and overly “ideological” force and was already receiving funding from the International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs (IWGIA) in Copenhagen and had already spoken for Indigenous people at the United

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<sup>1</sup> Page numbers are from the original 1983 paper. Smith (2002) has re-visited his typology to note the decline of indianista organizations and the emergence of two additional ideal-types for the Andean countries: the Indigenous non-governmental organization and the Indigenous political party.

Nations.<sup>2</sup> At Oxfam America, Smith's interest was "to get more of a community-based approach as opposed to [that of the] ideologues" (Interview May 6, 2006). In this spirit, Smith, as a representative of Oxfam America, and in coordination with other advocacy groups like Cultural Survival, convened a foundational meeting between Oxfam America and Amazonian Indigenous leaders (themselves products of years of struggles between Indigenous communities, states, and social forces) from Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, and Brazil in Lima, Peru.

"I went into this meeting with that analysis [of the merits of campesino, indianist, and ethnic federations] already made." Thus, this meeting serves as a kind of foundational moment in the relationship between Oxfam America and Indigenous organizations. It is important to emphasize that the participants at the meeting were far from blank slates, awaiting the wisdom of Oxfam, Smith, or anyone else. All leaders present came from organizations that themselves were products of years of struggles between Indigenous communities, states, and social forces. However, this meeting did represent an important opportunity to find a new articulation of South American Indigenous politics in light of the problems that had arisen with CISA (Smith, Interview May 6, 2006).<sup>3</sup>

One of the Indigenous leaders at the meeting described some of those complaints as a problem of what he called the problem of "*indigenas sueltos*" (literally: loose Indians). "These are Indigenous people without majority support. Loose Indians or cheap Indians without a clear position. Wherever there is money, there they go. When there isn't they aren't there. They have no real identity, they lack their own identity. They are following their own interests" (Anonymous interview, Lima, Peru, May 20, 2006). Speaking of an Indianista activist in Peru, Smith used similar language. The Indianista leader "is not Indian, but as mestizo as you can get. He was of the school of thought that anyone can be an Indian as long as your heart is in the right place and that sounded very dangerous to me" (Interview May 6, 2006).

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<sup>2</sup> Leaders from CISA participated in the first meetings of the U.N. Commission on Human Rights, based in Geneva (Smith, Interview; Smith, 2002).

<sup>3</sup> For Smith's published account of that meeting see (Smith, 2002).

Not all accept Smith's view. Javier Lajo, a former member of CISA, recognizes that the organization had its problems, but that it should not be up to white, U.S. anthropologists to certify or de-certify who can and who cannot speak for Indigenous people (Lajo, 2003).<sup>4</sup> While this is an important critique, it should be pointed out that a negative view of CISA was not confined to the head of Oxfam America, but voiced often by Amazonian and Andean leaders in Bolivia, Ecuador, and Peru. Moreover, while we should not overestimate the ability of any INGO to dictate the terms of Indigenous recognition, it is important to see that they do form part of the process of "positioning" indigeneity with national and global agendas (Li 2000) It is in this sense that this meeting among INGO and Indigenous leaders in the early 1980s in Lima is instructive.

At this meeting then, one sees the conflict of two of Smith's "types": ethnic federation against Indianist organization. From an early moment, Oxfam America made a choice to work with ethnic federations.<sup>5</sup> When I asked Smith if it was a political decision to work with ethnic federations rather than Indianist or campesino federations, he responded: "it was a political decision *not* to work with CISA. But it was not a decision against working with campesino based organizations" (Smith, Interview, May 5, 2006).

Thus, from the standpoint of Smith and Oxfam America (at the time) the criterion of representativity worked against Indianismo, while that of autonomy worked against campesino federations. This left the "ethnic federation" as the remaining organizational alternative, not only by default, but also because it worked best with the remaining criterion: identity. Unlike "campesino" and "Indianista" identities, "ethnic federation" did not impose a broad class or racialized pan-Indian category, but rather encouraged the articulations of various local identities. There is good reason to doubt the adequacy of the "ethnic" modifier in "ethnic federations" (as Indigenous groups continue to debate the utility of "nation" and "nationality" to describe their status), but the kind of "people-centered" actors represented in the 1984 meeting in Lima (Shuars,

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<sup>4</sup> For a more thorough discussion of Lajo's critique see García and Lucero (forthcoming).

<sup>5</sup> This does not mean that Oxfam only funds ethnic federations, as it also supports community level organizations and even academic groups.

Aguarunas and Kichwas), properly illustrates the view Oxfam had of “revitalizing” the traditions of and “restoring pride” in indigeneity.

Additionally, this meeting allowed for an extraordinary cross-regional exchange of views on indigeneity. Smith and Oxfam America had invited a legal scholar of Native North America, the late Howard Berman to join the conversation. Addressing the group of leaders from ONIC (Colombia), CONFENIAE (Ecuador), AIDSESEP (Peru), CIDOB (Bolivia) and UNI (Brazil), Berman shared some of his experiences working with the Iroquois Nation who at the time were “setting the tone” for internationalizing Indigenous rights in spaces like the United Nations. As Smith tells the story, Berman provided a masterful discussion of some of the key questions about the key words of Indigenous politics.

What was territory, what was people, pueblo, what did it mean? What was self-determination and why was there such a fight over it? [On] all these issues Howard Berman was working academically...It was a master class. I learned a lot from an international law perspective and the Indigenous representatives learned a lot. Then there was an internal debate, are we a nation, nationality, people, tribe? [And the idea of] self-determination was scary, not just to the military but also to Indigenous people. It was less scary as Howard Berman explained that there was a whole range of relationships with the state, [from separation to assimilation] and self-determination meant deciding where you wanted to be. That made it much more palatable (Interview, May 5, 2006).

In consideration of these ideas, a decision was made to create a new framework for collective action, formalizing the relationship among the various Indigenous people in what became known as COICA (*Coordinadora de Organizaciones Indígenas de la Cuenca Amazónica*, the Coordinator of Indigenous Organizations of the Amazonian Basin). The success of these efforts lies not in homogenizing Indigenous subjectivities but rather in the creation, dissemination, and socialization of a particular framework which Indigenous people navigate in a

variety of ways. (See also Lucero 2008, Greene, 2001; Warren and Jackson, 2002; Andolina, Radcliffe and Laurie, 2009).

I should add one final note about the historical moment during which these ideas and organizations were forged. When Smith presented his views on the importance of ethnic federations (and his critique of class-based organizations) in an academic seminar at the Colegio de México, many critics immediately thought of Cold War-era Nicaragua, where the Miskito struggles against the Sandinista government were taken as an example of the dangers of Indigenous politics, the danger of serving “reactionary” political projects and weakening “revolutionary” ones (Smith, Interview 2006; cf. Hale 1995). However, as the 1980s came to a close with the dramatic collapse of “class-centered” projects, the “people-centered” projects that Oxfam America had been supporting in Latin America suddenly found support from a growing number of practitioners of what Mexican scholar and UN Special *Rapporteur* Rodolfo Stavenhagen coined as “ethnodevelopment,” a term that would a decade later be operationalized in the policies of the World Bank.<sup>6</sup> Already at this moment, we can see important lessons about indigeneity that have been subsequently elaborated in the growing literature on Indigenous movements.

First, we note the importance of what we might call the geopolitics of “encountering indigeneity.” The Cold War moment in which these early discussions emerged along with the existing connections between Indianista organizations and European NGOs, and between the Iroquois and the United Nations, served as an important context for actors in Oxfam America and for the Amazonian Indigenous representatives. The international environment created both constraints and opportunities for the elaboration of new partnerships between Indigenous actors and INGOs and helped change the style in which transnational Indigenous politics had until then operated. It is important to signal that the partnerships between INGO officers and their

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<sup>6</sup> According to Smith, Stavenhagen was one of the critics at the seminar at the Colegio de Mexico. A man of the left, Stavenhagen seemed to have his worries about identity politics. If this is so, his transformation into one of the leading scholars of Indigenous rights is quite remarkable.

Indigenous counterparts take place within a network of norms and power-relationships that are constantly open to negotiation (Brysk 1994, 2002; García 2005; Greene 2006; Warren and Jackson, 2005).

Second, the process of creating various kinds of Indigenous subjectivities and key words, such as self-determination and territory, was already subject to the (locally) embedded encounters of such transnational actors as missionaries, anthropologists, development workers, oil companies, and others with local contact to Amazonian populations. For instance, by the time Evaristo Nugkuag, one of the Peruvian Amazonian leaders, arrived at the 1984 Lima meeting, he had already passed through the classrooms of the Summer Institute of Linguistics, attended a university in Lima, lobbied vigorously in Germany against the destructive consequences of the filming of Werner Herzog's *Fitzcarraldo*, and met a group of U.S. and Peruvian anthropologists who were interested in supporting the efforts of Aguaruna activists to create their own political organization. The important lesson is two-fold: on the one hand we must avoid implying that Oxfam America imposed any form of indigeneity on Indigenous people, but rather, on the other, emphasize that it became an important part of a process already underway to define the shape of Indigenous politics throughout the region, especially in neighboring Bolivia.

### **Oxfam in Bolivia: The Case of the Ayllus<sup>7</sup>**

Ayllus were the basic units of the archipelago-like communities that stretch over multiple ecological zones and existed well before Europeans arrived in the Americas over five hundred years ago. Many ayllus and markas (a larger communal unit made up of several ayllus) maintained their organizational forms throughout the republican period, sometimes making explicit pacts with government officials (Murra 1984; Platt 1982; Rivera 1992). During the modernizing campaign that followed the social revolution of 1952, ayllu governance faced its biggest threat as the state sought to impose a uniform union (*sindicato*) model throughout the

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<sup>7</sup> This section draws heavily from Lucero (2006).

countryside. As Albó (1991) has put it, the state tried to “re-baptize Indians as peasants,” moving from ayllus to unions. A dramatic example of this occurred in the marka of Machaqa (which today occupies most of what is the province of Ingavi), which was “fragmented . . . into 72 rural unions” (Choque n.d.: 8). Consequently, ayllu practices often had to exist subterraneously within union structures (Ticona 1996b). And this “re-baptizing” didn’t only come from the state. Even as independent organizing efforts emerged from indigenous-campesino actors like the CSUTCB (Unified Confederation of Rural Workers of Bolivia), union models were privileged over ayllus. The “unionizing” of the *altiplano* was uneven. While many ayllus did convert to union models, in several cases they continued to operate like ayllus (Rojas, Ticona, and Albó 1995: 126).

Ayllu leaders have had to enter transnational networks to translate their “pre-Columbian” cultural capital into nationally relevant social organizations. The recent history of the ayllus is best understood in the context of international development and new legal orders of official multiculturalism. The 1980s represent the first phase of the modern ayllu movement which took place in precisely those regions where ayllu traditions were strongest, the departments of Oruro and Potosí. In the wake of a severe drought (1982–83) and a rapidly deteriorating national economy, there emerged a new effort in the *altiplano* to channel international resources to new development projects. Those projects exacerbated the conflict between ayllu and *sindicato* organizational forms. Some national NGOs—often linked to leftist or Indigenous (Katarista) political parties—saw union structures as the only viable organizational form suitable for development projects and made it a requirement for receiving development assistance. Many Aymaras, who had opted to keep traditional authorities and rejected the *sindicato*, found themselves in a difficult situation (Rivera and THOA 1992; Andolina 2003).

Some international funders, however, did not have an anti-ayllu bias. Most notably, the European Economic Community funded the Self-Development Campesino Program (PAC, Proyecto de Autodesarrollo Campesino), which opted to work not with unions but with ayllus. In

Potosí and Oruro, “the willingness to understand and redeem the traditional organizational structure by an external agent such as PAC, at the same time stirred up cultural validation in the communities, accompanied by a growing willingness of self affirmation. Little by little . . . they began to develop common platforms of action” (Izko 1992 cited in Andolina 2003: 130). International funds thus created a new set of opportunities for reversing the “*sindicalización*” of certain highland regions.

In the last years of the decade, provincial ayllu federations were founded in Oruro (FASOR, Federation of Ayllus South of Oruro) and Potosí (FAOINP, Federation of Indigenous Ayllus of North Potosí), followed by the establishment of a National Council of Ayllus and Markas (CONAMAQ). However, European programs cannot take full credit for driving local events. In fact, the thin knowledge that European project managers had of ayllu structures arguably distorted pre-existing systems of authority rather than simply strengthening them. As an Aymara research team found, the European projects would begin by consulting the *jilanqu* who governed a set of communities where projects were planned. However, once the project was underway, development programs ignored the ayllu territorial systems and established centers from which an agronomist, and engineer, and a surveyor could attend to the needs of several different ayllus (Rivera and THOA 1992: 189–190). As this study suggests, the European funders’ most important contribution was beginning a process in which the “ayllu question” went from a local one to a transnational one.

Indeed, there were well-placed people in and outside of Bolivia who saw ayllus as options for the future, not relics of the past. Oxfam once again plays an important role. Richard Chase Smith, of Oxfam America, recalled a day in his graduate training when a young historian named Tristan Platt visited a seminar taught by renowned Andeanist scholar John Murra. Platt astonished Smith and his fellow students by detailing how ayllus were not just the sixteenth-century units Murra had researched so ably, but also viable contemporary social and political units. Years later at Oxfam, Smith was struck that Bolivian political and social actors did not

seem to know what his former seminar classmates learned, that ayllus continued “to regulate the social, economic, and religious life of tens of thousands of Andean campesinos” (Smith 1992: 15). In the late 1990s, as the rural union leadership of the CSUTCB was entering a political crisis, a new federation of ayllus came into existence, with the help of Oxfam and a Bolivian research organization, the Andean Oral History Workshop (THOA, Taller de Historia Oral Andina).

The relationship between THOA and Oxfam America is emblematic of the transnational nature of the resurgence of ayllus. THOA was founded in 1983, a product of the intellectual and political activities associated with Indigenous political organizing of the CSUTCB and broader Aymara nationalism. However, THOA soon grew disillusioned with the marginalization of Aymara and Quechua politics in an organization with “a union, peasant, and classist essence” (Choque n.d., 2). THOA began to dedicate an increasing amount of work to “rescuing” the ayllu from political or social erasure, both in terms of scholarly research as well as non-governmental advocacy, often with aid from Oxfam America and other international sponsors of Indigenous causes.<sup>8</sup> The 1990s signaled the beginning of a new period in THOA’s institutional biography, as well as in the trajectory of the ayllu movement. This new period was inaugurated by changes advanced by the administration of President Jaime Paz Zamora. Paz Zamora, in 1991, oversaw the ratification of International Labor Organization (ILO) 169 (which recognizes the existence and collective rights of Indigenous people). That same year, as part of a set of economic reforms, he announced the implementation of new taxes that would have important impacts in the countryside. Many ayllus were at the center of resistance, as they often had colonial titles that seemed to exempt them from state taxes. THOA began to get requests from the ayllus to help resist this new imposition of the Bolivian state. THOA helped many ayllus begin the move from union models back to ayllu forms of governance, something that THOA and ayllu leaders felt would provide ayllus with more protection, especially in the light of the ratification of ILO 169.

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<sup>8</sup> Other funders included the Inter-American Foundation, Plan International, and the Danish INGO, IBIS.

All this, THOA members explain, coincided with the CIDOB (the lowland ethnic federation) March of Dignity from the Amazon to the altiplano (1992) and a deepening crisis within the more class-based CSUTCB (THOA Group Interviews, November 8 and August 22, 1999). The state reforms of the mid-1990s, especially the Law of Popular Participation (LPP, 1994) and Nation Agrarian Reform Law (INRA, 1996) contributed to the changes in incentive and opportunity structures. The first law gave legal standing (*personeria jurídica*) to Indigenous, peasant, and urban collectivities, thus giving ayllus the opportunity to officially register with the state as a territorial base organization (OTB). The second law changed agrarian reform laws to allow Indigenous people (and only Indigenous people) the right to conform what the law calls original communal lands (TCO). Given these new political, economic, and cultural benefits, many communities that previously identified as “peasant communities” (in line with the 1953 agrarian laws) now opted for “reconstituting” themselves as ayllus. The changes in national law, however, are themselves linked to transnational actors such as DANIDA (Denmark Foreign Aid Agency), which provides much of the funding for the implementation of Popular Participation, and the World Bank supports the state land reform initiative (Javier Callua, DANIDA official, Interview, October 7, 1999). Additionally, Oxfam America, IBIS-Denmark, Plan International, and other INGOs have begun to make more funds available for the multiple activities involved in reconstituting the ayllus and linking them in the emerging structures like federations in Oruro and Potosí.

To get a sense of how these changes are transforming local spaces, it is helpful to consider a meeting I attended in Pacajes, a province in the altiplano of the La Paz department in November 1999. It took a few hours (and a few changes of typically cramped vans) to travel from La Paz to the site of the meeting, Callapa, the only pueblo in Pacajes that had not abandoned the sindicato and returned to the structure of original authorities like Jilaqatas, Mallkus, and Mama T’allas. Professionals from an Aymara-run organization, the Center for the Holistic Development of Aymara Women (CDIMA) ran the meeting in Callapa as essentially a

workshop on the country's new legal reforms and the advantages of econstitution.<sup>9</sup>

The CDIMA professionals displayed an impressive command of the new constitutional and legal framework of Indigenous rights. They moved effortlessly from the main constitutional provisions (Article 1, 171) to the specific paragraphs, sections, and subsections of tax codes, international treaties, and new laws. Their explanation of the Law of Popular Participation was particularly effective. They explained that the LPP created a new division of powers on the local level: *municipio*, oversight committees, and OTBs. In this scheme, there is no more room for *sindicatos*. “*Sindicatos* have nothing to do in the municipal government,” they explained. “Therefore, they should soon disappear.” This was a bit misleading as *sindicatos* *are* allowed to have a role under the new law. The law does not allow, however, the same community to have legal standing as both an Indigenous community and a *sindicato*. Thus, by reconstituting *ayllus*, *sindicatos* would in effect disappear.

Having erased unions on the blackboard, the presenters moved to important keywords in the new Indigenous political lexicon: *land* and *territory*. The distinction between the two, Smith (1996) explains, was first elaborated by a UN Working group, then adopted by Amazonian organizations, and then by Indigenous groups through the Americas. CDIMA professionals drew the clear difference between land and territory. Land, they argued, was the 30-cm layer of arable soil, the individual plots that Bolivian peasants fought for in 1952. Territory was much more—it included the sun, moon, mountains, stars, flora, and fauna—the stuff of cosmovisions. And territory could be legally protected if Indigenous people legalized their *ayllu* and contacted the government to do the necessary studies. The CDIMA team emphasized that many of

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<sup>9</sup> CDIMA was founded by Alicia Caniviri, an Aymara woman who serves on the board of the international Indigenous advocacy group Abya-Yala (headquartered in Oakland). The growing presence of Aymara professionals in CDIMA, THOA, and other NGOs contrasts with the neocolonial image of non-Indigenous or foreign intermediaries who collect “juicy salaries” and set the terms of Indigenous development. While some criticize the “Indianization” of development programs as assimilationist (Patzi 1999), this certainly marks an important change in the development landscape.

these changes—toward ayllu and territory—were not going to occur overnight, but they urged “reflection and unity.”

After the seminar ended, I rode back to La Paz with one of the seminar participants, a mallku whom I will call Don Marcelo. He had traveled from a distant province that borders Chile and is located about 4,000 meters above sea level. He told me that his community really turned “back” to the ayllus when the LPP and INRA laws recognized them. “The law grabbed us, and we grabbed the law.” Since then, they have been reconstituting the ayllus with the help of “some friends.” In particular, four NGOs have been working “together” and have divided the labor among them (usually with the support of INGOs like Oxfam or IBIS). CADA (Center for Andean Development and Agriculture), an NGO that employed a distinguished Aymara historian, Roberto Choque, taught them *usos y costumbres* or traditional practices that were performed by the ayllu authorities. CDIMA helped with the legal questions—which was no surprise given the legal fluency the CDIMA team demonstrated. THOA helped document ayllu history and organize colonial and other titles that an ayllu or marka might have. Lastly, Fundación Dialogo, he said, “mostly helps with the paperwork (*trámites*).” After Don Marcelo explained the NGO assistance his marka received, I asked him why they moved from sindicatos to ayllus; he said that they did it because the sindicatos were full of self-interested folks who took money. Mallkus and ayllus offered the promise of the end of corruption and “living well” again. Other traditional leaders in Callapa shared some of Don Marcelo’s sentiments. They said that the sindicatos are no longer respected, but that the mallkus are. Political parties get in the sindicatos, another said, and it becomes about clientelism, not representation. Some suggested that the very system of ayllu rotation, in which one must move up through the ranks and not remain in office, served to keep corruption at bay.

Whether many of the authorities were convinced of the moral superiority of ayllus, or made an instrumental judgment about what would be better in securing resources, the pro-ayllu transnational message seemed to be working. However, building new communal alternatives is

one thing, participating in national politics is quite another. As our stop approached, I asked mallku Don Marcelo about how he saw the emergence of the new national confederation of ayllus and markas, CONAMAQ. “It is fine, he says, but we don’t see it much. And we (mallkus) don’t ever see the money.”

That parting comment captures two of the main critiques made of the national organization: 1) it is a new set of elites and not representatives; 2) it is a new elite that, like the old elite, just wants to get money. Speaking of some of the leaders of the Oruro and Potosí federations before they constituted part of the CONAMAQ leadership, one critical Aymara sociologist wrote, “It is clear that the new Indigenous representation makes possible the birth of a new elite that in theory is traditional, but in practice reproduces external elements not far from those of the [class-based] CSUTCB” (Ticona 1996a: 1). The construction of “new representation” is always a difficult task. It can become even more difficult when new representation faces the challenges of “old” representation and the challenges of electoral politics.

In September and October 2000, Bolivia found itself in a period of nation-wide protests. The catalyst was the privatization of water in Cochabamba, but soon the protests became a generalized denunciation of neoliberal reforms and the U.S.-backed policies of coca eradication. In ongoing protests, the CSUTCB, under its own “mallku,” as its leader Felipe Quispe is known, seemed to feed off of the growing popular frustration with then President Hugo Banzer (Gustafson 2002; Finnegan 2002). CIDOB even contemplated a march, but then, as the organization had previously done, negotiated with the government and called the mobilization off. CONAMAQ, which not coincidentally shared CIDOB’s La Paz office space, also tried to share its tactics in drawing a contrast with the rock-throwing CSUTCB.

CONAMAQ’s leadership approached President Banzer, who was not only the president but also an aging ex-dictator with a reputation for repression during his previous rule in the 1970s. In the midst of this historically and politically charged environment, the CONAMAQ mallkus were shown in the national press, shaking hands with the (ex-dictator) president, stating

that the ayllus were not like the unions, they were not made for protest, and that CONAMAQ supported President Banzer. While they hoped that Banzer would reward them later, CONAMAQ's gamble paid off very poorly. The CSUTCB and Quispe became more popular as Banzer's credibility fell. Protests intensified, with CONAMAQ isolated and its bases wondering what its leaders had done. So were its funders. Both Oxfam and IBIS announced that they would be reevaluating their support until the next CONAMAQ congress picked new leaders (Oxfam America staff, personal communication, January 18, 2001). During the next congress, new leaders were selected and CONAMAQ began to show signs of learning from past mistakes.

CONAMAQ's leadership made a special effort to gain new legitimacy in a period of political change in Bolivia. In June 2002, as Bolivians were about to go to the polls to elect a new president, CONAMAQ took a page from the recent history of CONAIE in Ecuador and demanded a constituent assembly to reform the constitution. Along with CIDOB, CONAMAQ led a thirty day-long march to the capital city of La Paz to demand a participatory reform of the constitution. With the 2002 election of neoliberal Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada (known universally as Goni), a former president who presided over the last set of multicultural and neoliberal reforms, CONAMAQ was quick to put itself in the role of vocal opposition. It declared that the new government had "defrauded and tricked" Indigenous people (CONAMAQ 2002). CONAMAQ also joined the protests in October and November 2003 that forced Goni to resign from the presidency. Protests continued against Goni's successor, Carlos Mesa. However, these protests were mostly associated with the visible roles Felipe Quispe of the CSUTCB and Evo Morales, the cocalero leader, played. Both Quispe and Morales have become even more visible as leaders of their respective political parties, the Pachakutik Indigenous Movement (MIP) and the Movement toward Socialism (MAS).

Morales and MAS, of course, have had the most success. Morales placed second in the 2002 presidential election and then went on to become president, winning landslide victories in 2005 and 2009. It is worth noting that President Morales adopted the call for a Constituent

Assembly that had been originally articulated by CONAMAQ; he oversaw a contentious and controversial constitutional reform process. President Morales's MAS party had a majority of seats in the Constituent Assembly and was able to push through the drafting constitution over the protest of opposition party members and even, in the December 2007 vote that approved the draft Constitution, without their physical presence.

CONAMAQ also had serious doubts about the Constituent Assembly since President Morales reversed his earlier promise to elect members to that body in accordance with Indigenous norms and customs, and instead called for elections to take place through participation in political parties. Throughout Morales's presidency, CONAMAQ has often found itself in opposition to the first Indigenous president of Bolivia. While there has been significant friction inside of the country with President Morales, CONAMAQ, again with the help of Oxfam, CONAMAQ has developed strong international linkages with Indigenous organizations across the region. CONAMAQ, ironically perhaps, finds that its profile is higher outside of Bolivia than inside the country. This, of course, is not a unique situation as we will see in our final case study, which takes us back to Peru.

### **Mining the Resources of Indigenous Communities (and Identity Construction)**

The late 1990s saw several changes in Oxfam America. First, Richard Chase Smith left the organization to found a new NGO, the Instituto del Bien Comun. Oxfam also re-structured its program in ways that departed with its earlier development strategy of working in terms of regions (Amazon/Andean). While it continued to work in Bolivia, Ecuador, and Peru, it developed the following programmatic lines of action: 1) Indigenous Peoples; 2) Sustainable Development, 3) Risk Management and Disaster Relief; and 4) Extractive Industry. The last theme of extractive industry was in many ways the most controversial as it placed Oxfam America in the treacherous terrain between communities on one side and states and transnational mining and oil companies on the other. Clearly, though, the issue of extractive industry was of

vital importance to the livelihoods of the populations with which Oxfam America had historically worked. As it states on its official website ([www.oxfamamerica.org](http://www.oxfamamerica.org), Accessed July 1, 2007), “of the 5,660 Indigenous communities in Peru, 3,200 are now affected by mining.” Thus it is not surprising that the first “strategic partner” that Oxfam America worked with under its newly restructured program was a new organization called, the Coordinator of Communities Affected by Mining or CONACAMI.<sup>10</sup> It is worth underlining that legally, there are only two kinds of rural communities in Peru: *campesino* or peasant communities in the highlands and Native communities in the lowlands. By referring to all communities as “Indigenous,” Oxfam was making its own statement about the kinds of subjects and rights that were at stake.

While mining has a long history in Peru, the government of Alberto Fujimori (1990-2000) created a legal environment that enabled a full blown mining boom with mining claims skyrocketing from 4 to over 25 million hectares in the years after Fujimori’s reforms. For many communities the effects were (and are) disastrous. Populations have been displaced, productive agricultural lands have been dramatically reduced in size, water sources have been taken over by mining interests and environmental contamination has provoked the outcry of communities in Cajamarca, Cuzco, Piura, Junín and many other regions. Extractive industry, remarks activist Miguel Palacín, is part of the “fictitious development” that has trapped Peru. De Echave and Torres (2005) have provided data that suggest that departments with mining activities have higher rates of poverty than departments that are without mining.<sup>11</sup>

In the mid-1990s, Miguel Palacín and others began to organize protests against this unequal exchange in which state and industry profited while highland communities suffered. Mining companies however used the legal system, already tilted in their favor, to denounce

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<sup>10</sup> Originally, the *Coordinadora de Comunidades Afectadas por la Minería*, it is now the *Confederación de Comunidades Afectadas por la Minería*.

<sup>11</sup> There is debate over the economic impact of mining. Barrantes (2005) suggests that the department is too big a unit to allow a detailed understanding of the effects of mining activities. Using household data, she has found a slight economic benefit for households that are in mining districts when compared to households in similar districts without mining.

Palacín and accuse him of criminal activity. Palacín was forced to go into hiding. Emblematic of the double-edged nature of globalization, however, Palacín received unexpected aid from the north. Canadian First Nations formally requested that the charges against Palacín be investigated by the state. The state attorney looked into the Palacín case and found that there was no basis to any of the charges, which were subsequently dropped (though new ones were later reinstated, there are currently over 500 CONACAMI leaders that have criminal charges pending). With this brush with the law, Palacín realized that “the only weapon is organization” (Palacín, Interview, 2003). Thus, in 1998 he led organizing efforts throughout the central and Southern sierra to bring communities together. In October 1999, with the help of the Peruvian NGO Cooperación, the first congress of a new national organization, CONACAMI, was convened and Palacín was elected president.

In its first congress in 1999, CONACAMI did not refer to itself as an “Indigenous organization”. Many communities do not identify as Quechua nor as Indigenous, but as rural campesino communities. Despite this mixed constituency, over time CONACAMI began to adopt a more explicitly Indigenous message that using the language of territory and self-determination that was part of the meeting decades earlier in Lima organized by Oxfam America. In the Second Congress (2003), CONACAMI explicitly embraced an Indigenous agenda which included espousing the principles found in international agreements like Convention 169 of the International Labor Organization on the collective rights of Indigenous peoples. Given this change in the discourse of this new organization, it is important to ask how CONACAMI went from a strictly environmental and economic position to incorporating the concerns of Indigenous peoples and collective rights. It is here that Oxfam America (and other agencies) play an important role.

With the help of international agencies like Oxfam America and IBIS-Denmark, CONACAMI participated in a series of exchanges with the Ecuadorian organization ECUARUNARI (the Andean affiliate of the most important Indigenous federation in Ecuador,

CONAIE) and the Bolivian *ayllu* confederation CONAMAQ.<sup>12</sup> These exchanges helped integrate CONACAMI in the transnational network and language of the global Indigenous movement.

Within Peru, CONACAMI also contributed to the reconsideration of Indigenous questions. CONACAMI joined a pan-regional effort called COPPIP, the Permanent Conference of Indigenous People, established with the goal of uniting Andean and Amazonian peoples for the first time in the same organization. CONACAMI became the main Andean organization and AIDASEP the main Amazonian actor, and both organizations agreed to rotate the presidency of COPPIP.

At the local and regional level however, members of CONACAMI debated over the wisdom of embracing an “Indigenous” organizational identity (Anonymous Interviews, 2006; Paredes, 2005). As many communities did not consider themselves to be Indigenous in any way, local leaders rejected the changing position of the national leadership. They also questioned the decision of national leaders like Miguel Palacín to involve CONACAMI in broad coalitions of progressive causes, some of which, like feminist and gay movements, had little support at the community level. At a CONACAMI meeting, one leader remarked angrily, “Miguel Palacín first wanted us to be queers (*maricones*) and now he wants us to be Indians (*indios*)” (Anonymous Interview 2007). National leaders admit that there are “two factions” of CONACAMI, one that worries exclusively about mining, the other which incorporated indigeneity, and that these factions have had their encounters and disagreements in the congresses of the organization. In 2006, the presidency passed from one faction to the other as Miguel Palacín, who took over the leadership of the international Coordinator of Andean Indigenous Organizations (CAOI), was replaced briefly by regional anti-mining leader Luis Riofrio, who was then replaced by “Indigenous” activist Mario Palacio. Of course, it is certainly possible to articulate “mining” concerns with “Indigenous” concerns. National leaders note that by using the categories of

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<sup>12</sup> *Ayllus* are traditional forms of Andean organization that can link non-contiguous settlements across various ecological altitudes through systems of kinship and a rotating authority structure. For more on contemporary *ayllu* politics see Lucero (2006) and Andolina et al (2009).

Indigenous peoples and territory, they move their struggles into the legal terrain covered by international agreements (like ILO Convention 169) that require industries to consult with local communities before the work and damage of extraction is done. Yet, within the funding agencies, professionals are divided as to whether CONACAMI's Indigenous position has won it more allies or enemies (Huber 2007).

Over the years, another debate has emerged exposing tensions between Indigenous organizations and national NGOs. While agencies like Oxfam America continue to work with both Indigenous organizations and local NGOs, there exists a sense of competition between Indigenous and non-Indigenous development partners for the resources of the international community. This has meant that Indigenous organizations, as they seek to develop and implement their own programs, have had to act more like NGOs in meeting certain legal requirements of the state as well as the expectations of funding agencies. Thus, CONACAMI, in order to qualify for official international (that is, bilateral, state-issued) development aid registered as an ONGD (Organización No-Gubernamental de Desarrollo, Development Non-Governmental Organization). As a series of high profile conflicts between community and transnational mining communities emerged, resulting in the termination of one important mining project in Tambogrande, the formal ONGD registry, the Peruvian Agency of International Cooperation (APCI) revoked the ONGD status from CONACAMI. The director of APCI at the time, Oscar Schiappa-Pietra, suggested that he was under enormous pressure from the mining companies and that elements in the press had organized an aggressive campaign against CONACAMI and Oxfam.<sup>13</sup> The newspaper *Correo* was especially vocal. It accused CONACAMI of being a source of violence.

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<sup>13</sup>Schiappa-Pietra saw his decision as one that was not harmful for CONACAMI, which, as he points out is not an NGO, and even without being in the ONGD registry can still receive funds from private agencies like Oxfam America. Thus the removal of CONACAMI from the APCI registry, at the time, was largely symbolic. A new law passed in 2007 has changed the government oversight that accompanies even private international funds, but it remains to be seen how much changes in practice, especially since many have

It is in Peru's interest that mining take place in a climate of peace in order to consolidate its growing productivity. This is why we cannot give *carte blanche* to radicalist (*radicalista*, sic) positions of organizations like Oxfam and CONACAMI. Confrontational and violent situations, like the ones that stained Peru with blood in the 1980s and the early 1990s, are not the solution but rather the undermining of national development (Valencia Dongo-Cárdenas 2006).

The equivalence between anti-mining protests and the bloody war initiated by the Maoist Shining Path has been a recurring and constant theme in the critique of CONACAMI. On June 5, 2007, as President Alan García announced the signing of another mining agreement with the transnational Anglo-American Company, he declared that unlike the mining companies that were "partners" in working for development and the national interest, those who opposed mining were working against the nation. "All those who work against mining in our country have hidden motives and are supported with the financial support of other countries," García declared (Field notes 2007). While he never mentioned Oxfam or CONACAMI by name, there was little doubt that these two organizations were not far from his mind.

CONACAMI continued to be an important point of reference for national opposition to the mining-center development model that has been a common denominator across the administrations of Fujimori, Alejandro Toledo, and Alan García. In the July 2007 National Strike, CONACAMI along with historic campesino organizations like the CCP was an important part of the protest landscape even if its declarations were more about economics than about cultural identity (Field notes 2007). Still, CONACAMI (or ex-CONACAMI) leaders continue to find ways to build bridges between economics and culture. Former president Miguel Palacín became the head of the Andean Coordinator of Indigenous Organizations, traveled to the 2007 Indigenous

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questioned the constitutionality of what people call the "anti-NGO" law (Interview, Schiappa-Pietra, June 2007).

Summit and delivered a nuanced exposition of the problems and strategies of Indigenous leaders (Anonymous Interview, Oxfam America, June, 2006).

Like Palacín, the next CONACAMI president, Mario Palacio attempted to braid mining and Indigenous themes. In the proclamations during the national mobilization against García's economic policies, however, CONACAMI leaders were less likely to speak of "Indigenous people" and more often invoked the broader "Peruvian people." Thinking about CONACAMI's identity debates, an Amazonian Indigenous leader remarked, "unfortunately in Peru, it is better to say 'campesino' than it is to say 'indígena.'" (Anonymous Interview, May 6, 2006).

The arc of CONACAMI's Indigenous positionings, is strangely familiar to the arc of one of CONACAMI's adversaries, former President Alejandro Toledo who, like CONACAMI, emphasized his Indigenous roots more often out of the country than in it. Toledo's international links, though, raised questions at home. In the view of his critics, Toledo's Stanford education and advocacy of free market neoliberal policies made him less Indian, giving him what campesino leader Hugo Blanco (2004) refers to as the "face of an indio but the brain of a gringo". In the case of CONACAMI, the gulf between the leaders and many local communities' self-identification created doubts that adversaries in the state and the press have sought to exploit. Some observers fear that CONACAMI's best days are behind it as it has played a less central role in the negotiation over mining conflicts and has had a difficult time with leadership transitions and self-identification. In places like Cusco, where one important mining conflict was successfully negotiated, CONACAMI pulled out of the negotiations and there was little secret that there was little support for CONACAMI president Miguel Palacín among the members of the Cusco CORECAMI affiliate. During a research visit in June 2007, CORECAMI Cusco had seemingly vanished. One local observer explained that many local leaders come to work with national organizations like CONACAMI in hope of having access to resources that will help them survive. As CONACAMI brought few resources to the local level, those local leaders also seemed to stop coming (Ramón Pajuelo, personal communication, June 2007).

## **Preliminary Conclusions**

It is worth summarizing the key elements of these “critical junctures”—from 1980s, 1990s, and 2000s—and which involved Oxfam American and various Indigenous actors and ideas. In the 1980s, in a challenge to both the ideological Left and the ostensibly radical, but weekly rooted, Indianistas, Oxfam America helped shape a “regime of indigeneity” that put “people-centered” actors first and that produced a multi-scalar model of Indigenous politics: transnational networks and resources could be used to articulate local, region, national, and transnational Indigenous social movements. This model of politics was the legacy of that moment and was (re)produced by the converging agendas of certain INGOs like Oxfam and Indigenous organizations like AIDSESEP and COICA. In the 1990s, the model continued to spread in the “imagined geography” of ayllu reconstruction in Bolivia, as “outside” experts helped authenticate and validate a “return” to local authenticity. Once again rejections of Leftist models (the sindicatos) and revalorization of Indigenous ones (the ayllu) help introduce a new political actor to transnational politics: the ayllu confederation CONAMAQ, one that is now a regular participant in global encounters of Indigenous peoples but frequently at odds at home with an Indigenous Bolivian president. The viability of a transnational ayllu actor is once again co-produced by the work of INGO professional and Andean Indigenous intellectual and political brokers. In 2000, political and ecological crises, and changing programmatic priorities, helped create the conditions for an “anti-mining” and “Indigenous” actor in Peru, CONACAMI. This new confederation has not had an easy existence as the Peruvian state sees its anti-mining position to be anti-Peruvian, and many of its local affiliates see its Indigenous discourse to be the result of Oxfam-funded trips to Bolivia and Ecuador, rather than a reflection of local realities.

This brief exploration of some of the encounters between an international NGO and a variety of local actors has illustrated two of the challenges and lessons of encountering indigeneity. First, regimes of indigeneity involve a geopolitics of recognition that can only be

understood across local, national and global scales. Indigenous people throughout the Americas (and beyond) have found it often inevitable and sometimes useful to explore the political imbrications of a variety of legal, economic, and political systems. Since the first contacts with missionaries, the state, and agents of global capital, Indigenous people have found that new systems of domination are not without points of entry within which they can contest the very terms of domination. The rising importance of non-state actors in the wake of aggressive neoliberal economic reforms (which shrank already weak states) provided an additional set of opportunities that Indigenous people have been able to use.

Second, and to qualify the optimism of the previous point, these global connections often involve risks for Indigenous social movements. In some cases, the lure of international funds creates a perverse incentive in which Indigenous leaders must spend more time attending to the demands and expectations of international audiences than to the needs of local communities. Similarly, the construction of indigeneity can also have a Janus-faced appearance in which some discourses are for external consumption and have little to do with the lived “social fact” of indigeneity at the local level. This is not to say Indigenous people should exit global civil society (as if this were even possible in the times of internet Zapatismo and international legal recognition of Indigenous rights). However, it is important to note that what Keck and Sikkink (1998) notably dubbed the “boomerang effect”—the ability of local actors to gather strength by going transnational—can strike not only state targets but also the very actors that first let the boomerang fly.

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