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Future teachers and social change in Bolivia: between decolonisation and demonstration

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Continuity & change in Bolivian society: a story of historical and present struggles

'*Utopia is on the horizon. I go two steps, she moves two steps away. I walk ten steps and the horizon runs ten steps ahead. No matter how much I walk, I'll never reach her. What good is utopia? That's what: it's good for walking*' (Eduardo Galeano 1993 in Las Palabras Andantes, in Dangl, 2010: 10-11).

3.1 Introduction

When I travel back from a day at the Normal Simón Bolívar, I find the streets of the centre of La Paz being taken over by a steadily moving mass of determined Bolivians. It is 20 October 2008, and thousands of government supporters endured days of walking without much food or rest as they marched into the capital to enforce the approval of a referendum on the new constitution. Many Bolivians working from the grassroots level know how to play politics with their feet: mass demonstrations have proven effective in changing the political direction of the country both before and during the current government. Large parts of the Bolivian indigenous population and social movements are walking towards their utopia, of a better, more just Bolivia. Moreover, '*utopias matter*', because utopian discourse and actions can function as important instruments for social and political change (Postero, 2007: 12).

Bolivian teachers operate in a very complex and tense context, which historically has been characterised by continuous forms of conflict. Bolivia, situated right in the heart of South America, is a country of wide diversity, contrasts and struggles. Even though Bolivia experiences a period of economic growth in a global context of economic decline, it remains one of the most unequal and poor countries of the Latin American continent (World Bank, 2009). With a majority population that identifies as indigenous, and the rise of social movements over the past two decades, Bolivian society has entered a new stage in its history. This new phase is marked by the democratic election and re-elections of president Evo Morales since 2005. On the one hand, Morales' government radically wants to *change* Bolivia's socio-economic situation, through adopting a new political ideology and endogenous route to development. More than a mere political moment of transformation, the recent shifts in power have been connected to the Andean notion of *Pachakuti*, seen by many Bolivian as a traditional ritual and phase of change. This somewhat mythologised and stylised use of the Andean past, and reference to the imaginary of *Pachakuti*, is part of Morales' strategy (Postero, 2007: 3, 17).

On the other hand, Bolivia's society and education system are still confronted with *continuing* social tensions and deep structures of discimination and inequalities. The rise of Bolivia's social movements and their decisive roles in resource conflicts (e.g. over water and gas) are the results of a continuation of past clashes (Dangl 2007: 8). Under the new government of Morales, the education system is perceived as a crucial instrument to restructure and revolutionise Bolivia's society towards a decolonised ideal of '*equal opportunities for all Bolivian (male and female) to social justice in order to live well*' (Ministerio de Educacion de Bolivia, 2010b). These tensions, between *continuity* and *change* in Bolivian society, and the tensions or even gaps between a radical new *discourse* and social and educational *practices* are part of the main storylines of this thesis.

This chapter introduces and follows these story lines, as it provides an overview of the relevant aspects of the complex and conflictive strategic selective context of the past and present Bolivian society, in which (future) teachers – the main agents of this study – live and work. In the words of Gray Molina, '*the core of Bolivian democratic politics is about conflict and resolving conflict. Room for contestation is a driver for change*' (2009). The main objective of the chapter is to explore Bolivia's various conflict dimensions and to find out whether this room for contestation is indeed opening up new horizons amidst a context of continuing tensions and struggle. The chapter first outlines Bolivia's main socio-political historical developments, and paints the picture of continuous historical and contemporary political battle field for diverse state and non-state actors in a multiscalar setting that extend beyond the state level. I continue by outlining the characteristics of Bolivia's diverse demographical, geographical, economic and ethnic cultural context, leading to a situation of serious societal tensions. This leads us to the following section which stresses five processes of conflict defined for the purpose of this study, including: *poverty and inequality of opportunities*; *discrimination and exclusion*; *separatist discourses and identity politics*; *mistrust in the state and between societal groups;* and *popular protests and violent clashes between the state & social movements*. Finally, I begin to locate teachers – being the most important actors of this thesis – in this very diverse, unequal and slowly changing Bolivian context as an incitement for the next chapter, which deals with the education context specifically.

3.2 Bolivia's socio-political history of struggles for hegemony and counter-hegemony

Bolivian politics are a fascinating area of study, and this section provides a brief overview of the most important historical and recent political developments that are relevant in shaping the strategic context in which Bolivian (future) teachers live and work. Inspired by a relevant categorisation of Latin American politics of Rodriguez-Garavito et al (2008: 31-37), in this historical overview of socio-political struggles for (counter)hegemony I pay special attention to three important political players in Bolivia being: 1) political parties; 2) social movements – including unions, the (coca-)farmers and indigenous movements; and 3) the government..

Prior to the colonial period, the Andes region was inhabited by a series of civilisations; the Aymara civilisation took over from the Tihuanacu in the twelfth century and the Aymara were conquered by the huge Inca Empire. When the Spanish colonist arrived in 1532, in the region currently known as Peru and Bolivia, they used the fragility of the Inca Empire – disrupted by civil war – to take over control (Kohl and Farthing, 2006: 37; Morales, 2004: 245). The Spanish rulers found many ways to enrich themselves; through gold, silver, food stocks and coca

leaves.[38] Bolivia was the first country to rebel against the Spanish oppressors, yet the last to achieve liberation. Eventually the struggle for freedom was won in 1824 guided by *criollos*, local elites with Spanish descent. The Venezuelan freedom fighter Simón Bolívar acknowledged this new state and it was named after him – the 'Bolivian Republic'. The colonial rule ended in 1825 when the Bolivian Republic was founded. However, the following period was everything but peaceful and stable. A small, white elite of military and large landowners, named *caudillos*, ruled the country. In this period large 'modernising' infrastructural projects were accomplished and most land was expropriated from indigenous communities (Malaver & Oostra, 2003: 13-16; Morales, 2004: 246). These developments – the appropriation of Bolivia's resources by the national and international elite, ongoing resistance by indigenous groups and tensions between the different regions of the country – form part of a shared process of colonisation and post-colonialism in many countries in the global South (Kohl, 2006: 34).

Photo 2. Fragment of a mural at El Prado in La Paz – artist Gonz Jove. On the left hand side the colonial repression is illustrated, from the centre to the right the struggle for independence

The year 1879 marks a sensitive period in Bolivian history; Bolivia lost its access to the sea to Chile. Bolivia still maintains it's naval forces (patrolling on Lake Titicaca) and politicians – including the current government – still try to gain popularity by 'dragging up' this subject. Bolivia's national self image was further hurt by loosing all of its wars with neighbouring countries from 1862 until 1935.[39] In the last two years of the nineteenth century the 'Liberal Revolution' laid the basis for a relatively stable political situation in Bolivia in the first decades of the twentieth century. However, the indigenous population remained marginalised and excluded

[38] The so-called *encomienda* system gave ownership of all land to Spanish aristocracy, while the Spanish colonizers maintained the so called *mita* system, used in the Inca period to ensure compulsory free labour by the lowest classes for the elite. The indigenous people had to work for their Spanish *encomenderos* in large agricultural estates (*haciendas*), in exchange for 'proper care'. However, the colonist made the indigenous population work all year long in harsh circumstances (Morales, 2004: 245).

[39] On 28 March 2011, the Bolivian newspaper *La Razón* reported how after failed negotiations with Chile Evo Morales plans to take this issue of access to the sea to the international court in The Hague. The BBC, on that same day, published a similar message, showing a picture of school children carrying boats with Bolivians flags, as they are taught 'they must reclaim the sea'.

(Morales, 2004: 247; Talavera Simoni, 2011: 32). The deterioration of the social and economic position of the indigenous populations led to further conflicts and violence, on both local and regional scales, in the beginning of the twentieth century (Baud, 2007a: 24).

In the 'Guerra del Chaco' (1932-1935) between Bolivia and Paraguay, different ethnic and geographic groups fought together on the Bolivian side, fuelling a new nationalist cry for change. This led farmers, miners, students and ex-combatants to join forces in a counter-hegemonic struggle against the oligarchy, as they formed the first revolutionary parties (among which the *Movimiento Nacionalista Revolutionario* – MNR). Bolivia's oldest political party MNR was founded in 1942 and since then developed from extreme left to extreme right. The Second World War deteriorated the situation in Bolivia, which was heavily dependent on tin export. In the years after the War, massive mobilisations and violent oppressions – under the command of Victor Paz Estenssoro – eventually led to the 1952 Revolution. A new alliance of armed farmers and workers, organised in unions and political parties, took over power from the military forces. The COB (*Central Obrero Boliviano*) became one of the strongest unions in Latin America and had a relatively strong political role at the time (Zavaleta 1998, in Talavera Simoni, 2011: 104). The highland region became the 'centre of the country', where modernisation and development processes were concentrated. The strong and powerful social movements of the miners were situated in the mountains and most of the governmental institutions were since then located in La Paz (Molina, 2008: 6; Talavera Simoni, 2011).

It took until 1952 to establish general voting rights and until 1956 before the first democratically elected government was in power.[40] Although the 1952 Revolution meant a first step towards full citizenship for indigenous groups in Bolivia, the dominant *criollos* of Spanish decent and the urban middle class *mestizos* created an exclusionary society with no space for indigenous participation in economic, political and social life. However, pressure from working class and indigenous groups ensured general voting rights, together with national education and healthcare systems (Kohl and Farthing, 2006: 35-36, 47). The revolution also changed the indigenous groups' 'title' (identity in my view is not the right term here), from the negatively associated *indio* to the term *campesino*, which refers to the rural background and lifestyle of many indigenous groups (Taylor, 2004: 9). In the decade of the 1960s, indigenous groups finally saw themselves represented through a formal political movement, when different groups of Aymara Indians – the Kataristas – organised themselves in a union that had its connections with the left-wing intellectuals in La Paz (Baud, 2007a: 32).

The wide differences of opinion among members of the revolutionary MNR eventually led to new oppressions and the involvement of armed parties. General Barrientos, chief of military forces, gained power in 1964. With United States support, the military stayed in power for the following 18 years (Morales, 2004: 248; Zavaleta 1998, in Talavera Simoni, 2011: 104). Resistance started to come from the 'revolutionary left'. Under the leadership of Ernesto Che Guevara a counter-hegemonic guerrilla battle was prepared in 1966-67, but this turned out to be

[40] According to the 1993 constitution, the president has the power to appoint ministers and prefects. He/she controls the military and state finances. The parliament consists of two chambers; a senate with 27 members, and a Chamber with 130 representatives. The parliament can authorise or hinder legislation processes. The national Ombudsman (*Defensoría del Pueblo*) investigates complaints of governmental actions since 1998 (Domingo, 2005: 1734; Morales, 2004: 241-242).

unsuccessful for the *guerrilleros*. The military were to keep their authority, and hegemony, until 1982. General Hugo Banzer ruled for most of this time. Bolivia was part of 'Operation Condor', a Latin American anti-communist pact between Argentina, Chile, Paraguay, Uruguay and Brazil. Many perpetrators of human rights violations from that time have never been condemned. A nation-wide hunger strike heralded the beginning of the end of military rule. A coalition of socialist, communist and revolutionary organisations called the *Unidad Democratica Popular* together with the Socialist Party and trade unions, pushed for a transition to democracy at the end of the 1970s. General Banzer was under so much popular pressure that he had to resign at the beginning of 1978. The transition back to democracy was rather troublesome, as many unsuccessful elections and very violent *coup d'états* followed each other. It took until 1982 to install a new democratic government, led by the leftist Siles Zuazo.

The 1980s are often called the 'lost decade' in Latin America, referring to a severe economic crisis in the region. Similar to wider developments in Latin America at the time, developments in Bolivia were characterised by: on the one hand neo-liberal Structural Adjustment Programmes or 'SAPs' (Kohl, 2006); and on the other hand the rise of indigenous social movements (Regalsky and Laurie, 2007: 242). During the first half of the 1980s, Bolivia's economy was in complete disarray and the newly elected president Siles Zuazo introduced an economic 'shock-treatment' (Brienen, 2007: 22, 30), in line with wider imposed and fairly brutal neoliberal programmes in Latin America (Klein, 2007). Advanced new elections gave the 1952 revolutionary leader Víctor Paz Estenssoro the opportunity to start a radical neoliberal experiment in 1985, named the New Economic Policy (NEP). Two influential international financial institutions – the World Bank (WB) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) – in this decade used Bolivia as a 'social laboratory', as the SAPs were primarily designed by the economist Jeffry Sachs and Bolivia was even called a 'neoliberal success story' then. To minimise the negative social impacts of these neoliberal policies, social emergency funds were created. The Bolivian model was copied in many other countries in the global South (McNeish, 2006: 220, 224). However, there is consensus that this neoliberal programme in Bolivia (the NEP) has not reduced poverty and income inequalities, but instead had even deteriorated the social situation, despite the 'poverty alleviation programmes' and social emergency funds that accompanied it (Domingo, 2005: 1735; McNeish, 2006: 224-227). The NEP also undermined the power of the COB and other popular resistance groups (Morales, 2004: 249; Domingo, 2005:1735).

Throughout the twentieth century, labour unions formed the core of the opposition to the urban governing elites.[41] Historically, there has been a strong link between trade unions and political parties (Tapia, 2008: 215). The COB had an immense influence on politics in Bolivia from the 1952 Revolution until 1985, when the NEP was introduced. The class based labour movement formed a strong political opposition until the neoliberal policies negatively affected the unions' power. Due to its rigid male dominated and Marxist oriented structure, the COB was not able to succesfully navigate the SAPs.[42] In the decade of the 1980s it became clear that the link between the trade unions and political parties had its limits. Yet, at the same time

[41] In Bolivia's education sector, there are two influential teacher unions: a rural one and an urban one, which are discussed in more detail in chapter 5.

42 According to Kohl and Farthing (2006: 153), the COB lacked flexibility to cope with a working force that turned more and more heterogeneous (including a large share of women). Together with the worldwide decline of communism, the decline of COB was irreversible.

decentralisation and political restructuring made space for indigenous and *cocalero* leaders to stand up. Bolivia's popular social movements emerged in response to forms of '*economic and military violence, leading neoliberalism to dig its own grave in Latin America*' (Dangl 2007: 8). Opposition movements since then often emphasised their identity and territorial demands. This illustrates the paradox of neoliberal policies; they both weaken and simultaneously stimulate active resistance (Kohl and Farthing, 2006: 75, 125, 153).

In line with the global post-Washington consensus model, the decade of the 1990s introduced a new era of socially oriented developments and reforms in Bolivia. The neo-liberal project was still going strong, from 1993 led by Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada, or *Goni*, who was the original inventor of the neo-liberal experiment. He promoted sustainable development in a free market environment. Following international trends, human development (through education) and popular participation became key issues (Morales, 2004: 250-251). Goni also invented the *Plan de Todos*, or Plan for All, of which the 1994 education reform (see next chapter) was part of, together with privatisation, popular participation measures and the development of a new constitution in 1995 (Taylor, 2004: 21-25). These so called 'pro-poor' neoliberal reforms responded to the growing international and external pressures to tackle growing poverty levels. Subsequent to the World Bank's introduction of the Poverty Reduction Strategy Guidelines in 1999, Bolivia became the only country in South America to join the World Bank's Highly Indebted Countries (HIPC) initiative. This initiative included the formation of a more favourable debt repayment climate and capital investment, together with an involvement of the government in the creation of a Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) in 2003, as a response to the Millenium Development Goals (MDGs).[43] These neoliberal reforms recognised indigenous cultures and raised expectations of indigenous citizen participation. The reforms, however, rather channelled into a '*Western form of citizenship*' and did little to transform the status quo and structural forms of racism (Postero, 2007: 4-5). This led to growing dissatisfaction and unrest in Bolivian society as well as its political arena, in which old and new actors started to battle over a hegemonic neoliberal system and its failures.

Hence, the decade of the 1990s in most parts of Latin America was also characterised by the rise of indigenous movements. Indigenous movements had already come into being in the 1960s, but were only noticed internationally after 1992. That year, the 500 year 'discovery' of Latin America by Columbus was celebrated and indigenous groups in the whole continent took the opportunity to openly protest against continuing colonial relations. Internationally, indigenous rights and popular participation were given emphasis through the ILO 169 Convention, which was signed by Bolivia in its early stages. A strong '*collectively contrued social memory*' helped indigenous groups in the Andean region to develop an understanding of historical hegemonic systems of social and cultural domination, and to construct counter-hegemonic responses (Abercrombie in Postero, 2007: 13). While taking a critique on neo-liberalism and the nation state as the core of their protest agenda, these new social movements struggle for an alternative development model in different parts of Latin America. The highland and lowland indigenous movements differ from each other in terms of their organisational form, although

[43] Bolivia's local version of the global PRSP initiative was called the 'Bolivian Poverty Reduction Strategy' (McNeish, 2006: 223-224), which recently has been replaced under Morales' government by the National Development Plan (PND).

both are often organised following the labour union model. In the highlands, most organisations are based on family and community connections, the *ayllu's*.

The rise of social (and mostly indigenous) movements was encouraged by the installation of the 1994 *Ley de Participación Popular*, or popular participation law (Domingo, 2005: 1733).[44] Here we can see how through popular pressure methods – including massive roadblocks and protest manifestations (Harris, 2007) – the Popular Participation Law triggered space for contestation, as grassroots movements and unions could also make their demands heard through formal political channels (McNeish, 2006: 221). Although popular participation is highly valued in Bolivian discourses since the 1990s, and officialised through the Popular Participation law of 1994, large sectors of the population – and especially marginalised groups – have been excluded from real influence in (national level) politics and democratic participation, leading to social disintegration (Salman, 2006: 163; McNeish, 2006).

Thus, in the context of the failed neoliberal SAPs, a decline of trade unions and a rise of indigenous movements in the 1980s, during the 1990s a range of new players entered the political arena. This plurality of political actors is one of the main characteristics of 'the New Left' in Latin America, not excluding Bolivia, where different types of (mostly rural) social movements became to form a strong coalition on the left (Rodriguez-Garavito et al, 2008: 8-17). In Bolivia, Evo Morales has played a key role in the rise of the New Left. Based on his union-based political career (Sivak, 2008), he became one of the two protagonists of the Bolivian protest movement who converted their mobilisations into a political party; respectively the governing party *Movimiento al Socialismo* (MAS) of Evo Morales and the *Movimiento Indigenista Pachacuti* (MIP) of Felipe Quispe. Morales and Quispe, although not described to be best friends, gained electoral successes with their parties despite being portrayed as extremist, subversive, un-democratic and irrational (Assies and Salman, 2003: 150-155; Domingo, 2005: 1737-1738).[45] Morales spent quite some time abroad, where anti-globalisation movements and other indigenous movements (including the Zapatistas) inspired him to use his '*indigeneity*' strategically. As a consequence, he has been criticised for adopting a '*strategic essentialism*', because he '*romanticizes indigenous culture for political ends*' (Canessa 2006: 252-255). Interestingly, the process of transformation of the party system is being commenced from the rural areas into the cities (Tapia, 2008: 219-221) and the MAS came to power in a context of '*ruralisation of Bolivian politics*' (Zuazo, 2008).[46] Using the coca leaf as 'their symbol of struggle and Andean traditions', the coca-growers, or *cocaleros*, gained ground in electoral politics with the MAS (Dangl 2007: 49). The MAS is often brought forward as an example of the merge of indigenous social movements and (coca)farmer trade unions into a political party (Gray Molina, 2009).

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[44] Through municipal decentralisation, this government sought to strengthen national legitimacy, to fight corruption, and to empower historically marginalised rural indigenous groups by giving them a voice. Through a system of redistricting, 311 new municipalities were created. They all had a rural majority, even though the rural population only counts for 42 per cent of the population (Taylor, 2004: 17-22).

[45] According to Canessa (2006: 241, 250), the political rhetoric of Quispe is mostly radical, exclusionary and particularistic; Morales' rhetoric, instead, is inclusive and broad as he lets *mestizos* into his party, and he is connected to both Aymara and Quechua cultures. In Bolivia, the term *Mestizo* refers to those from a mix of both Spanish and Indigenous descent.

[46] Zuazo (2008: 17) analyses how the MAS emerged out of four historical factors: 1) a strong urban-rural rupture; 2) the crisis of the neoliberal economic model; 3) a crisis in representativeness of traditional political parties; and 4) the decentralisation process towards 'municipalisation' from 1994 onwards.

Economic crises within Bolivia and in neighbouring Argentina at the turn of the century laid a basis for growing frustrations among the population. Kohl and Farthing (2006: 149, 175) explain how the neoliberal hegemony in Bolivia started to unravel in the period between 1999 and 2003, when the country staggered from one crisis to another. In this changing social and institutional context social movements emerged to (re)gain access to political processes (to the state) and to secure local autonomy issues (Yashar, 1998: 34). Three large social movements were the main players at that time. The (urban) teacher's union, by then the backbone of the COB, showed its strength and wide support through various protests. Secondly, new urban movements arose, especially in El Alto, the mostly indigenous city situated right above La Paz. Finally some ad hoc committees came into being in order to defend the rights of Bolivians to water (in 2000 in Cochabamba, see for instance Assies and Salman, 2003: 146-148), a fair tax system and natural gas in 2003. Recent history tells us how neoliberal governments have not survived the pressure of Bolivia's social movements, how the state was unable to '*sell the idea of the common sense of neoliberalism to the mass of the Bolivians*' (Kohl, 2006: 321) and how neoliberal hegemony started to unravel.

Following a 'politics of protest'[47] or 'direct democracy', the popular masses, movements and unions became a strong force within Bolivian politics at the start of the 21st century (see for instance Brienen, 2007; Domingo, 2005; Gamboa Rocabado, 2009). Since the so-called Water War in 2000 in the city of Cochabamba, counter-hegemonic popular struggles in Bolivia more and more began to focus against neoliberalism (Domingo, 2005: 1736; Harris, 2007: 12) and foreign domination, with Evo Morales as one of the fore runners of these struggles. The Water War in Cochabamba in 2000, through their successful mass mobilisation and victory of social movements, created counter-consciousness to neoliberal hegemony, giving rise to further battles over the recovery of gas resources and the extension of democracy. This illustrates a crucial aspect of Gramsci's 'war of position', since a new level of confidence and self-awareness stimulated people to organise and become agents of change (Harris, 2007: 11). Besides this 'war of position', Gramsci spoke of a 'war of manoeuvre', defined as '*a frontal or insurrectional attack against the state or a period of intensive and active struggle, such as strikes and mass protest*' (Harris, 2007: 3). Before taking democratic power, the political party MAS of Evo Morales were both employing a war of manoeuvre – with its massive demonstrations – and a war of position – becoming a leading social movement that eventually won the elections. One of the most famous events was the 'Red October' (because of the bloodsheds) mass demonstrations and blockades by popular movements, which eventually led to the resignation of the president Sanchez de Lozada in October 2003. When Lozada fled to Miami, he left vice president Carlos Mesa to take on a year-long interim presidency in a context of continuous battles and protest, until new elections were held in 2005 (Kohl and Farthing, 2006: 12; Postero, 2007: 5). In the words of Canessa: '*The events of 2003 mark a profound change in the nature of indigenous protest, mobilisation, and identity in Bolivia*' (2006: 243). Or, as El Alto based sociologist Pablo Mamani said about the overthrow of the neoliberal government in October 2003, '*the state died, here in El Alto*' (in Dangl 2007, 151), radically changing the legitimacy of governments in Bolivia.

[47] Or 'Protest politics' as referred to by Domingo (2005). Alternatively, the term 'politics of protest' has been used by David Meyer in his book on social movements in the US (in Krinsky 2007).

In Gramscian language, the Water (and later on also the Gas) Wars were a war of manoeuvre with the various represented sectors creating a new historic bloc of actors (Harris, 2007: 13). These events in Bolivia at the beginning of the 21st century can be seen as part of a '*new historic moment with resonance beyond its borders*' in which opportunities have opened for marginalised and especially indigenous groups to take a vital role in the formation of the agenda, which is both concerned with a politics of recognition and a politics of redistribution (McNeish, 2007: 889). Gramsci wrote about three different 'moments of relations of forces', which help to understand historical and contemporary formations of 'historical blocs', being particular forms of state, with specific attention to the role of social forces (through social relations) and civil society in these processes (Harris, 2007: 4). The first 'moment' refers to the level of structure, or the material forces of production, which forms the basis for the emergence of various social classes such as the rise of new political players since the 1990s in Bolivia. The second 'moment' is the relation of political forces, which reveals the homogeneity, self-awareness and organisation of various social classes (Crehan, 2002: 92).[48] The increasing political conciousness of Bolivia's indigenous and *cocalero* movements described in this chapter illustrate this stage. The third 'moment' marks the stage of effective political organisation. In Bolivia this can be illustrated by the example of Evo Morales' party MAS, as this third moment comes about when a class, or coalitions of classes, have organised themselves in a political party that incorporates the interests of the various social classes. The following political statement of Evo Morales in an interview – in ideological terms – could be seen as part of what Gramsci terms the 'third moment' of relations of forces: '*the new constitution is not created to retaliate to anyone, or to create a new elite. We don't have the ambitions to subordinate anyone, or to take revenge. We simply want everyone to enjoy the same rights*' (Journeyman Pictures, 12 May 2008). Effectively creating a new 'historical bloc' is, however, anything but a 'simple' undertaking. Part III elaborates on the specific power plays between the government and non-governmental actors (educational institutions, indigenous movements, unions etc) in the field of teacher education that both reinforce and undermine this development of a new historic bloc.

Viewed from a neo-Gramscain perspective, the Bolivian state can be perceived as a site of contestation and a 'strategic terrain' upon which both left and right political actors and wider civil society strive for their causes (Rodriguez-Garavito et al, 2008: 21, 34). The relationship between the state and social movements can be understood as a dialectical one (Rodriguez-Garavito et al, 2008: 35). Bolivia has a 'jammed' political culture, where individual leadership, mostly by men, and corruption still form important elements of the functioning of the system (Salman, 2006: 228; Dangl 2010: 26). This mistrust in the state is deeply rooted in historical struggles between governments and popular movements (Brienen, 2007; Salman, 2006; Domingo, 2005; Dangl 2007; 2010), and remains an important dimension of social and political tensions. Considering the majority votes Morales continues to receive, the change in government since 2006 appears to have contributed favorably to the legitimacy of the Bolivian political system (Seligson et al, 2006: 28; Tapia, 2008: 224). Morales' political and now governing party MAS has remained close ties with its social movement base, creating rather blurred boundaries between the party and social movements as they '*at times work for, with and against each other*' (Dangl, 2010: 16, 19). The

[48] This second political moment covers three faces of political consiousness: from solidarity within the corporate level; to solidarity among all members of a social class; and finally when corporate and class interests are transcended to a solidarity that encompasses the interests of all subordinate groups (Crehan 2002: 92).

relationship between the social movements and the current government is '*a two-way street*', since social movement's goals are largely supported and taken up by this government, while the MAS receives support for passing legislation and policies through (sometimes even MAS-funded) mass demonstrations (Dangl, 2010: 22). Yet, in spite of Morales' background as a social movement leader of the coca growers union before becoming president, he cannot count on an absolute support from all social movements. Several trade unions, neighbourhood movements (especially in El Alto) and landless movements have protested from the beginning against certain appointments within the Morales cabinet.[49] Zibechi warns for the '*dangers of seduction by the state*', as he emphasises how the new Bolivian government can be '*the bearer and voice of change*', yet it should not disempower social movements in their key roles (2010: 7).

Gray Molina, who was involved in Bolivia's UNDP Human Development Report 2007 '*El Estado del Estado'*, claims that the '*lack of institutionality*' is actually a strength of Bolivian democracy. It creates a hybrid kind of democracy, according to Gray Molina, and makes accommodation and contestation possible. The next crucial steps for this accommodated hybrid democracy would be to integrate the former elites into the 'new society' under Morales and to recognise an emerging middle class with a mixed indigenous identity (Gray Molina, 2009). Or in Gramscian terms, the new government seeks to create hegemony, a consensus on their new route to a decolonised state transformation. Instead of the historical unifying policies of *mestizaje* – the creation of a unified *mestizo* nation (Canessa, 2006: 255; Zoomers, 2006: 1023-1024) – the Bolivian government now strives to create a decolonised and pluriethnic state, with equal rights and opportunities for its diverse people. The present government is facing the difficult task of creating consensus and a new 'social settlement' (Robertson, 2000). The new political discourse is clearly radical in nature, but critics point out the limitations of Morales' revolutionary politics of change. Regalsky (in Kohl and Bresnahan, 2010: 8-10), for instance, argues how Evo Morales' current political agenda does not coincide so much with indigenous demands for (certain forms of) autonomy. He argues that Morales' goal is to build a centralised nation state, by balancing indigenous demands with those of former elites, instead of radically transforming the state apparatus. While recognising the validity of this statement, alternatively it can also be argued how Morales sees himself forced into, and strategically uses this balancing of indigenous and former elite demands, in order to reach his goal of a radically restructured Bolivian society, for instance through a newly written constitution and education reform.

Bolivia's current political situation, in which the Morales government is struggling to install a counter-hegemonic project after a long history of elite domination, falls under Gramsci's notion of an 'organic crisis of the state'.[50] From a neo-Gramscian perspective on social transformation, the Bolivian state is certainly in a moment of transition, at the same time as the new 'revolutionary' government struggles to convince various groups in society of the validity of their new ideology. In Bolivia, an organic crisis of the state can be interpreted, in my view, in two ways. The neoliberal governments that ruled the country until Morales experienced an organic

[49] The (urban) teachers union for instance rejected the appointment of Felix Patzi Paco as the first Minister of Education under Morales, because he would lack a background in teaching (Petras 2006).

[50] Although critics wonder about its current applicability (Martin, 1997), as Gramsci's ideas on the 'organic crisis of the state' were based on his reflections on the weakness of the Italian bourgeoisie in the first part of the twentieth century, it is still useful to analyse the case of Bolivia, notwithstanding this is a very different geographical and temporal context.

crisis of their hegemonic regime, when social movements through mass demonstrations enforced an ending of their reign in the first few years of the 21st century. Secondly, the new, and not yet fully prepared, government since its installation in the beginning of 2006 up to the time of writing faces another version of an organic crisis, as it struggles to move a yet 'incomplete transition' further on. Based on empirical findings on the Bolivian education sector, the boundaries between 'political society' and 'civil society' are rather fluid, and the government is also internally struggling to create a cohesive strategy, since social movements leaders have now become officials within governmental institutions and work alongside an older generation of policy makers. Furthermore, the government is confronted with serious popular resistance to the new 'politics of change' and a decolonising education reform (see chapter 5). Due to this long-term transition phase at present in Bolivia (Harris, 2007: 13-14), or what I refer to in this thesis an impasse in the education sector, we cannot (yet?) speak of a new installed hegemony.

3.3 Bolivia in the world and in the region

With the aim to provide a multiscalar analysis of Bolivia's context, I now briefly turn to explain how these political developments are reflected in Bolivia's external relations. Although Bolivia's societal conflict has deep historical roots, it is the effects of wider processes of globalisation in the last few decades that have further intensified poverty and inequality in the country. In trying to overcome such negative outcomes of certain exclusionary globalisation processes (see for instance Duffield, 2001; Castles, 2001) and in response to the failure of certain 'pro-poor-policies' accompanying neoliberal structural adjustments, many Latin American countries have chosen to follow their 'own' regional and nationalist development strategies. It can thus be argued that the case of Bolivia is illustrative of a wider process of transformation in the Latin American region. The National Development Plan (2006-2010) summarises Bolivia's new external relation strategy: '*the state becomes a sovereign and self-determined actor, with an own identity, as it formulates its foreign political doctrine for diplomacic actions, providing an international framework of solidarity and complementarity, acknowledging a presence of indigenous peoples and in defense of sustainable use of natural resources and biodiversity'* (authors' translation). Especially in Bolivia, the sense of the need to protect 'the national' against 'the international' has recently become strong. Since Morales came into office in 2006, this tendency led – at least for the education sector – to the exclusion of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund in decision-making and financing mechanisms. There also seems to be a break in the traditional 'back yard' relationship between the United States (US) and the Latin American continent. As explained by the Bolivian ambassador in the Netherlands, American domination in national politics is no longer tolerated in Bolivia (Calzadilla Sarmiento, 2009, translation by author).

Besides the 'global' influences on Bolivia, perhaps even more important nowadays are Bolivia's regional ties. Various Latin American leaders cooperate in South-South regional and global blocks (for instance Chavez from Venezuela, Lula from Brazil, Kirchner from Argentina, Correa from Ecuador, Ortega from Nicaragua and Morales from Bolivia), 'in order to alter the international economic rules of the game' (Rodriguez-Garavito et al, 2008: 27). We can distinguish between 'open regionalisms' with a more neoliberal character and new forms of regionalisms through 'counter-projects' (Muhr, 2008b). An example of the first form of open regionalisms is the Free Trade Agreement that was signed between Bolivia and MERCOSUR in

1996. On the other hand, and exemplary of the second form of counter-hegemonic regionalism, Bolivia also forms part of the 'Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America' (ALBA), together with Cuba, Nicaragua and Venezuela.[51] Bolivia became an official member of ALBA in 2006, the same year Morales started to govern. Critics have called Bolivia's foreign policy schizophrenic, because it is driven on one hand by an ideological block (being ALBA), and on the other hand by pragmatic choices (linked to MERCOSUR) (Gray Molina, 2009).

Fairclough (2005: 931-932) speaks about *recontextualisation* as the dissemination of emergent hegemonic discourses across structural boundaries (e.g. between organisations) and scalar boundaries (e.g. from local to national or international scale, or vice versa). With regard to crossing scalar boundaries, Bolivia's decolonising education discourse is propagated at the regional level through Bolivia's coordinating role in ALBA's Editorial Educative Council (*Fondo Editorial Educativo* – FEE). Bolivia's relationship with ALBA has been reciprocal; while regional solidarity through the TCP (*Trato de Comercio de los Pueblos* or People's Trade Agreement) has offered Bolivia models for political, social and cultural engagement, the country has done the same for other ALBA member states (Lopes Cardozo and Strauss, forthcoming). In the 'Cochambamba declaration' of April 2008, the 'Margarita Declaration' of March 2009 and the 'Managua Declaration' of June 2009, several ministries of education of ALBA-members – Bolivia, Venezuela, Cuba, Nicaragua, Dominica and Honduras – declared the importance of fighting inequalities and social injustices through education throughout the ALBA region and to find alternatives to the commodification of education driven by 'the North' (ALBA, 2008; ALBA, 2009). So far, ALBA's actual education activities have been a focus on higher education, with around 6000 Bolivian students participating in exchange study programmes in Cuba and Venezuela (Muhr, 2009).[52] Bolivia has also engaged ALBA in its educational advancement through the *Yo Si Puedo* literacy programme, which brought Cuban teachers to areas with low literacy rates. Due both to that programme and Bolivia's own initiatives, the country was declared free of illiteracy on December 20 2008 (ALBA, 2009b: 5). Although the ASEP law was not directly related to the ALBA agenda in interviews, we can still see some convergences (see Lopes Cardozo and Strauss, forthcoming). For instance in relation to teacher education, the ALBA-Education plan presents aligning teacher training as one of the main goals (ALBA, 2009b) and Bolivia has recently changed the system from three and a half to five years, leading to a university level '*licenciatura'* (Bachelors degree), as is the case in various other Latin American countries.

3.4 Characteristics of Bolivia's diverse and tense context

This section shows an overview of the different dimensions of Bolivian diversity and inequality that have contributed to the countries past and present conflictive situation.

Geographical and demographical diversity

Bolivia's diversity is determined by its geographical variety and its multiethnic population; by its many different languages and cultures; and by its biodiversity and rich resources. The country is thinly populated with 9.7 million inhabitants (2008 estimates by UNESCO)[53], on a surface 26

[51] For more information see also http://www.alba-tcp.org/.
[52] Courses that are developed include Community Medicine, Education Sciences, Comparative Education and Oil Geopolitics (all at post-graduate level) and a PhD in Education (ALBA 2009a).
[53] http://stats.uis.unesco.org, last viewed 24-03-2011.

times the size of the Netherlands. While just about 95% of the population is officially counted as belonging to the Roman Catholic Church[54] and the remaining 5% to Protestantism, many Bolivians consider themselves to practice a contextualised interpretation of Christianity, where Christian traditions are mixed with various indigenous inspired traditions and the worshipping of Morther Earth. There is a heterogeneous church presence in Bolivia, including Jesuits, Silesians, Fransiscans, Protestants and the Summer Institute for Linguistics, among others. Often these religious institutes work in the areas of education, media or cooperation with indigenous movements and NGOs (Malaver and Oostra, 2003: 37; Yashar, 1998: 37-38).

Bolivia has nine departments (with a representing prefect) and these departments are divided into provinces. Since the 1995 decentralisation, the municipalities – more than 300 in total – form important administrative institutions. The country can be divided into three main geographical areas (see Maps 1 and 2): the Andes Highlands (*Altiplano*) in the West (20 per cent of the total surface); the valleys in the central part (15 per cent); and the lowlands of the tropical Amazon and Chaco in the North, East and South (60 per cent) (Malaver and Oostra, 2003: 60; Morales, 2004: 243). Bolivia remains the least integrated country in Latin America; huge geographical differences and an ongoing power struggle between the urban 'centre' and 'the regions', and between the '*media luna'* and the highland regions, prevent integration processes and interregional communication. As argued below, one of the dimensions of Bolivia's present conflict is the divide between the economically dynamic lowland movements (primarily in Santa Cruz, Tarija, Beni, Pando and Chuiquisaca) and social movements from the highlands and the valleys (McNeish, 2006: 234; Seligson et al, 2006: 35; Molina, 2008: 5). There is substantial migration within Bolivia, and many other Bolivians leave the country to work in Chile, Argentina, Spain or the United States. Within the country, people migrate to the bigger cities of La Paz, El Alto, Cochabamba and Santa Cruz. Especially young rural youth leave their homes to find job opportunities in the cities or in the lowland coca farming. International migrants, either seasonal or longer term, send back remittances to support their families back home (CEPAL, 2005: 55; Morales, 2004: 243). Due to this historical and present internal migration flow, no demographically 'uncontaminated' areas exist in Bolivia (Salman, 2008: 98).

Economic Development in Bolivia

The Human Development Report 2006 shows that 63.7 per cent of the Bolivian population lives in urban areas, with an estimate for 2015 of 68.8 per cent. The country ranks 95 (out of 169 countries) on the UNDP Human Development Index 2010 (HDI) and is placed in the 'medium human development' segment.[55] While poverty levels have decreased over the past few years, just a few years ago Bolivia was still in position 117 of the HDI 2008.[56] Data presented by Latinobarómetro (2007: 110) showed an increasing trust in (parts of) the economy since Morales came to power. Indeed, even in a global context of economic crisis, Bolivia's economy has grown: according to the World Bank (2009) the gross domestic product increased from 9.3 US$ in 2005 to 17.3 US$ in 2009.

Nevertheless, Bolivia remains one of the poorest and most unequal countries of the Latin American continent. Regardless of an increased popularity of the government after the

[54] See http://www.minbuza.nl/nl/Reizen_en_Landen/Landenoverzicht/B/Bolivia.
55 See http://hdr.undp.org/en/statistics/.
[56] See http://hdr.undp.org/en/reports/global/hdr2007-8/ (out of 177 countries).

installation of Morales in 2006 (Kennemore and Weeks, 2011), Bolivia's democratic system continues with a broken legitimacy due to a failure to successfully integrate socio-economic developments (Zuazo, 2008: 13), slow economic development and the fact that a majority of the Bolivian workforce are employed in the informal sector. Without going into detail, there are a number of obstacles for Bolivian economic development including: low national savings and investments; national budgetary deficits, a negative trade balance and deteriorating terms of trade; export of resources with low added value; growing foreign debts and a crack-down on coca production (during the Banzer government 1997-2002); scarce employment opportunities; growing income inequalities; increased regional inequalities; and continuing social exclusion and inequalities (see for instance Domingo, 2005: 1735). While foreign or elitist exploitation of the countries' natural resources are usually seen as a main obstacle to poverty alleviation, Brienen argues that there is a danger in this singular focus and the overestimation of the productivity of Bolivian subsoil, since these expectations (when foreign dominance disappears, poverty will diminish) are too high (Brienen, 2007: 28-29).

Although political rhetoric might mislead us to think otherwise, Bolivia's interpretation of 21st century socialism in practice has not signified dramatic shifts towards a pure socialist model. According to Kennemore and Weeks, Morales follows a model of *'Andean capitalism'*, a pragmatic strategy of a centre-left government that aims to '*capture the capitalist surplus necessary for state spending*', mostly from the country's natural resources (2011: 271). The nationalisation scheme of the MAS has made it possible for the government to fund various social policies, including the *'Bono Juancito Pinto'*, a cash transfer programme for school going primary education students of around twenty Euros a year. Both from an ideological 21st century socialism point of view, as well as a means to deal with a global volatile economy, Bolivia participates in various regional trade relations, such as the Back of the South and ALBA (discussed above). Venezuela, for instance, has provided financial support to Bolivian municipalities. The country also negotiates (for instance of gas deals) with various partners outside of Latin America, including Russia and Iran (Kennemore and Weeks, 2011: 271-272).

Within the National Development Plan (PND), education is considered a crucial instrument to strengthen development. In the PND, the current government also emphasises the need to live in harmony with the natural environment, with respect for Mother Nature and avoiding environmental degradation (Calzadilla Sarmiento, 2009). Drawing from Ramirez' world (education) cultures theory and Wallerstein's world-systems theory, Griffiths (forthcoming) analyses how, in the case of Venezuela, the relation between educational planning to benefit national development planning may be seen as an example of Venezuela both drawing on world-system level cultural scripts about education, as well as part of the governments attempts to achieve higher levels of endogenous economic development. A similar analysis applies to Bolivia, where we find a comparable reasoning that sees education as a core vehicle for national development.[57]

57 A similar argument is presented in the Latin American regional overview of UNESCOs Global Monitoring Report 2011, which describes the link between mortality rates of under-5 year olds, which are three times as high for those children having mothers with no education. 'More educated women have better access to reproductive health information and are more likely to have fewer children and to provide better nutrition to their children, all of which reduce the risk of child mortality'. See http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0019/001914/191433e.pdf.

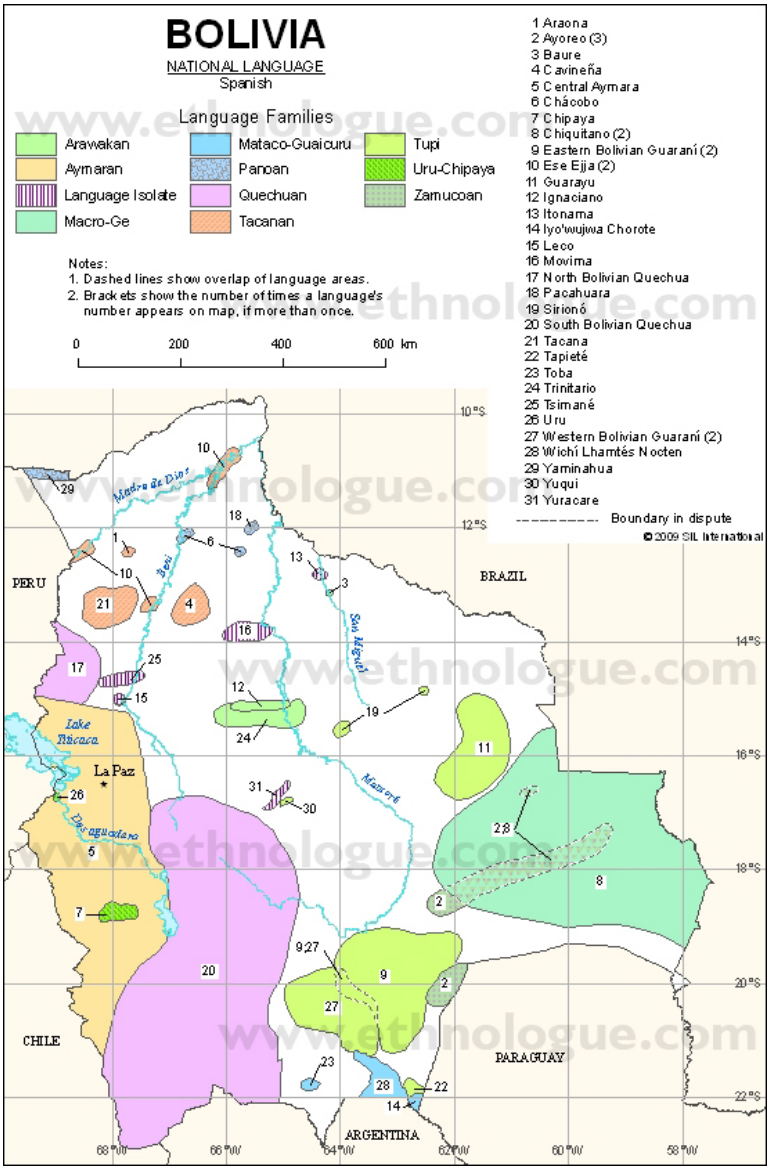
Cultural and ethnic diversity: developing indigenous identities

The country has struggled since independence in 1825 to create internal cohesion and a national identity in the face of significant ethnic and cultural-linguistic diversity. Depending on the source, Bolivia has between 34 and 36 official languages (Morales, 2004: 244; Taylor, 2004: 25; Delany-Barmann, 2010: 181). However, not all these languages enjoy the same amount of power, as often only four languages are referred to: Spanish; Quechua; Aymara; and Guaraní.[58] There are also different figures on the numbers of indigenous groups; Albó (2005) for instance mentions 34 groups, while other studies describe 37 indigenous groups in Bolivia (CEPAL, 2005: 9; Nucinkis, 2004: 4). A CEPAL survey of 2001 shows that 65.8% of the population who older than 15 years of age auto-identifies as indigenous, with the highest concentration in the urban areas of La Paz and Cochabamba because of urbanisation flows (2005: 32, 44, 45). A study named 'Democracy audit' in 2006 showed that 71% of the population identified themselves as belonging to indigenous groups (Seligson et al, 2006). In the 1992 census, few Bolivians identified themselves as indigenous, showing a change in self-conception over the last decade (Drange, 2007), a process that continues to date among future teachers as will be illustrated in chapter 7. This links to a change in identity formation from becoming white – or *blanqueamiento* – to becoming indigenous again – or *reindigenización* – as it is called by Chaves and Zambrano (2006).

The largest indigenous groups are the Quechua and the Aymara, respectively 49% and 41% of the indigenous population. The linguistic Map 3 below shows how Aymaras and Quechuas generally live in the Andean region, with the Aymaras on the higher plateau and the majority of Quechua people in the valleys (see also Speiser, 2000: 225). Yet, although Bolivia is often referred to as being an 'Andean region', a great part of Bolivia's territory and ethnic groups are Amazonian (D'Emilio, 1996: 13). In this lower part of Bolivia, many different smaller (a few hundred people) and larger (a couple of thousand people) groups have their own languages and (cultural) identities, and since the 1990s the Bolivian Amazon region has been an active site of indigenous organisation (Yashar, 1998: 25).

Despite the fact that the poor are primarily indigenous, they are everything but a homogenous group. What they have in common is '*a shared history of exclusion and a common frustration with the promises and the failures of neoliberal globalization*' (Kohl and Farthing, 2006: 4). Although at first sight it might seem clear which groups in Latin America can be identified as being indigenous, this is far from an easy task in reality. Identifying one self as being indigenous is highly subjective and at the same time it is contextually defined (Canessa, 2006: 243-244). Besides ethno-cultural classifications, in Bolivia a variety of other aspects are also adopted to define someone's identity, including language, geographical references, clothing and social class (Delany-Barmann, 2010: 182). Canessa points to the paradox that even though a majority of the Bolivian population identifies with being indigenous, the majority of Bolivians have Spanish as their mother tongue (Canessa, 2006: 256).

58 For instance on the webpage of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, http://www.minbuza.nl/nl/reizenlanden/landen,landenoverzichten/westelijk_halfrond/bolivia.html, last viewed 17-07-2007.



Map 3 Linguistic map of Bolivia (Lewis 2009, www.ethnologue.com, © SIL International)

Thus, language is a poor indicator of indigenous identity. Still, it is a factor for discrimination, as *'linguistic competence, or the 'correct' manner of speaking Spanish, seems to be an important mechanism of social discrimination that goes beyond ethnic and socio-economic differences in Bolivia*' (Seligson et al, 2006: 32). Fieldwork experience also revealed the difficulty and sensitivity of the identity discussion. The following quote, from a graffiti-painting from 'Mujeres Creando'[59], illustrates how discussion

[59] Mujeres Creando (Women Creating) is a feminist activist organisation working from La Paz. More information can be found on http://www.mujerescreando.org/. See also Dangl 2007, chapter eight.

continues on the claim that the majority of the Bolivian population is really indigenous, since it is unclear who identifies with being indigenous and why.

'*Pachamama, tu y yo sabemos que la única originaria es la papa*'
'Mother Earth, you and I both know the only native is the potato'

There are various ways of reflecting on 'indigenous-ness'. Van Dam and Salman's work (2003) helps us to understand different 'moments' of reflection, in which they first saw indigenous-ness as something of the past which could be overcome through modernisation. The second way of reflection departs from a multicultural and human rights perspective, widely adopted in mainstream international development debates, that sees difference as both valuable and necessary to overcome racism. The category 'indigenous' can also be viewed as a context specific social construct, often closely linked to political interests (see also Howard, 2009), especially in urban areas. This connects to what van Dam and Salman call the 'third moment' of reflection on indigenous identity. Postero (2007: 9) argues this 'third moment' is particularly relevant when reflecting on Bolivia's current politics of 'strategic essentialism', in which indigenous and Andean cultural aspects are appropriated to strengthen political power. As a result of major socio-economic inequalities, rougly since the 1990s, there has been an 'indigenous awakening' in Bolivia, but also in Ecuador, Guatemala, Mexico and to a lesser extend in Peru (Canessa, 2006: 242; Zoomers, 2006: 1043; Baud, 2007a). The issue of identity and ethnicity has only since the 1990s been recognised as having an impact on Latin American politics and conflicts, in contrast to earlier acknowledgement of it in other parts of the world (Yashar, 1998: 23).

Ethnic, political, social and educational discrimination and exclusion of indigenous population groups – that constitute the majority of the Bolivian population – are deeply rooted in Bolivia's society and politics, which in other cases are often linked to 'minority problems'. Zoomers (2006: 1025) argues that while indigenous groups are now actively involved in mainstream politics, the majority of these groups are still the poorest of the poor. Yet, while indigenous identity has long been 'equated with backwardness', nowadays a somewhat more flexible and dynamic perception has replaced this (see also Yashar, 1998: 23). A new middle class is emerging, of formerly lower class citizens who claim to be (at least partly) from indigenous descent (Gray Molina, 2009). Evo Morales is the most prominent example of this new middle class, as a former rural coca-grower who has, through union leadership and politics, worked his way up to becoming president.

3.5 Five processes of conflict

This context of huge diversities and large inequalities, between rich and poor, between lowland and highland Bolivia, and between different ethnic-cultural groups, lead to social tensions and conflicts in the country: as in indication about 80% of the population expresses that there is a conflict between rich and poor people in the country (Latinobarómetro, 2007: 67). For the purpose of this study, Bolivian conflict is defined as a combination of the following five processes: 1) high levels of *poverty and inequality* of opportunities; 2) *discrimination and exclusion*; 3) a regional struggle linked to the use of *separatist discourses* and *identity politics*; 4) a severe *mistrust* in the functioning of state (institutions) and between groups in society; and 5) reoccuring *clashes*

between the state and social movements, that sometimes turn *popular pressure methods into violent encounters*. These processes are all historically rooted, as has been highlighted in the first part of this chapter, yet they also carry on under the current government of Morales.

First of all, high levels of poverty continue to exist, as was highlighted above. In the words of the Bolivian scholar José Luís Saavedra: '*poverty is a form of violence*'. Although poverty is not a direct cause of conflict, it can be seen as a trigger mechanism for frustrations with, and mistrust in, the state (Salman, 2006: 164, 171). Moreover, because of the wide gap between rich and poor people, ensuing severe inequalities lead to tensions amongst different population groups. Because of a lack of jobs, there are limited career opportunities for unemployed youth, which can lead to a process in which youngster's exploitation is reproduced, for instance for young, poor, female – and often indigenous – house servants (Kohl and Farthing, 2006: 190-191).

Secondly, discrimination and exclusion continue to leave deep marks on society and cannot be changed over night. Estimates illustrate that 71% of Bolivians label the tensions between the different ethnic and cultural groups as 'strong' or 'very strong' (Latinobarómetro, 2007: 70). Discrimination is not only directed towards a heterogenous group of indigenous peoples, but extends to gender issues, class issues and regional prejudices – with Andean inhabitants negatively called '*collas*' and inhabitants from the plains called '*cambas*' (D'Emilio, 1996: 22). Discrimination is apparent in political struggles and in clashes between societal groups, and it appears that concealed forms of violence over the past decades have become more 'open' and direct. Recently, on the 12 September 2008 for example, violent clashes between supporters and opponents of the 'indigenous president' at a demonstration in the Pando region regretfully resulted in deaths and wounded. Not only political preferences, but also 'racial' issues are said to have triggered the violence between civilians. One of Bolivia's ex-presidents described in the Spanish newspaper *El País* how regional, racial and cultural differences in Bolivia are at a critical stage. He argued how Morales has pushed his pro-indigenous constitution through, thus creating more tensions among the non-indigenous population and the risk of more violent confrontations (Mesa, 2008). Within the education sector, discrimination and exclusion of certain groups of (indigenous) students has been called 'indirect' or 'symbolic' forms of violence (Bourdieu in Regalsky and Laurie, 2007: 241). Although at the policy levels attention is being paid to solve these problems, in reality discrimination and social exclusion in educational institutions continue to exist. According to Gamboa Rocabado in UNESCO's report on Bolivian education, the function of present day education should be to *'identify a sentiment of reconciliation to overcome the inter-ethnic conflicts that have affected Bolivia*' (2009: 70).

A third aspect of present day conflict in Bolivia is the use of *separatist discourses* and *identity politics* that are linked to vast regional differences leading to tensions, the demand for autonomy in parts of the country by both the political (fomer elite) opposition and indigenous groups and the use of an exclusionary discourse by political leaders on both sides. Some sectors were, for instance, in favour of the new constitution and nationalisation of the gas reserves, whilst other sectors (those mobilised by the entrepreneurial elites of the department where the gas reserves can be found) claim regional autonomy and against nationalisation (Salman, 2006: 163). Zuazo (2008: 19, 24) discusses the urban-rural rupture in this context of regional and political tensions, originating from a colonial 'installation' of a lack of trust between (rural) indigenous people and

the (urban) central state. She argues how decentralisation to the municipal levels from 1994 onwards resulted in a 'ruralisation' of Bolivian politics, aggravating the urban-rural divide and differences. There is also a partition between the economically dynamic lowland movements in the western *media luna* (half moon) – controlled by a powerful elite – and the indigenous and working-class based movements from the highlands and valleys (McNeish, 2006: 234; Seligson et al, 2006: 35; Molina, 2008: 5). According to Molina (2008: 10), the '*Cruceña*'[60] call for autonomy is a necessary step to liberate this relatively wealthy region from the political domination, the ideology and the poverty of the *altiplano* (highlands). However, we should avoid a simplistic vision on 'for or against autonomy', since different indigenous groups also strive for different forms of autonomy.[61] As president Morales explained in an interview with Al Jazeera: '*it is not a matter of east versus west, but of opposing groups in society*' (Al Jazeera, 2008).

Political leaders have started to use separatist discourses to mobilise their support against 'the other part' of the country. Although president Morales at the discursive level claims to work for a unified Bolivia, the opposition and other critics argue that his pro-poor and pro-indigenous strategy is a new form of exclusionary politics, fostering polarisation by excluding the non-indigenous and mostly urban inhabitants of the country (Molina, 2008: 8; Gamboa Rocabado, 2009: 23, 69). Besides, the present government announced to the press how the *prefectos* (provincial state representatives) of Santa Cruz are working towards a *coup d'etat* (La Razón, 2008). During another speech in March 2009, Morales addressed a crowd of supporters and urged all union leaders to '*define themselves*': '*If they aren't with the government, they are with the opposition. If they are with the opposition, then they are on the right, they are racist fascists, they are neoliberals*' (as quoted by Molina, 2009 in Kennemore and Weeks, 2011: 273). Such discourses can obviously lead to growing mistrust among the population against 'the other', claiming power on the bases of a particular identity. Within Conflict Studies, Kaldor (1999) uses the term 'identity politics' to explain such processes.[62]

Fourthly, there is a severe 'culture of mistrust' in society. Not only does part of the population lack confidence in the government to govern well, mistrust can also be signalled between groups in society, in the messages of the media and, importantly for this research, also in the education institutes. The fast majority of Bolivian daily press and television channels are controlled by private enterprises that have little trust in Evo Morales and the MAS (Howard, 2010: 186). The severe lack of trust in poorer peoples' opinions according to McNeish indicates an '*often hidden, but nonetheless potent structural violence of class, racial and gender prejudice that many Bolivian social scientists highlight*' (McNeish, 2006: 228). Regardless of his electoral success, over the past few years a lack of trust in the Morales government has also gained ground, even under Morales'

[60] From Santa Cruz

[61] Autonomy struggles are also fought out in the education sector, were alternative education policy initiatives – the so-called '*estatutos autonomicos departamentales*'– were created in the lower regions of Bolivia. These documents are highly debated in terms of their legitimacy, congruence with the national Constitution and influence on education. It could be stated that they '*ignore the common, emphasize their own truth as the only truth, and impede an open dialogue between different groups and cultures in society*' (Van Dam & Salman 2009).

[62] In some cases, it might be argued that certain forms of identity politics could be legitimate for a period of time, for instance when linked to the improvement of the lives and power positions of marginalized and discriminated groups. Although the concept of identity politics is a useful one, we should be careful not to treat it in a simplistic and solely negative sense. Hale (1997) elaborates on how the 'politics of identity' evolved in Latin America, and links it for instance to the rise of indigenous politics as opposed to unified national-popular projects.

supporters.[63] In contrast to the sense of hope when Morales came to power in 2006, it was estimated that only 29% of the population believes that the state is actually able to solve current problems (Latinobarómetro, 2007: 29). Relating back to Bolivia's turbulent politics described above, the country's 'political conflict' (McNeish, 2006: 225, 237), or 'crisis of belief in democracy' (Salman, 2006: 163), has led to a continuing unstable political environment and a lack of a 'culture of trust' in democratic institutions (Domingo, 2005: 1740; Zuazo, 2008: 14). Historically deeply rooted forms of corruption seem to persevere at different levels (national and local/institutional), only creating a deeper mistrust in state actions and official institutions (for a discussion on the lack of trust in teacher education institutes see chapter 7).

The fifth and final dimension encompasses the unceasing tensions between the state and social movements, sometimes leading to violent encounters. These events are usually portrayed in the national and international media by showing the clashes between police/military forces and social movements using popular pressure mechanisms such as demonstrations, roadblocks, hunger strikes and crucifixions. These popular pressure methods are particularly adopted by Bolivia's teachers' unions, as is explained below. Similar to other Andean countries, these instruments are primarily used to enforce popular power as opposed to state power. As Sousa Santos argues, in the case of these forms of direct popular action, we can distinguish between violent and non-violent and between human and non-human objectives (Sousa Santos, 2008: 269). Though popular uprisings have shown to be effective, even in overthrowing the government in 2003, they nevertheless also had – and have – their downsides. Particularly the poor can be viewed as both protagonists and victims of the effects of the numerous roadblocks and violent confrontations with the police and military. Furthermore, the economy suffers from the withdrawal of foreign investors who lose trust in the Bolivian situation.

Recent research has shown how education can both contribute to processes of conflict, as well as work against them (for an overview see Novelli, 2008: 478-481). A conflictive society and education are dialectically related to each other, since education is usually reflecting, influenced by and affecting society. The work of Bolivian teachers is embedded within and responds to this conflictive multilevel (global, national and local) context, and is the topic of the following section.

3.6 Teachers' life and work in relation to the five processes of conflict

Similar to many other education systems worldwide, Bolivian educators face the challenge to better understand the relationship between education and the tensions within society; to analyse the roots of inequalities, discrimination, mistrust, exclusion and the use of violence. Of course, it cannot be argued that education is the only cause of Bolivia's troubles, nor can it be seen as the sole medicine. Yet, we do need to take into account that the historically embedded inequalities within the education system will not change from one day to the next, that these structures do form a basis for tensions and frustrations in society and that there is a potential space for educators to work *against* these processes, as is taken up in chapter 9.

[63] For example, indigenous protesters who first thought the new constitution would be a ticket to inclusion in Bolivia's future, later on stated that Morales and 'his' constitutional assembly have not dealt with issues of greater autonomy and representation (Almudevar, 2007, BBC 06-08-07).

Both rural and urban teachers are faced with the first process of conflict – poverty and inequality – in both their private and working life. Teachers and students alike live with daily realities of poverty in their homes and in their classrooms. Teachers in both urban and rural contexts complained of poor teaching materials and a deprived infrastructure, such as insufficient or badly maintained school buildings and long and difficult journeys to get to school for both students and teachers. Some statistics show how inequalities still persist in the Bolivian education system, particularly in the more remote areas such as the Amazon region. Although only 8% of all primary schools are private (Contreras and Talavera, 2003: 9; UNESCO, 2011: 318), it has been argued by several education actors that there are significant inequalities between the quality of education in private and public schools. It was, for instance, mentioned by the former Minister of Education how '*most ministers of education – and Bolivia knows many of them – all came from private schools. Thus, the political decisions are in the hands of those who enjoyed a private education. Public schooling should open up these opportunities for others. Around 90% of society, including the social movements, demands changes for better quality in public education.*'[64]

Based on UNESCO's Global Monitoring Report statistics (2011) learning achievements in Bolivia differed between indigenous and non-indigenous students, and inequalities remain to exist over the past decade based on students' ethnicity, gender, regional and urban/rural location, and their level of wealth. The average years of schooling are calculated based on factors including wealth, location and gender, with an average of 11.5 years of schooling for a richer, male and urban student on one end of the continuum, and an average of 5.5 years of schooling for a poorer girl living in a rural area in Bolivia. Educational inequalities are further influenced by factors such as ethnicity and regional location within Bolivia, as becomes clear in UNESCO's most recent available statistics: particularly those groups with a Quechua ethnic background and those living in Cochabamba, Potosí or Chuquisaca face the highest levels of educational marginalisation in Bolivia.[65]

The work of Bolivian teachers is also strongly linked to the second dimension of conflict, as one of the principle problems that educators are faced with in Bolivia nowadays is not just '*the presence of multiple identities and languages but rather the existence of mechanisms of discrimination and exclusion*' (D'Emilio, 1996: 12).[66] Discrimination, the so-called 'diseducational function' of the school, thus presents an alarming feature in a country such as Bolivia with an indigenous majority (D'Emilio, 1996: 18). Until fairly recently, popular or indigenous knowledge was not seen as equally valuable compared to western-based knowledge (Gandin and Apple, 2002: 259). Some Bolivian teachers tend to disqualify indigenous knowledge as backward, since it is not based on modern science and technology (Regalsky and Laurie, 2007: 240). D'Emilio (1996: 17) observed how teachers would for instance ask their students '*if you want to be an Indian or if you want to be intelligent*'. Drange likewise signalled how a large part of Bolivian teachers assert that '*children from the city are more intelligent than children from the countryside*' and that '*intelligence depends on the race you*

64 Interview with the former Minister of Education, Lic. M.M. Cajias de la Vega on 16th September 2008.
65 For more detailed information and visual illustrations see UNESCO's GMR website, http://public.tableausoftware.com/views/PageFourNew/Pg4Dash?:embed=y&:toolbar=no&:tabs=no
66 However, it has to be noted that the complexity of interculturality also forms a huge challenge for teachers and policy makers (see for instance Albó 2003, the three dimensions of intercultural education).

belong to' (2007: 3).[67] A feminist and indigenist activist explained in an interview how teachers are protagonists in reproducing discrimination, forming one of the major obstacles to a genuine intercultural, bilingual and just education system in Bolivia: *'there exists a blindness in the political ideological vision of teachers: while most of them have black faces, in their minds they see themselves as even whiter than the whitest citizens of this country*' (70:5).

Both government offices and schools are identified by Bolivians as important scenes of discrimination (Seligson et al, 2006: 33). Bolivian schools, similar to Bolivian society, are characterised by a wide diversity. The integration of children with different backgrounds in the same school can – under certain circumstances – have positive effects on learning how to live together, as the case of Sri Lanka shows (Lopes Cardozo, 2008). However, when not negotiated well by teachers, these differences can trigger discrimination, stigmatisation and exclusion against those who learn more slowly, or those who do not understand the language of instruction (D'Emilio, 1996: 15). Discrimination and exclusion of certain groups of (indigenous) students has been called 'indirect' or 'symbolic' forms of violence (Bourdieu in Regalsky and Laurie, 2007: 241). Violence unfortunately does not only take place outside of schools. Often, schools themselves form places where direct and indirect violence is committed. A study by Regalsky and Laurie (2007) showed how local community members developed strategies to neutralise the unwanted effects (including racism and violence) of their local school. Furthermore, violence in the form of physical punishment, or even sexual abbuse has been – and in some cases still is – used in schools to punish low-performing or disobedient students. These punishments were 'tolerated' by the state until the 1994 reforms, in line with the goal to increase the number of girls in school. Since the creation of parent committees there is a larger control on what happens inside the school area. Teachers have been reported to be expelled by the parents associations because of – true or false – accusations of maltreatment of students. Finally, Seitz (2004: 51), drawing on the work of Salmi, uses the relevant concept of 'alienating violence', referring to culturally biased curricula, and suppression of linguistic and cultural diversity.

The third process of conflict (identity politics/polarising discourses) has a more direct influence on teachers' life and work. On the one hand, teachers' own identities (chapter 7) and being part of a certain community influences the way they perceive the situation in the country: a Bolivian Aymara highland teacher is more like to be in favour of the current Morales government discourses than an only-Spanish speaking teacher living in the city of Santa Cruz. The way teachers themselves experience the societal tensions and their own political views often influence the way they (do not) deal with these issues in school. Chapter 9 discusses teachers' potential agency to counter stereotyping and polarising discourses, by enhancing levels of trust and promoting open and critical dialogue.

The issue of mistrust can be illustrated by looking at the difficult process of the implementation of the 1994 Educational Reform (discussed in the next chapter), and the foreseen difficulties of the implementation of the new ASEP law (see chapter 5). According to the teachers' unions (and especially the urban one) the 1994 reform process lacked participation of teachers and was imposed by neo-liberal actors. Similarly, teachers currently complain again

[67] The issue of race in the Bolivian context is usually discussed in terms of ethnicity and/or indigenous background, culture and languages.

about a lack of genuine participation, ownership and a lack of information about the new ASEP law, which rather decreases than improves teachers' trust in government policies. In addition, mistrust in the quality and effectiveness of teacher training institutes can be signalled since the general view is that teachers are not being prepared well enough for their job. Several teacher trainers, as well as student teachers, explained how corruption and 'political favours' (in different forms and at different levels) and the malfunctioning of state institutions also increased a sense of mistrust (chapter 7).[68]

Bolivia's teachers unions are notoriously known for their use of popular pressure methods to push for their demands (see also chapters 5 and 11). I witnessed several marches, usually on Friday afternoons, organised by the urban teacher union in La Paz. This section of the teachers' union is known for the somewhat radical nature of their demonstrations.[69] On one occasion (September 2008), although there were no signs of this demonstration turning violent, police forces vigilantly controlled strategic locations in the city centre (including the MoE) because, as one police officer explained, these demonstrations by teachers 'might escalate'. Chapter 9 elaborates on teachers' possibilities and challenges of their collective agency related to this fifth process of conflict. In addition, in their desperate attempts to become a teacher – as a main way out of poverty – hunger strikes were organised by students who tried to push the MoE to let them enter the already full Normales.

As a final note on these five dimensions of the Bolivian conflict and its relation to the education sector, it is worth mentioning how the new ASEP reform aims to directly or indirectly tackle at least the first two processes through and in education, as a decolonised education system strives to create equal opportunities for all to live well, without discrimination (Ministerio de Educacion de Bolivia, 2010b). The final three processes are, however, not so much taken into account in the current education reform plans, while changing identities, misrust, corruption and strong feelings of resistance among educators are described in this thesis as pressing issues in the (teacher) education sector that deserve political attention.

3.7 Bolivian society in summary: continuing tensions, new horizons

A new political and ideological wind seems to be blowing through Bolivian territory, creating new spaces for contestation of historical structures of inequality and injustice. Change is the buzz-word in Bolivian media, politics and even in the streets and markets. Also, we can observe real changes taking place since president Morales' installation in 2006, such as a new constitution as of February 2009. A very important change in relation to this study is an emerging new profile of an indigenous middle class, with Evo Morales being the most prominent example (Gray Molina, 2009). Building on the work of Sahlins, Postero (2007: 12-13) rightly notes how there is continuity in all processes of social change, while in cases such as Bolivia, indigenous peoples are

68 Mistrust at the personal level was also visible in some of the schools I became acquainted with. Schools are often used in two or three 'turns' a day. In many cases, there are different management teams in the morning, afternoon and evening turns. Teachers and students reported a lack of communication between these managers, and the (mis)use or destruction of educational material in the classrooms by 'the other' users. Consequently, children who sit in classroom 1B in the morning, get to perceive their fellow students using the same room in the afternoon as unmannered and rude children, because their teacher is afraid to leave anything behind.

69 Data exists that show how between 1996 and 1997, in 17 encounters with the police, more than 170 people were detained, 2 people died and 62 were wounded (Contreras and Talavera 2004).

active agents in these processes of counter-hegemonic change. In addition to the need to build an alternative economic vision and activity, as Harris (2007: 19, 22) suggests, I argue it is similarly important to follow Bolivia's attempts to build a new education system that supports this alternative vision and a 'counter-hegemonic' culture. Struggles in Bolivia revolve around economic, environmental, social and democratic justice, and Morales' 'politics of change' envisions bringing these struggles for justice forward, with education being one of its core instruments for transformation. However, this is far from a smooth process, as various processes of conflict discussed in this chapter continue to dialectically affect the education sector and various social groups, incuding teachers, disagree with Morales' new project. These processes of conflict are also creating certain room for contestation, opening up a horizon of potential progressive changes in a context where change is – slowly – beginning to take place.

This context makes the focus of this study on the link between these envisioned processes of social justice and the role of teacher education and future teachers very relevant. Especially now the education system has a crucial function in preventing and coping with the effects of these conflictual processes. Drawing from debates in the field of 'Conflict and Education', it is relevant to refer to Pigozzi (1999) here, who emphasises that situations of crisis, emergencies and post-conflict reconstruction should be viewed as opportunities for positive transformation of education systems. In situations of societal transition, education systems – which might have contributed to the root causes of conflict – should not just be rebuilt, but be transformed (Bush & Salterelli, 2000: 24; Seitz, 2004: 56), as is anticipated in Bolivia's new ASEP education reform. The next chapter therefore turns to discuss how processes of *continuity and change* in the eduation sector eventually led to the recent developments of the new ASEP reform under the Evo Morales government, which will be the core focus in the chapters of Part III, IV and V.