

‘...diversity within unity’: Sovereignty, Recognition and Ecology in Indigenous Interpretations of Modernity

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ABSTRACT

Starting from Peter Wagner’s insight about the re-theorization of modernity, this article sketches a theoretical framework to incorporate the interpretations of modernity which go beyond the domination of a single Western or European perspective. Much theorization of modernity has been European-centered to the neglect of rich social and cultural thought from other regions of the world. The rise of indigenous activism in Latin America has provided the world with an example of different kinds of activism, and distinct forms of cultural and political thought and practice. This article takes the bold step in arguing that Latin America’s indigenous movements have generated a fresh and alternative interpretation of modernity. Those movements which have emerged over the course of the last three decades have pursued a different vision of recognition, sovereignty and ecology and bring to that pursuit a new kind of social and political agency. Unlike conventional philosophies of statehood derived from the Westphalian tradition of state-making, indigenous perspectives privilege new kinds of coexistence. Moreover, the different ontological relationship with Nature that they posit also has potentially significant implications for addressing climate change.

Key Words: modernity, interpretation, indigenous movements, sovereignty, ecology

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INTRODUCTION

Reasons for judging Latin America as a distinct kind of modernity have grown in the social sciences as the explanatory force of Louis Hartz's argument that American societies are 'fragments' of Europe has faded (Hartz 1964). The case for treating Latin America as a civilizational region in its own right has grown (Canclini 1995; Domingues 2008; Larrain 2000; 2007; Miller 2008; Roniger 2011; Schelling 2000; Smith 2006). In particular, famous comparativist Shmuel Eisenstadt's analysis of the Americas represents an important step beyond Hartz in developing a nuanced image of different civilizations in the Americas (Eisenstadt 2002). Eisenstadt re-frames Latin America in the multiple modernities paradigm and casts the American societies as 'the first modernities'. However, his analysis is a starting point only for an understanding of the diversity of the Western hemisphere. Indigenous civilizations are not accorded the agency or interpretative capacities that they should be. Eisenstadt's analysis, and indeed that of the literature on Latin American modernity does not incorporate the chief problem under analysis in the current work: how modernity is interpreted in Latin American contexts by indigenous movements.

This article goes further than Eisenstadt and Hartz's approaches by surveying the variety of original cultural, political and economic currents of thought and practice in Latin America's contemporary indigenous movements. Drawing on one insight from Peter Wagner's re-theorization of modernity (1994; 2008; 2012), I argue that indigenous movements have expanded the "interpretative space" of modernity by striking new positions on recognition, sovereignty and ecology in response to 'basic problematiques that all societies need to address' (Wagner 2010, 57-58). The next section of the article outlines Wagner's theory of modernity and indicates its distinction from the multiple modernities framework pioneered by Eisenstadt and associates. In the main body of the article I subsequently sketch the context in which indigenous social movements emerged and analyze key statements of indigenous coalitions and clauses of reformed constitutions in order to illuminate interpretations of problems of recognition, modern sovereignty and ecology.

THE “INTERPRETATIVE SPACE” OF MODERNITY

Though originating in European social theory, Peter Wagner’s sociological conception of modernity can help clarify the spaces in which non-Western insights into modernity emerge. In critique of the multiple modernities paradigm, Wagner uniquely identifies interpretation as the basis for understanding plurality in the world (2008; 2010; 2011; 2012). He presents this framework as an alternative to conceptions of stable blocs of civilization and modernity that match world regions (Indian, Chinese, Japanese, Islamic, Western and so on). There are a number of stages that Wagner’s position has passed through to arrive at a point where it can be thoughtfully applied to original cultural, political and economic currents of thought and practice outside of Western societies. In this section, I proceed through the stages of development of Wagner’s theory before putting forward a diagram of indigenous responses.

In his first phase, Wagner drew an important distinction between the institutions and cultures of modernity in European and North American societies. Modernity’s impulses to form institutions that provide social order are partnered by discourses of modernity that frame modern problems. At most the discourses of modernity have corresponded only approximately with existing practices and institutional constellations of a small number of societies even in the early twentieth century. In Wagner’s pithy words, modernity ‘had few citizens by 1800, not many, by 1900 and still today it is hardly the right word to characterize many current practices’ (Wagner 1994, 24). Thus, for instance, there is a mismatch between the rise of democracy and liberty as a body of thought and practice and the actually-existing institutional constellations of modern societies. Democracy and liberty are high aspirations constrained by the institutional imperatives of order, hierarchy, rationalization and bureaucratization.

In itself, that is hardly a unique insight. However, Wagner continues to elaborate from this point a core tension between modernity’s tendency to *liberty* and its countervailing tendency to *discipline*. Following Cornelius Castoriadis’ notion of social imaginary significations (1987), liberty and discipline are treated as abstractions of the most deeply symbolic nature. As such, they inform everyday meaning in social life. Liberty and discipline are open to interpretation in varying and often contrary ways within a discursive field. Thus the history of modern political and social thought is rife with ideological contestation about society’s mix of these two elements. However, the extent to which the institutional constellations of modern

societies fulfill the ‘promise’, if you will, of liberty or of highly rational and functional social order is another matter. With this conclusion Wagner suggests that it is more circumspect to understand modernity as a discursive break more than a comprehensive revolution in institutional formations and practices. His phrase ‘discourses of modernity’ evokes a variety of interpretations more than the core meanings of social imaginary significations of Castoriadis’ social imaginary significations.

How Wagner arrives at his theory of interpretation is open to conceptual critique (see Carleheden 2010; compare with Kahn 2001). As Wagner’s position stood in the 1990s, one particular problem salient to the current argument looks unresolved. The discourses of modernity as described look insufficiently nuanced. Until recently, Wagner has expressly focused on European and North American experiences. Bringing in the historical experiences of other world regions (or other modernities) would further nuance the discursive spectrum. His substantive research has brought him into close contact with studies of South Africa and Brazil (Wagner 2014). As a result a discernible cross-cultural sensibility has entered his work. In subsequent texts (2008; 2012), Wagner turns to the problem of multiple interpretations, naming discipline as ‘mastery’ in this instance:

(t)he relation between autonomy and mastery institutes an interpretative space that is to be specifically filled in each socio-historic situation through struggles over the situation-grounded appropriate meaning. Theoretically, at least, there is always a plurality and diversity of interpretations within this space (2012, 23).

The emphasis on interpretation gets closer to a sense of plurality necessary for perceiving and understanding non-Western perspectives on modernity. Wagner’s most recent work further clarifies how interpretation furnishes societal diversity (Wagner 2012). The ‘interpretative space’ opened up by the ambivalence of autonomy and mastery gives rise to a ‘potentially infinite variety of interpretations of modernity’ (2012, 23-24). Moreover, interpretation is linked to institutional formation undertaken in different societies, rather than being so disconnected from institutional frameworks as Wagner claims is the case in the multiple modernities paradigm. What exactly is being interpreted? There are three problematics –Wagner favours the French term *problématiques*– of modern life that are fundamental to all human collectivities according to Wagner: epistemic, political and economic. Forgive the lengthy quote, but Wagner’s own words best explain the concepts:

- a) The epistemic problematic interrogates first of all the degree of certainty of knowledge human beings can attain with regard to themselves, to their social life and to nature. Translating this into socio-political matters, it further raises the question to what degree such knowledge can or should be used to determine socio-political issues [...] one needs to ask how far claims to certain knowledge –in comprehensive world views– can be made collectively binding in any given society.
- b) This last question directly links the epistemic to the political problematic. The central issue of the latter concerns the relation between those matters that should be dealt with in common and those others that should/can be left to individual self-determination [...] the political problematic also concerns the extension and mode of participation in political decision making (the question of citizenship) as well as the mode of aggregation in the process of collective will formation (the question of representation).
- c) The centre of the economic problematic is the question as to how to best satisfy human material needs, and it can be alternatively answered in terms of productive efficiency and in terms of congruence with societal values and norms (Wagner 2010, 57-58).

The 'interpretative space' opened up by indigenous perspectives and activism responds approximately to these core problematics, but only approximately. To pair-up Wagner's theory with indigenous perspectives, I introduce a diagram of three responses around recognition, sovereignty and ecology and then analyze each. Preceding that diagram is a short history of the emergence of contemporary indigenous agency.

In summary, Wagner's re-theorization of modernity throws into relief the space for the many interpretations of modernity. I draw from Wagner's sociology of modernity the proposition that there is more variety of interpretations of modernity than conventionally understood in the Eisenstadt-inspired multiple modernities paradigm. Conceived in this way, the problem of interpretations of modernity outside of conventional Western contexts can be better explored. Latin American interpretations of modernity include philosophically-demarcated currents and doctrines and blueprints for social reform promoted by indigenous social movements.

THE 'FOURTH WAVE': THE RISE OF CONTEMPORARY INDIGENOUS ACTIVISM

At the other end of the twentieth century, a remarkable diversity was evident in the emergence of the indigenous movement. Its first obstacle was the legacy of *indigenismo*, the preceding tradition that refused recognition

of Indian cultures as nations in their own right. *Indigenismo* linked indigenous agency to other movements, particularly the labor movement. Assimilation was promoted during much of the twentieth century with the effect that a deficit of visibility worked against indigenous politics and its potential advocates. Culturally, indigenous civilization was to be preserved in museums, archaeological sites, sculptures and murals. The invisibility of surviving communities rested on a broad consensus that the only humane possibility was assimilation with de-Indianised mestizaje national identities.

Since the 1970s, indigenous movements have directly challenged the legacy of this regime, exercising their own voices on vital issues (Brysk 2000; Diaz-Polanco 1997; Meyer and Alvarado 2010; Yashar 2005). A 'fourth wave' of indigenous mobilization has raised a different experience of modernity and thereby instituted a different interpretative space (Domingues 2008, 103-104, 112-113). In the 1990s the fourth wave responded most spectacularly to neo-liberal incursion on the basis for the cultural reproduction of communities, a commitment that had been accepted by many states for much of the century. During the last decades of the twentieth century nearly all states in the sub-continent began to challenge Indian autonomies through promotion of neo-liberal policies, particularly the de-collectivization of communal lands and the subsidization of large-scale infrastructure and mining projects (Yashar 2005, 105-109).

In this context, indigenous movements asserted an independent mode of organization. In addition, their expressed perspectives evinced a distinct interpretation of modernity. In this section of the article, I analyze indigenous interpretation from three types of documents. Key published statements of *indigenous movements* and larger *summits* endorsed by indigenous coalitions constitute the first two types. These are alternative expressions on modern problems of recognition, sovereignty and ecology. The third is made up of important constitutional provisions of Bolivia and Ecuador where the influence of such indigenous expressions is evident.

The movements that gave rise to indigenous interpretation accumulated collective experience over many years. Reaction manifested at the transnational level in 1992 in protests against the Colombian Quincentennial celebrations (including against incipient neo-liberalism). This phase was a watershed in connecting Indian organizations and federations with each other (Smith 2009). Regional and trans-national dialogue between peoples with little or no contact with each other or even awareness of each other has become commonplace. Such informal exchanges have been a form of inter-cultural learning about new styles and strategies of organizing (Singh 2011, 56). The level of organization at the transnational or

transcontinental level was ground-breaking, even though it was developed with established national and regional networks. Trans-nationalization not only broadened the scope for protest but also presented a critical philosophy of coexistence. The questions that the anti-Quincentennial protests asked addressed concerns of the entire Americas and not just particular peoples or regions. The new Indian coalitions put forward a vision of autonomy that challenged the constitution of provincial 'autonomy' in some Latin American states that merely permitted Indian groups the rights of isolated cultural preservation (Diaz-Polanco 1997, 129-142).

As a result of this newfound agency, relations between American states and indigenous nations are being tested. Indigenous claims that time were two-fold in character. On one hand, indigenous movements asserted values and an overarching world view against the dominant political culture. They challenged romantic images of historical first-people cultures fostered after colonialism in popular culture, the human sciences and law. On the other hand, there were the rights-claims and disputes over native title and sovereignty that summon the constitutional and juridical dimensions of states and the normative framework of international law (Diaz-Polanco 1997; Keal 2003). Broadly speaking, indigenous movements work across both the base of values contextualizing the public sphere and the proceduralism of the law. This led indigenous movements to work in the context of nation states and in the transnational framework of regional and international coalitions and intergovernmental organizations.

The anti-Quincentennial protests of 1992 were extended by the Zapatista insurgency in Mexico and the regional activism of large confederations in the Andes and Amazon Basin. The Zapatistas arose against the backdrop of a deeply assimilationist regime. The state's conception of provincial autonomy was, at most, limited self-administration for the purpose of cultural protection. To align with the NAFTA, the Mexican government the Salinas and then Zedillo administrations moved to dissolve Mexico's communal lands (*ejidos*) protected by section 27 of the Constitution. This was taken as an open act of hostility towards the limited autonomy of indigenous peoples. The Zapatista rebellion in Chiapas was a response to proposals for Constitutional reform and neo-liberal policies resulting from commitments made by the Mexican government under the NAFTA. It is well known as a globalizing movement with great international exposure. But the rebellion also acquired a national character and the Zapatistas made connections with urban social movements, unions and the Mexican Left.

Indigenous uprisings in the Andes harnessed established sectors to some

new organizations. The rise of political coalitions such as the *Movimiento al Socialismo* (MAS) in Bolivia along with experiments in organizational forms in Peru and Ecuador leave little doubt that the new wave of Indian mobilization is unlikely to be reversed. In addition to the MAS in Bolivia, Ecuador has been a source of political vision for continental coalitions. There, large regional federations organized by CONIAE (Confederación de Nacionalidades Indígenas Del Ecuador) have been very active since 1986 (Selverstone-Scher 2001). CONIAE stands out as one of the best organized of Latin America's alliances. CONIAE grew more vociferous in the 1990 uprisings and then after the Quincentenary and the Chiapas revolt (Davalos 2002). Towards the end of the century indigenous demands in Ecuador have been advanced even more effectively in the areas of bicultural education and agrarian reform.

Utilizing the notion of 'nation' as well as 'peoples', new indigenous movements have developed three types of organizational agency. Firstly, nations with identifiable historical lineage are a form of identity and have been a vehicle for mobilization. Bolivia's *ayullus* are a good illustration. They have legal recognition and resources and are at times effective instruments of activism. More prominent are the federations and confederations noted above which consolidate and further trans-community networks (Yashar 2005, 71-75). They are responsive to events and turn easily to alliance-making. Finally, trans-national gatherings around indigenous rights and climate change have brought activity back to the international sphere (Brysk 2000). There can be few illustrations of this more prominent than the 'World Peoples Conference on Climate Change and the Rights of Mother Earth' at Cochabamba in April 2010 which made bold claims on international summits on global warming about restorative justice and the so-called Rights of Mother Earth.

As a result of newfound agency, indigenous movements began to assert values and an overarching world view that can be taken as an interpretation of modernity. Below I present a diagram of this interpretation which has three distinguishing features.¹

1. A re-envisioning of relations between indigenous America and Euro-America. On this view, a common future presupposes alternative cosmological horizons and negotiation of inter-cultural co-existence, as well as recognition of cultures.
2. An emerging post-Westphalian conception of sovereignty which seeks

1 In doing so I draw on Gow and Rappaport (2002) and Warren and Jackson (2002). See also Rundell (2004) for theoretical elucidation of a notion of 'indigenous modernities'.

to replace principles of unitary statehood and ethnic uniformity with pluri-nationalism and pluri-culturalism. In the place of the mono-ethnic nation state form of European modernity, the objective becomes pluri-cultural and pluri-national republics.

3. An ontological reorientation to land and life which is in conflict with a Euro-American and capitalist conception of land as commodifiable resource. A different kind of worldliness is intrinsic to indigenous ontology and where this ontological conception manifests, a conflict of basic values can occur.

Each will be considered in turn as recognition of cultures, post-Westphalian conceptions of sovereignty and ecology. How do they match up with Wagner's problematics of modernity? Table 1 aligns these three features with Wagner's problematics. The subsequent discussion presents evidence from the movements. The conclusion looks again at the alignment.

Table 1. Alignment of features of indigenous interpretation of modernity and Wagner's problematics of modernity

Wagner's problematics of modernity	Features of indigenous interpretation of modernity
Epistemic – 'the degree of certainty of knowledge human beings can attain with regard to themselves, to their social life and to nature'	Feature 1 – the recognition of cultures Feature 3 – ontological reorientation to land and life
Political – the 'mode of participation in political decision making (the question of citizenship) as well as the mode of aggregation in the process of collective will formation'	Feature 1 – the recognition of cultures Feature 2 – the emerging post-Westphalian conception of sovereignty
Economic – 'how to best satisfy human material needs'	Feature 3 – ontological reorientation to land and life

RECOGNITION

Indigenous mobilization brings new kinds of presence of indigenous peoples in society including as political actors. Realization in a post-assimilationist era that Latin America's *indios* do not have timeless essences and are not living in a state of cultural stasis adds ballast to

the new agency. New perspectives on indigenous identity are unambiguous about the durable, living cultures of indigenous Latin America. The assertion of identity entailed in these processes of inter-cultural engagement brings a visible and audible civilizational presence to Latin America's public spheres and the international arena. In its declarations, dossiers and communiqués, indigenous movements articulate the terms of dignity and a peaceful pluralistic coexistence for all – an attainment of civilizational recognition if you will. A reflective instance of this comes from CONIAE's published history:

To know [...] each one of those peoples is important for knowing how we are part of this cultural diversity, a knowledge that has as an objective to form in each one of us, the citizens of Ecuador, an intercultural being, interculturality that alone is possible if we know how to recognize our culture and knowing the distinct cultures that surround us and coexist with us. Through it and because each one of those peoples has its own forms of making and recreating life that we have seen, it is necessary to study each one of them (CONIAE 2010).

There is interesting boundary-pushing evident in this quote. Who is the subject? The 'us' that is articulated has multiple identities: a people, a citizenry (Ecuadoran) in a state of inter-culturality, and other peoples. The state of inter-culturality is facilitated by all 'knowing the distinct cultures that surround us and coexist with us' and, by implication, knowing that they coexist with us in an intercultural way of being. The last sentence suggests that intercultural being relies on knowing each and every culture/*pueblo/nación* – a very high standard of recognition, with a great level of cultural competence required for the citizenry to attain this normative state.

To the moral claim on recognition CONIAE adds terms for a reinstated national state. The claim hinges on coexistence rooted in broad and multidimensional dialogue. Instead of accepting cultural separation as coexistence CONIAE posits engagement as the *modus operandi* of pluri-culturalism. Engagement is variously posed as 'equality', 'inclusion', 'dignity', 'solidarity', 'reciprocity', 'respect', 'complementarity', 'harmony', 'participation' and 'common wellbeing'. Inter-culturality of this kind has not been possible in the unitary republic bequeathed by the nineteenth century revolutions. Forced beyond cultures of assimilationism, Ando-american societies exhibit the conditions in which inter-culturality can be meaningfully promoted.

Returning to Table 1, it seems that recognition aligns in an open-ended

way with the epistemic and political problematics. The degree and quality of recognition in this context requires a holistic conception of humanity; that we can know each other as human beings in an inter-cultural way. Furthermore, recognition as posed by indigenous movements involves a shift of understanding of what constitutes an independent and lasting form of human collectivity; indigenous peoples are not only peoples, according to this standard, with fragile cultures, but *nations* with compelling demands to pluri-national coexistence. Compared with assimilationist notions of inter-culturality where 'protection' of cultures in separate territories was the only obligation of states, indigenous perceptions of inter-culturality has political implications. With this awareness, indigenous movements contest unitary statehood that tolerates only one sovereign will.

SOVEREIGNTY

I characterize such advocacy of inter-culturality as an aspiration to post-Westphalian federalism. By this, I refer to the core principle of coexistence with others and to the will to transform the structures and form of existing states in ways that are compatible with post-neoliberalism (Burdick and Roberts 2009; McDonald and Ruckert 2009). Post-Westphalian federalism takes the ideal of pluralism that is explicit in the project of modernity as an obligation to transform states. The terms of this pluri-nationality suggest two things:

- 1) Confrontation with the unitary form of the established republican state
- 2) Uncertainty about what post-Westphalian statehood might or should look like in future contexts, as a result of that confrontation.

The latter point is made with no intent to say that post-Westphalian statehood is without conditions. Such a vision of alternative sovereignty and compact-making as a mode of politics presupposes manifold recognition of many cultures and pluri-cultural conditions of coexistence (Arpini 2007). Most states in Latin America are at odds with this ideal. Yet some cannot evade it and almost seem fated to it, especially in Ando-America. Moreover –to return to the current groundswell of post-neoliberal form– the context for pluri-national sovereignty is favourable.

The call to re-found republics, made increasingly in the region, is a

call for radical reform of the kind that many on the Left argue is revolutionary (Burbach, Fox and Fuentes 2013; Kozloff 2008; Webber and Carr 2012). The character of statehood has been re-problematized and is being widely debated (as evidenced by the swing to the Left in election results). How pluri-cultural recognition and compact-making fit into new sovereignties is part of both the re-problematization and the debates. The environment is quite different from the 1990s when international pressure on the region to conform to the ‘Washington consensus’ was great.

However, indigenous movements face a paradox in this situation. As comparativist Priti Singh notes, the claims made by indigenous movements are claims made upon the state as a ‘the progenitor of reforms’ (Singh 2011, 61). In this regard, the state is by necessity ‘both an adversary and an interlocutor’. Rights-claims and disputes over sovereignty summon the constitutional and juridical dimensions of states and the normative framework of international law (Diaz-Polanco 1997; Keal 2003). A compromise lies in constitutional reform. Thus, the rise of contemporary indigenous movements has intersected the wider resurgence of democracy in Latin America, and indeed indigenous movements have been an important part of this resurgence. Enumerating the dates of reform or inclusion of indigenous rights in constitutions gives a remarkable impression of widespread change:

- Ecuador (1983/1998)
- Guatemala (1985)
- Nicaragua (1987)
- Brazil (1988)
- Colombia (1991)
- Mexico, Paraguay (1992)
- Peru (1993)
- Panama, Bolivia, Argentina (1994)
- Chile (1989/1997)
- Venezuela (1999)
- Bolivia (2009)

Constitutional recognition inscribes rights into a foundational legal framework. Undeniably, there has been a ‘wave’ of constitutional reform as part of a wider impetus for democratization (Arjomand 2007). Latin Americanists highlight the fact that the growth of indigenous rights as part of constitutional reform has served to stress the importance of inter-cultural dialogue, which cannot be summoned into existence by constitutional statutes (Arpini 2007; Singh 2011; Escayola 2012). This reveals a boundary limit to constitutional reform. Reform presumes recognition as a passive condition, whereas inter-cultural dialogue, broadly construed, is an active and reciprocal creation. Such dialogue is widespread in the Ando-American countries where there much in common in terms of indigenous historical experience (see for example Rodriguez 2012).

At the same time, constitutional reform and inter-cultural dialogue are demonstrably intertwined. A flourishing cultural pluralism is vacuous without constitutional and other kinds of legal recognition. In turn, inter-cultural dialogue is essential to the realization of constitutional rights.

If one point of view suggests that constitutional reform is in fact an act of assimilation, others would argue that it is part of an assertion of movements for democracy and for the expansion of rights (Escayola 2012). The exercise of that very agency creates democratic opening on a large scale and enables broader activism. To be more specific, the politics of the movements is about decolonization of the modern Americas, including development of compacts for coexistence and pluralism. In today's movements there are significant alternative visions of sovereignty with compact-making as a mode of politics. In the words of Ecuador's CONIAE, they declare a new 'cosmovision' calling for:

[...] transparency, participation, democracy and equity from all governments and has struggled for national demands because indigenous towns and nations above all have struggled for the construction of a democratic and plurinational state for all Ecuadorans. We have proposed to the nation a new State based on the recognition of [...] diversity within unity in which economic democracy may be as important and political and social democracy and in which diverse models of development, of culture and society can coexist in a harmonious, tolerant and respectful way. We have proposed a Plurinational State as the only guarantee of democracy in this broad sense and as the only possibility for respect on differences and diversity that are part of our continent (CONIAE 2006).

Movement activism is one side of the landscape. In countries with large indigenous populations and governments that are aligned to the Bolivarian project of twenty-first century socialism, there are strategies of reform amenable to development of a pluri-cultural and pluri-national order. Express examples of this can be found in the Constitutions of Bolivia, Venezuela and Ecuador. Thus, Article 9 of the Bolivian Constitution privileges 'wellbeing, development, security and the protection and equal dignity of person, nations, peoples and communities, and to foment mutual respect and intra-cultural, intercultural and pluri-lingual dialogue' (Republica de Bolivia, n.d.). The active notion of recognition invoked here is undergirded by the principle of 'wellbeing', a principle of the Bolivian Constitution more generally. Article 8 enshrines two aspects of wellbeing – the normative dimension of how to live and the commitment of the state to deep social justice:

- The State assumes and promotes as ethical and moral principles of a plural society: do not be lazy, a liar or a thief; live well; live harmoniously; a good life; land without evil; a noble or good life.
- The State will sustain itself in the values of unity, equality, inclusion, dignity, liberty solidarity, reciprocity, respect, complementarity, harmony, transparency, equilibrium, equality of opportunities, social equity and participation, common wellbeing, responsibility, social justice, distribution and redistribution of products and wealth in order to live well (Republica de Bolivia, n.d.).

Comparable statements can be found in the Constitutions of Ecuador and Venezuela though they are not as elaborate in their commitment. All three constitutions are testaments to the weight of indigenous nations and movements in Ecuador and the multi-sectoral and interconnected movements in Venezuela (Ellner 2008). They are also privileged principles of the project of twenty-first century socialism (Cameron and Hershberg 2010). But Bolivia is an especial case. The emergence of Bolivia's Constitution is indicative of indigenous interpretations of modernity. Understood as a process of struggle around the Constituent Assembly since the MAS formed government in 2005, the Constitution has been described as rich in recent struggle for the decolonization of law. According to Alfredo Escayola, the Bolivian Constitution is regulated by the principle of the 'good life' (*buen vivir*) instead of principles of the preservation of private property. This is the basis on which a 'decolonial turn' in law has been made as part of a broader process and with far-reaching ramifications for how key concepts in social and political life are interpreted and fought over. 'The decolonial turn undertaken in constituent processes in Bolivia and also in Ecuador inscribes in a broader historical process in which, from a counter-hegemonic perspective, concepts of democracy and human rights are recuperated and resignified' (Escayola 2012, 12). Constitutions are still juridical frameworks with the incompleteness discussed earlier. Moreover, Latin America's entire history attests to the abundant deficits of constitutional law. Escayola's argument has an interesting twist here however. Quoting Anibal Quijano, he affirms that the good life is an open horizon continuously 'investigated, debated and practiced' (2012, 11). Constitutional reform can therefore be cast as a process connected to broader transformative movements, which promote an interpretation of modernity as self-determined coexistence. Re-formation of the political community (as re-founded republics) reflects an image of modernity in which social actors create and shape the conditions of coexistence rather

than being at the mercy of global forces.

ECOLOGY

In the public sphere, arguments for pluri-national re-foundation of states are heard across Mexico, the Andes, Guatemala and Amazonian America (Jung 2008; Nash 2001; Van Cott 2008). Such demands for pluri-national sovereignty and constitutional re-foundation are considered to be imperative to the protection of the ecological worlds of aboriginal societies. Demands around environmental protection and far-reaching response to global warming have sprung from a politics of survival that declares land essential to economic and ontological security. In this world-view, pluri-culturalism becomes a non-negotiable good when it comes to the preservation of the environment. Meaningful territorial autonomy, cultural rights and sustainable economic development are bound up together with the conservation of forests and riverine systems.

From this viewpoint sovereignty must involve control over land and water rights. Furthermore, indigenous movements clearly seek just redistribution of the means of life as well as recognition and moral dignity bringing issues of recognition and security of the means of socio-economic wellbeing. Two abstract conceptions of land come into dispute in conflicts over the rights to land, water and sub-soil resources. On one hand, land is a set of exploitable resources. For many indigenous communities, on the other hand, it is the wellspring of cultural reproduction and a source of indigeneity itself. An expression of this is found in the final communique of the World Conference on Climate Change and the Rights of Mother Earth held at Cochabamba in April 2010. The conference drew far more participants than anticipated and was considered broadly representative of indigenous nations from Latin America. The published People's Agreement is unambiguous about to the threat to the vitality of land:

Under capitalism, Mother Earth is converted into a source of raw materials, and human beings into consumers and a means of production, into people that are seen as valuable only for what they own, and not for what they are (World People's Conference on Climate Change and the Rights of Mother Earth 2010).

The *People's Agreement* includes an assertion of economic rights and indeed proprietary rights, or control over the means of production, as a contrasting and contestatory alternative to the capitalist construction

of humanity's relationship to Nature. The *People's Agreement* asserts:

the right of peoples to control their own seeds, lands, water, and food production, thereby guaranteeing, through forms of production that are in harmony with Mother Earth and appropriate to local cultural contexts, access to sufficient, varied and nutritious foods in complementarity with Mother Earth and deepening the autonomous (participatory, communal and shared) production of every nation and people (World People's Conference on Climate Change and the Rights of Mother Earth 2010).

In the background of conflicting conceptions of land are apparently incommensurable ontologies. The 'cosmovision' of indigenous cultures denotes different sets of worldliness which can be at odds with those of Latin American states, businesses and even Non-Government Organizations. In this way, it can be seen as an instance of a radical democratic response to climate change (see Mummery 2012). Beyond conservation measures and development of new carbon-lite and carbon-neutral technologies, the current societal organization of social life cannot be left untouched; 'there must first be equity among human beings'. The consequent move is the institution of a different ontology, one consistent with indigenous cosmovisions. According to the 'People's Agreement' this includes the 'Rights of Mother Earth':

In an interdependent system in which human beings are only one component, it is not possible to recognize rights only to the human part without provoking an imbalance in the system as a whole. To guarantee human rights and to restore harmony with nature, it is necessary to effectively recognize and apply the rights of Mother Earth (World People's Conference on Climate Change and the Rights of Mother Earth 2010).

The People's Agreement includes little detail about realizing the substance of such rights. Ideas about 'differentiated debt' to the global South and to Mother Earth are spelt out further on in the document in terms that are familiar in debates about climate change action.² They are described as an obligation to pay disproportionately for technology transfer, climate change adaptation and for the re-settlement of climate change refugees. The rights of Mother Earth are couched as a matter of 'restorative justice' and 'the restitution of integrity to our Mother Earth and all its beings',

2 Burgmann and Baer (2012) make the connection between the global indigenous movement and the climate change movement and then examine the two movements' wider alliances in the introduction to their analysis of the climate change movement in Australia. Their comments bear on the international situation also.

lending the planet a political personality. Furthermore, a legal personality is implicit in the affirmation of the rights of nature in some constitutions. As with pluri-nationality, the rights of nature find their way into the constitutions of governments aligned to the Bolivarian Project of Twenty-First Century Socialism. Chapter 7 of the Ecuadoran Constitution is an exemplar and Article 71 is quite particular:

Nature or Pachamama, where life is reproduced and exists, has the right to exist, persist, maintain and regenerate its vital cycles, structure, functions and its processes in evolution [...] The State will motivate natural and juridical persons as well as collectives to protect nature; it will promote respect towards all the elements that form an ecosystem (Global Alliance for the Rights of Nature, Article 71, n.d.).

The Bolivian Constitution is even more extensive and expansive than Chapter 7. It contains 62 articles on Nature, production, sustainability and environmental management, and limitations to property and commercialization (Arts. 342-404). Many of the articles go to the question of and collective ownership and control of resources and equitable distribution of the benefits of their development (especially in mining and energy). Article 381 casts the state's responsibilities as follows:

The State will protect all genetic resources and micro-organisms that may be discovered in ecosystems of the territory, as soon as there is knowledge associated with their use and exploitation. For their protection a system of registration will be established that safeguards their existence, as soon as intellectual property favorable to the state or local social subjects is claimed. For all those resources not registered, the State will establish procedures, by means of law, for their protection (Republica de Bolivia, n.d.).

Following Article 381, a body of state responsibilities for the regeneration of biodiversity is enshrined in subsequent articles. More recently at the December 2012 summit at the Isla Del Sol, the published manifesto allowed a plainer and more political version of this commitment to find expression. Notably, it is a trans-national in scope and projection:

The pluri-national state of Bolivia echoing the voice of the peoples of the world, assumes an ethical obligation with the planet and suggests that a necessity of being human is to recoup the sense of unity and pertinence with Mother Earth (Estado Plurinacional de Bolivia 2012, 5).

In summary in the programmatic statements and activism of indigenous

Latin America, we can detect an indigenous interpretation of modernity in which social movements exercise agency to compel states to address climate change. At the same time, social movements assert a broader transformation. The indigenous interpretation of modernity goes beyond the scope of juridical vision and posits cultural pluralism as a basis for being-together (Meyer and Alvarado 2010). In this context, ‘autonomy’ and ‘sovereignty’ are re-problematized. Post-Westphalian visions of sovereignty to invoke ontological reproduction aimed at the security of life. With a new notion of autonomy, conceptions of pluri-national sovereignty now expressed in trans-national obligations going beyond the protection of local environments to include regional and global concerns about global warming.

CONCLUSION

In this article I aim to differentiate interpretations of modernity that, in effect, help expand the ‘interpretative space’ that Wagner discusses. Wagner’s problematics align to three features of the indigenous interpretation of modernity. First, the manifold recognition of cultures responds to questions of both the epistemic and political problematic by asserting the agency, knowledge and mode of decision-making of indigenous peoples to raise issues for the reorganization of states and civil societies. Second, the form and substance of reforms of constitutions, politics and the terms of coexistence of all peoples are challenged by proposals for pluri-cultural and pluri-national reconstruction of Latin American societies. I pose this as a post-Westphalian conception of sovereignty in order to emphasize the conceptual rupture with unitary philosophy of statehood derived from the European system of states. Third, indigenous ontologies of land, life and ecology respond directly to the economic problematic of how to satisfy wants with a different balance of ‘productive efficiency’ –or husbandry of the commons in this case– and ‘societal norms and values’. As a final point, indigenous ontologies exceed the economic problematic with principles urgently-needed for our times.

The project of civilizational and cultural coexistence that is posited in this post-Westphalian reconstruction of statehood has promising implications for development of more far-reaching responses to climate change. As one of the most potentially calamitous twenty-first century consequences of longer history of modernity, the creative proposals for

transformation noted above attest to the fecundity of indigenous thought and practice and deserve more attention and wider application in contemporary sociological studies.

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