

STATE OF POWER 2017

Power and patriarchy:

reflections on social change from Bolivia

– Elizabeth Peredo Beltrán



After more than a decade of processes that brought hope to the progressive world, several developments in Latin America in 2016 suggest we have reached the end of a cycle of left-wing victories in the region. The collapse of left-wing governments in Argentina and Brazil, and the wave of environmental, democratic and political conflicts in others (Bolivia, Ecuador and Venezuela) raise critical questions about the viability of these models of social change. Why are these important progressive processes that began with a huge degree of legitimacy now facing social resistance for departing from the ideals that inspired them? This is a crisis that offers pointers and important lessons for us all, about the dynamics of social transformation and about ourselves as activists.

Bolivia and what it means to the world

Bolivia is an important learning laboratory with useful lessons not only for the local left but also to progressive and left-wing forces in the region and worldwide. It was the first country in the Southern Cone to re-establish democracy in the 1980s, following a lengthy period of military dictatorships. It was the first in the region to experience significant anti-colonial indigenous rebellions in the late twentieth century. It led the fight against neoliberalism, with major victories such as the expulsion of Bechtel (the US transnational corporation (TNC)) in the famous 'Water War' in 2000, the nationalization of its natural gas reserves in 2005 and the country's withdrawal from the World Bank's International Centre for Settlement of Investment Disputes (ICSID).¹ Bolivia was in the vanguard in developing concepts on which the narrative of 'Twenty-First Century Socialism' is based, such as 'living well' and participatory democracy, summed up in the famous slogan 'govern by obeying the people'.

Bolivia's experience provides an exceptional opportunity for us to conduct an in-depth analysis of the unresolved 'knots' and challenges that the last few years have laid bare.

This essay is partly a personal testimony based on my recollections and assessment of the path Bolivia has taken, its process of emancipation and social change, and the attendant difficulties and frustrations. My aim is to provide a perspective from the 'inside', drawing on the feelings and ideals of those of us who believed profoundly in the need for social change and committed our energy and convictions, our lives and our emotions, to these processes.

'now I am myself, the person I always was...'

It is also a heartfelt response to a reality that pains and concerns us as we see a powerful process of social change collapsing and becoming more extreme (and dangerous) on issues of power, the environment, democracy, women, and a caring society. This represents a profound challenge to us in how we put our utopias into practice and make them effective and real.

I still remember how deeply moved I felt in 2003, after President Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada had been forced to flee the country as a result of mass street protests against his role in the October Massacre, when a woman in El Alto took off her 'señorita's [employer] clothes' of blouse and trousers, burned them in the middle of the street and wearing the traditional clothes of the indigenous *chola*, proudly proclaimed: *'now I am myself, the person I always was...'*

This was the beginning of a new and different time for Bolivian society. In the past, indigenous women were not allowed to enter the parliament building or the presidential palace. They were even banned from luxury hotels and theatres. Social exclusion and racism were deeply entrenched in everyday life and seen as a 'natural' component of social relations. It was thanks to struggles by indigenous urban and rural unions, such as the union of domestic workers who fought long to have their rights legally recognized, that changes great and small penetrated the farthest reaches of Bolivian society. They shook up the discriminatory practices of the white elites accustomed to expropriating their labour, as well as the *mestizo* and urban indigenous property owners who likewise exploited impoverished women in their homes, secure in the impunity that a deeply racist, neocolonial society protected them. *'Imagine wanting to regulate the work of the domestic workers with new laws!'*, said the elites. *'It would be like stirring up a hornets' nest – they're only going to create turmoil in society!'* *'We can't allow them to unionise'*, said others. *'When they get together they just infect each other...'*

But it was the domestic workers who won. Working as a unified movement with rural and indigenous movements, workers, residents of low-income and even some middle-class neighbourhoods, they managed to impose their demands as part of a huge wave of social change that had been building up for decades. It was the culmination of a mass social mobilization for indigenous territories and autonomy, respect for human rights, recognition and inclusion of their vision of the commons. But it was also the result of the determination of broad swathes of the middle class, intellectuals and activists who took up these demands as a way of saving themselves, of escaping from the prison that discrimination and the exclusion of indigenous people meant for their own lives, in order to build a different Bolivia.

Signs of change

The recent progressive period in Bolivia – and in other countries too – was the result of a lengthy political build-up: almost 40 years of resistance, rebellion and proposal-making. It was nourished by the work of various groups of activists and collectives forged in different historical periods, such as those that resisted the dictatorships, neoliberalism, machismo and colonialism. It emerged after nearly two decades of bourgeois democracy that had focused on building an institutional framework under the mandates of neoliberalism to serve the class interests of Bolivia's national elites in partnership with TNCs and international financial institutions (IFIs).

The wisdom accumulated in these protests and movement-building took political form and society was obliged to integrate them into new social pacts. These were expressed in the new Constitution (enacted in 2009 after being approved in a referendum) which led to the founding of a new state that finally put an end to republican-era colonialist ideas: the new Plurinational State of Bolivia, in which society's expectations and ideals were distilled, shaping a new national horizon.

Capturing this historical moment of such transcendental importance was a new leader, an indigenous president who before taking office had said humbly: *'With great respect, I want to ask our indigenous authorities, our organisations, our amautas (wise people) to control me, and if I am unable to move forward, please push me, brothers and sisters'* (Evo Morales, 2005).



From the process of change to the extractivist state

When Morales took office as President in 2006, he appointed Casimira Rodríguez, Executive Secretary of the Bolivian Federation of Domestic Workers, as the first indigenous Minister of Justice. A woman who wore indigenous dress and spoke Quechua, she had spent almost all her life performing household chores for derisory wages. Nothing could be more symbolic than appointing an indigenous woman who was a cook and a worker to this post.

A series of progressive measures characterized the first years of the Morales government. These included the nationalization of the oil and gas industry, which restored the revenue from the sale of natural gas to the state, allowing the new government to develop redistribution policies that increased benefits for children, pregnant women and new mothers, and older people. It also marked the start of a period of economic growth that moved Bolivia from the category of 'low-income country' to 'middle-income country'. Support for the Morales government rose to as high as 81%.

Now, ten years after taking state power with the legitimacy of social struggles that demanded deep social change, things have changed a great deal. This is not simply a 'revolutionary ebb' but a change of direction that can be seen in the deteriorating social fabric and institutions, and the impact of its economic and political model in local territories. It also represents a failure to establish the necessary social oversight mechanisms to sustain the vision.

Gaining access to power gradually became an end in itself. Hundreds of trade union and social movement leaders became secretaries, vice-ministers, ambassadors or members of parliament, weakening these popular forces. The number of civil servants grew by more than 70% since 2005, with the consequent increase in expenditure and government infrastructure.

By 2009, the Morales government and its Movement for Socialism (MAS) long-term political and economic project was becoming more apparent. It involved so many concessions to the reactionary and racist forces of the Santa Cruz oligarchy (in the east of Bolivia), that its youth wings – such as the Juventud Cruceñista, which had committed violent racist attacks against indigenous people during the Constituent Assembly process – actually joined the MAS support base in eastern Bolivia.

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Even though, MAS leadership continued to use an attractive of environmentalist and leftist rhetoric in practice they had already opened up to the proposals of the agribusiness sector and conventional visions of development. They aligned themselves with a vision that is industrialist (this has not been achieved), developmentalist (this has not produced much in the way of results either) and extractivist, in partnership with local trade unions and capitals from Europe, China and Russia. This model carries a heavy environmental and social toll for Bolivian society.

The rebellious and anti-systemic legacy of the water and gas wars –led by working class and rural peoples - ended up being expropriated by the government, which turned it into the emblem of its ‘crusade for gas and economic growth’. This became a dogma laid out in national development plans that nobody is allowed to criticize² The slogan ‘partners not bosses’, which was used to confront regional economic powers and transnational imperialism, had secured the government a high degree of legitimacy and enabled it to strengthen the state and to establish a basic system of social redistribution. However, it also fortified a process of plundering indigenous territories in the Altiplano (highlands) and the Amazon region, affecting the rights of indigenous peoples and rural communities around the country.

On the international stage, President Evo Morales gave lengthy ecological speeches at the United Nations (UN) on the rights of nature and proclaimed an alternative view of development around the idea of ‘Living Well’ and ‘Mother Earth Rights’ that captivated everyone, at home and abroad. But the rhetoric was not matched by consequent actions within Bolivia. In fact, Bolivia was already wedded to a development model that, far from reflecting a vision of harmony with nature, sought to re-enact a populist modern industrialism and developmentalism. This was evident in April 2010, when Bolivia organized the World Peoples’ Conference on Climate Change and the Rights of Mother Earth, bringing together thousands of international activists in an edifying policy debate that produced one of the most interesting social movement declarations on climate change. Yet at the same time, the government was going ahead with gas and oil exploitation in national parks, mining projects and had already decided to build a road through the TIPNIS national park and indigenous territory.

The TIPNIS road, a government project to connect Villa Tunari (in the Chapare region of Cochabamba) with San Ignacio de Moxos (in Beni in the north of the country), would cross the Isiboro Sécuré National Park and the territory of indigenous peoples, supposedly protected by the Constitution. The people – still trusting in their power to change government decisions – took to the streets in September 2011 to oppose the government’s plans, without suspecting that this time their power to change things would not stop this new injustice. The government did not hesitate to harshly repress the lowland indigenous peoples as they began the 8th Indigenous March to La Paz. The conflict caused the resignation of two ministers³ and great desperation and outrage among people who had supported the process of change right from the start. Shortly afterwards, the indigenous authorities who had led the march were harassed and persecuted, and the indigenous organizations forcibly split and manipulated by the government, which would then go ahead with the road-building project.

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The conflicts surrounding TIPNIS marked a turning point in the process of change in Bolivia. It split the social movements, breaking the unity of the indigenous and rural organizations that had driven the process of change and alienating many activists who were not in government. The conflict over the TIPNIS road revealed the crudest side of the process of change: the use of power and a national project which – departing from constitutional principles – was imposing an unscrupulous developmentalism and breaking openly with the rhetoric of Mother Earth and the rights of indigenous peoples.

It is hard to forget the way in which the government promoted this road using populism and the language of machismo and patriarchy. When the project began, Morales said to people in the Chapare region:

If I had time, I'd go and flirt with all the Yuracaré women and convince them not to oppose it [the TIPNIS road]; so, you young men, you have instructions from the President to go and seduce the Yuracaré Trinitaria women so that they don't oppose the building of the road. Approved? (La Razón, 2011)⁴

Although women's movements criticized these statements, they did not cause much of a reaction in the left-wing circles that were part of the Morales government.

It was with these contradictions that Bolivia consolidated its model, defending its decisions by celebrating the highest economic growth rate in the region, ignoring the fact that it increased the economy's dependency on the primary sector and inherently unstable commodity prices. The oil and gas industry currently accounts for 69.1% of Bolivia's exports, while agriculture (timber, quinoa etc) contributes 3.3% and manufactured products – in which the National Institute for Statistics (INE) includes soya and gold – represents 26%.⁵

Annual deforestation rates in Bolivia are extremely high, with roughly 270,000 hectares disappearing each year. The country's main contribution to global emissions and climate change comes from this change in land use, and it now ranks 27 out of 193 countries on this count.⁶ In the last year, the clearing of new land for agriculture has been legalized in an agreement with agroindustry and the farming sector, allowing four times more land to be deforested than in the past. These agreements have also led to an exponential increase in the use of genetically-modified seeds and glyphosate. Ninety-seven per cent of the soya produced in Bolivia is now genetically modified, and although it is argued that this is justified in order to supply food to the Bolivian people, these crops are mainly destined for export.

Major mining TNCs such as Sumitomo, Glencore, Pan American Silver and others are operating in Bolivia in business deals with the state mining company. And the government has done little to address the power of so-called 'mining cooperatives' – small informal local enterprises that make up most of the mining industry (115,000 miners, compared with the only 7,500 workers in the state mining company), known for exploitative working conditions and destructive environmental practices due to the lack of regulations of this sector. The Mining Law approved by the government in 2013 did little to improve this situation, undermining principles of prior consultation mandated by ILO Convention 169 and even allowing water courses to be altered to benefit mining projects.

Even the huge revenues obtained from the sale of natural gas at better prices have not been able to generate value-added productive industries nor used to assist the transition to renewable

energies that would be more in tune with the rhetoric of climate justice that Bolivia proclaims in UN negotiations. Indeed, contrary to its discourse, Bolivia did not support proposals to limit fossil-fuel subsidies at the Rio+20 and UN Climate Change summits, and it continues to subsidize its oil industry without even considering transitional energy policies.

Worse still, in the National Development Plan for 2025, Bolivia proposes to become a major regional 'energy power' and supply energy to neighbouring countries, which hardly reflects the transitions recommended by the International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) to avoid worsening the climate crisis:

*The new idea coming from this government is that we're going to be an energy power. The twenty-first century for Bolivia is to produce oil, industrialise petrochemicals, industrialise minerals. (Álvaro García Linera, Página Siete, 2015)*⁷

The plan is based on the commercial logic of selling electricity to Brazil to generate revenue expected to materialize in 10–15 years. Major hydroelectric dams, like the Bala-Chepete Project and Rosita, take pride of place in the plan, even though this model has displaced indigenous peoples elsewhere in Central and South America, costing the lives of union leaders such as Berta Cáceres in Honduras. Vice-President García Linera appears to see no limits to their expansion:

That's why, with President Evo (Morales), we've flown all over Bolivia in helicopters, looking for places where we could put a dam, and looking for gas. We're seeking out the areas where there's more gas, where there's water, sites for dams. Where there is water, it's like pure gold falling from the sky. Where there is water, where we can build dams, that's where you'll find the gold, the money.⁸

These plans are clearly out of line with the energy transitions required to mitigate and adapt to climate change. They also fail to take into account that neighbouring countries may take advantage of falling prices for solar and wind energy in the near future, which would eliminate the market for Bolivia's energy exports. As part of the same aim to become a major energy power, the government has also proposed investing in research on nuclear energy in partnership with Russia, with an ambiguous proposal that includes research on health and food radiation and the building of an experimental generator. This is a project that requires a vast amount of money and, in spite of protests, is being imposed on the people living in one of the country's largest cities, El Alto. The project was approved through an international treaty signed with Russia that has been criticized as illegal for contradicting constitutional restrictions that prohibit transit of nuclear waste in Bolivian territory.



Change, culture and power relations

What has happened to Bolivia's progressive and left-wing forces? What happened to the drive for change and the social narrative in favour of water rights and sovereignty against corporate and imperialist power, and that conceived the idea of 'living well' as the basis for a new society? How is the left processing its government's retreat from the ideals of emancipation and social change? What happened to the autonomy of the social movements? What happened to the indigenous peoples? What happened to women and feminisms? What happened to the rights of Mother Earth?

In short, what does this process tell us about ourselves?

Thinking about 'where to start to change things' and 'how to bring about change' is of paramount importance right now and leads us to the key question regarding power, culture, the state and society. What is it that really changes a society? And which structures, processes or values should we strengthen in order to ensure a solid, progressive social change, with an *ajayu* (spirit) that stays firm over time despite the disagreeable ups and downs of politics and power plays?

Based on Bolivia's experience, we need to ask why the left's political legitimacy has allowed the traps of power to become invisible.

What is the place of culture and ethics in this enquiry? Although it seemed to have it all, the left is now facing unresolved 'knots' or contradictions that have led to a significant weakening of the progressive field and a shocking rise of authoritarian populist leaders.

Based on Bolivia's experience, we need to ask why the left's political legitimacy has allowed the traps of power to become invisible. And ask how the left can continue on its path and resolve its relationship with essential aspects of processes of social change such as democracy, the notion of the 'vanguard' and the subjects of social change, ecology and nature, patriarchy, feminism and women, the diversity of indigenous peoples, and, finally, how it processes its relationship with power.

Extractivism and violence against women

One of the most meaningful terrains in the contradictions besetting the Bolivian political process is the patriarchal ideology that has been like a second skin in the MAS way of governing, based on an authoritarian, male-chauvinist discourse and a symbolically powerful link between patriarchal power and the cultural foundations of the extractivist model.

The argument that *'we are using capitalism to arrive at socialism'*⁹ became officially enshrined in the narrative of the Bolivian state, permitting both the control of financial capital and extractivism. In the same way, the androcentrism expressed in Morales' phrase *'I am a feminist who tells sexist jokes'*¹⁰ became part of the content of government discourses and statements. The 'radical' left that has accompanied this government from the beginning never challenged this 'way of governing' and permitted the spread of this heavily symbolic ideology. Those on the left who said they wanted to change the system 'overlooked' the patriarchal attitudes of their leaders and 'forgave' their unbridled machismo in the interests of a supposedly 'higher purpose' – the building of socialism.

Unmistakeable signs of a populist authoritarianism could be seen in the misogynistic remarks, sexist jokes, and homophobic statements such that made by Morales at the World Peoples' Conference in April 2010: *The chicken we eat is full of female hormones. That's why when men eat that chicken they deviate from being men.*

Or when Morales boasted of his 'EVO CUMPLE' (Evo Delivers) social programmes in villages using sexist jokes: *When I go to a village, all the women end up pregnant and on their bellies it says: 'Evo delivers'.*

Or when he encouraged young men to do their military service as a way to 'free' themselves from the responsibility of paternity: *As you generals, admirals, officers all know, when a youngster gets his girlfriend pregnant he prefers to escape to the barracks and when he gets there that soldier is untouchable.*

Although laws and decrees have been passed in Bolivia to promote gender equality, eradicate violence and achieve parity in political representation, the repeated attacks on women in government speeches and the scant public investment to enforce stronger gender policies have weakened the process. This is yet another example of the dissonance between discourse and practice.

Patriarchy has features such as:

- Devaluing the different 'Other' and making it invisible
- The systematic practice of dividing the public from the private sphere, thus widening the distance between words and deeds
- The denial of diversity and difference, negatively valuing difference as a deficit
- Violence and subjugation as a means of self-assertion

These features have become consolidated in the government, together with the need to exercise power and control and demonstrate strength, authority and infallibility. This ended up co-opting leaders of the process of change from different walks of life. When a comrade – a lifelong colleague – in a high-ranking political post said to me: *'I am a good politician, because I am able to be cruel'*, two things became clear to me. First, that the cycle of social change had come to an end because it had lost the ethical values that made the quest for social change worthwhile; and second, that power and machismo had become deeply embedded in this process as part of a structure that combined subjectivity and politics and reproduced a culture of violent, destructive power – exactly what extractivism is all about.

Among Morales' most outrageous and widely criticized remarks was one he made while visiting an oilfield in April 2012. To laughter from other workers, he 'jokingly' asked two women professionals at the 'Sísmica 3D' camp in Chimoré: 'Oil workers? Are you drillers? Or do you get drilled? Do tell me.'

Every three days a woman dies horribly in Bolivia in crimes of femicide. Although there are no official figures, the rates of violence are extremely high. Obviously, gender-based violence is worse in societies that do not see caring for life as a priority and have allowed gender-based violence and discrimination to be 'normalized'. Alarmed by the way official discourse has legitimized violence, women's movements have run many public information campaigns and demanded, among other things, that MAS exclude *machistas* from their lists of electoral candidates.¹¹

Exploitation and violence against women and exploitation and violence against nature are two sides of the same coin, two expressions of the same system, the empire of patriarchy governing in coalition with big business.

Internationally, Bolivia is celebrated by multilaterals such as the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank for its economic model that has delivered the highest rate of economic growth in the region. Yet at the same time, few of these institutions remark on the fact that Bolivia is one of the 12 countries in the world with the highest rates of femicide and violence against women.¹² Moreover the government certainly does not re-invest – or rather redistribute – this money in policies that would effectively combat violence. Investment (or 'expenses' as some prefer to call it) is less than 2% (1.91%) of municipal government budgets, while the funds allocated to specific programmes on violence eradication, prevention and victim protection amount to no more than 0.33%. Although a Law 348 against gender-based violence was approved, it has proved difficult to implement, partly because of the lack of investment in the institutional structure required to enforce it.

In contrast, investment in natural resource exploration and production in our forests is huge, as is investment in infrastructure for transport, energy and the oil and gas industry. Together, they amount to 65% of the government budget, invested in a national dream of turning Bolivia into a regional 'energy power' and, supposedly, making everyone more prosperous.

Notably in this plan, renewable energies (more likely to protect nature and human rights) only account for 2% of the energy structure,¹³ a figure quite similar to the investment in women. All these decisions are being taken unilaterally by the male politicians at the top who supposedly – like all good patriarchs – 'know what's best'. They even disregard the mechanisms for prior consultation with indigenous peoples, whom they seem to consider 'subalterns' who ought to submit to these plans at the cost of their territories and the survival of their cultures.

They take no heed of the feminist position, which demands sufficient resources and democratic, relevant, fair and inclusive policies not only to ensure effective justice systems but also to develop education programmes to put an end to the cultural patterns of machismo.

Exploitation and violence against women and exploitation and violence against nature are two sides of the same coin, two expressions of the same system, the empire of patriarchy governing in coalition with big business. Women's bodies (Mother Earth) has now become the metaphor of what is sacrificed to maintain the capitalist illusion of infinite, androcentric, ecocidal growth that is disdainful of nature and the lives of people and communities.

Learning to deconstruct the dominant paradigm

Capitalist power is able to reproduce itself efficiently thanks to its alliance with very ancient systems of oppression such as patriarchy – which is much older than capitalism – and colonialism, which likewise predates forms of capitalist appropriation. Its capacity to remain the dominant system of civilization is subjectively based on capitalist values that separate human beings from nature. It does this through science and philosophy and also through the economy, culture and the values of everyday life.

Modern capitalism survives because it feeds ideals, representations and subjectivities based on the domination of nature, over-consumption and the modern imagery of economic growth associated with happiness and wellbeing. The combination of these forms of domination is precisely what enables the exercise of power, and we see these patterns repeated again and again, even in attempts to subvert the capitalist order.

Modern capitalism survives because it feeds ..[on]..subjectivities based on the domination of nature, over-consumption and the modern imagery of economic growth associated with happiness and wellbeing.

The thoughts I have set out here reveal how patriarchy is wholly at the service of the exercise of power and enables capitalist violence to take effect, becoming the linking mechanism through the power of the state. The alliance between patriarchy and extractivism naturalizes violence against women, devalues them and constructs a social mindset that endorses abuse and impunity. Indeed, a state that promotes extractivism has to base itself on an authoritarian rationale that discredits rights to territory, the rights of nature and indigenous peoples, and female otherness. Extractivism as proposed in our countries is exacerbating a violent mentality.

Capitalist accumulation is essentially dependent on a mindset that reinforces the idea of the public sphere as the ‘property’ of the governing elites rather than a common good that belongs to everyone. Capitalist accumulation is ultimately based on the abuse and destruction of the values of caring and solidarity between human beings and with nature.

We need more critical thinking on social change, the state and power relations. The process in Bolivia and – as in-depth enquiry will surely find, many other processes that have sought to change society – are learning experiences about ourselves, our goals and our limits. Although the MAS initially enjoyed a huge degree of social legitimacy and was sincere in its proposals on decolonization and overcoming capitalism, in the end it has replicated relations of domination and plunder.

We need to develop real emancipatory projects and unite against capital with a solid culture of social change that does not shy away from examining the ethical dimension of change.

In the last few years, global challenges have multiplied, become more complicated and raised major questions about the values behind social transformation. It is no longer a question of moving forward with an agenda of national sovereignty or controlling corporations and major powers. We need to develop real emancipatory projects and unite against capital with a solid culture of social change that does not shy away from examining the ethical dimension of change. We need to engage in a self-critical debate on how power is exercised, the continuing presence of patriarchy in the ranks of progressive movements, and the pernicious effects of our movements’

dependence on unchallengeable, messianic leaders. We need to propose forms of power that change things from below and from everyday life; the power of healing, of solidarity; power that is embodied and built gradually over time. We need to get beyond the simplistic critique of what we oppose and turn our sights to our own practices to build alternatives to the system. With that in mind, and focusing on the ethical dimension of social change, here are some of the ideas emerging from the forces of change who refuse to admit defeat:

- We do not need heroes or strongmen to bring about social change.
- We oppose individualism with the values of community, the common good and solidarity, but without ceasing to be individuals ourselves.
- We oppose the paradigm of infinite development or 'sustainable development' with the paradigm of restoration, of healing the planet, of care and regeneration.
- We oppose the practice of plunder by developing the idea of cooperation with nature.
- We oppose the idea of power as violent control and domination with the power of caring for life, the power of love, empathy and emotions.
- We oppose the concentration of power and exclusion with the recognition of diversity and democracy in all its different forms.
- We oppose notions of global power by strengthening local power and developing local systems resilient to the centralized politics of power.
- We oppose the practice of patriarchal power that refuses to politicize the private sphere with the principle of 'the personal is political'.
- We oppose the culture of top-down change by reinforcing those constructive, restorative, healing practices that have the real power to bring about change.

About the author

Elizabeth Peredo Beltrán is a psychologist, researcher and author. As a collaborator with TAHIPAMU (Workshop on Women's history participation), she researched anarcho-sindicalist women's movements in 20th Century La Paz, the rights of domestic women workers and the rights of water as a common good. In 1997 she joined the Solon foundation and was its director between 2006 and 2011, developing work that combined art, culture and politics. She coordinated Blue October, promoting water as a common good and pushed for a Tribunal on Climate Justice at international level. In recent years she has dedicated her attention to the issue of climate change and the civilisational crisis and set up *Trenzando Ilusiones* (Weaving Hope) as a space to reflect on social transformation. She is on the Board of Food and Water Watch, the Scientific Committee of the Citizens Earth University, the Working Group on Alternatives to Development and belongs to various activist collectives working on water, climate change, women's rights, and nuclear threats.

Endnotes

1. A tribunal established to settle disputes between corporations and states. Its tribunals are dominated by the corporations, and in most cases end up ruling in their favour.
2. Agenda Patriótica 2025. The government has declared that any NGO that criticizes this agenda could be subject to sanctions or even being forbidden from operating. This agenda, among others, includes the government's plans to develop nuclear energy. <http://www.planificacion.gob.bo/pdes/>
3. Cecilia Chacón, Minister of Defense (April/2011- Sept/2011) resigned in protest at the police repression of the march. Earlier on, just prior to the Climate Change and Mother Earth Rights Conference in Tiquipaya, Juan P Ramos, Viceminister of Environment, resigned after refusing to grant environmental permission to build the TIPNIS road.
4. La Razon, La consulta del TIPNIS no será vinculante. http://www.la-razon.com/index.php?url=/economia/consulta-TIPNIS-vinculante_0_1441655852.html La Razon, Demandan a Evo una disculpa pública (por declaraciones para "conquistar" a mujeres yuracarés para construir carretera por el TIPNIS http://www.la-razon.com/index.php?url=/sociedad/Demandan-Evo-disculpa-publica_0_1443455677.html
5. INE (2015).
6. CAIT Climate Data Explorer - Bolivia [http://cait.wri.org/historical/Country%20GHG%20Emissions?indicator\[\]=Total%20GHG%20Emissions%20Excluding%20Land-Use%20Change%20and%20Forestry&indicator\[\]=Total%20GHG%20Emissions%20Including%20Land-Use%20Change%20and%20Forestry&year\[\]=2013&act\[\]=Bolivia&sortIdx=NaN&chartType=geo](http://cait.wri.org/historical/Country%20GHG%20Emissions?indicator[]=Total%20GHG%20Emissions%20Excluding%20Land-Use%20Change%20and%20Forestry&indicator[]=Total%20GHG%20Emissions%20Including%20Land-Use%20Change%20and%20Forestry&year[]=2013&act[]=Bolivia&sortIdx=NaN&chartType=geo)
7. Pagina Siete (2015) García linerá anuncia que está 'en busca de agua' para construir represas <http://www.paginasiete.bo/economia/2015/11/9/garcia-linera-anuncia-gobierno-esta-en-busca-agua-para-construir-represas-76338.html>, November.
8. Ibid.
9. Negocios con el poder capitalista: http://correodelsur.com/politica/20151026_evo-busca-socios-en-eeuu-pese-a-criticas-al-capitalismo.html
10. Datos (2014) 'Evo dice que ese feminista y que cuenta chistes machistas'. Available at: <http://www.datos-bo.com/Bolivia/Actualidad/Evo-dice-que-es-feminista-y-que-cuenta-chistes-machistas>
11. "Machista fuera de la lista": las mujeres que persiguen a los candidatos acusados de violencia doméstica en Bolivia http://www.bbc.com/mundo/noticias/2014/10/141007_bolivia_machismo_elecciones_politicos_violencia_egn
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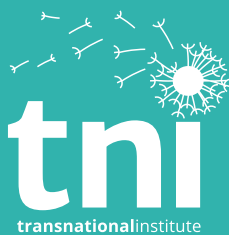
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This essay appears in TNI's sixth annual State of Power report. This year, it examines the cultural processes that are used by corporations, military and privileged elites to make their power seem 'natural' and 'irreversible'. It also explores how social movements can harness creativity, art and cultural forces to resist and to build lasting social and ecological transformation. Visit www.tni.org/stateofpower2017 to read all the essays and contributions.



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