



Transnational Communities

An ESRC Research Programme

“Indigenous people have forged lasting networks with multilateral and non-governmental organizations which have a material and policy impact.”

TRANSNATIONALISM, INDIGENOUS PEOPLE AND DEVELOPMENT IN ECUADOR AND BOLIVIA

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Aims and objectives

The research aimed to examine the context for the transnational connections made by indigenous people in the South American countries of Ecuador and Bolivia. We wished above all to contribute to an understanding of the ways in which the international connections were shaped by – and contributed to – new forms of social participation and social identities, development projects, and policy reforms. Although previous research had demonstrated that indigenous peoples were successful in forming transnational networks, more was known about the *endpoints* of these connections than their impact on indigenous development. Therefore, the project approach was to map out the transnational context of three key fields of indigenous development in Bolivia and Ecuador, namely professionalization and education; notions of local spaces and identities; and the politics of water. We carried out interviews with indigenous leaders, development agencies, government officials, multilateral development banks and non-governmental organizations working with indigenous peoples. Involving extensive fieldwork in Ecuador, Bolivia, the United States and the UK, the combination of interviews, participant observation and policy document analysis yielded important new comparative data on the transnational development network that has arisen in the past decade. The data has enabled us to identify an indigenous peoples’ affairs network which is arguably a “policy community” sharing experiences and approaches to indigenous development work. Moreover, the indigenous affairs network and the international development field are increasingly articulated and mutually influential.

Duration of Research

April 1999 - June 2001



PRELIMINARY FINDINGS

Results so far suggest the following broad observations about the content of transnational indigenous networks in Ecuador and Bolivia.

First, the creation of transnational connections made by indigenous people in the Andean countries was linked to the '500 years of resistance' campaign, a critique of colonialism and European claims over indigenous (and black) Latin America. This sparked a major debate in Latin America that compelled agenda and policy responses by governments and multilateral development agencies. Our research project aimed to examine the consequences of these new political and policy conditions on the practice and theory of "development with identity". Indigenous people have forged lasting networks with multilateral and non-governmental organizations which have a material and policy impact, often with unintended or unexpected implications for states, indigenous politics and for civil society. Our data suggest that

- transnational actors and institutions shape relationships between indigenous identity, territorial questions and resource conflicts
- indigenous people seek to represent themselves in international forums in ways that shape their relationship with the nation-state, civil society and the international community

Second, one unintended consequence of establishing a policy identity as 'indigenous' is a shift in funding flows across national territories and among social groups. Data from both Ecuador and Bolivia have established that claiming an indigenous identity provides communities with

resources from development agencies. This situation and its consequences must be understood as part of the on-going implications of transnational indigenous development networks for development and the state.

- Bolivian highland groups challenging neo-liberal reforms to privatize irrigation water successfully gained transnational and multi-lateral support for modifications to policy when representing themselves as indigenous. 'Non-indigenous' groups in the same situation did not receive the support of transnational actors in the same way, making them more vulnerable to the consequences of neo-liberal reforms
- Ecuadorian indigenous groups receive funding from the multi-million dollar Prodepine project, an innovatory World Bank-funded programme. Prodepine funds development and cultural-strengthening activities across the country, but is the centre of a controversy with the indigenous movement and the state agency CODENPE over the designation of participant communities
- Indigenous movement members' access to higher education and training has been tied to claims to indigenous identity. The professionalization of an indigenous affairs agenda is creating a common language and multi-ethnic network of experts

Third, transnational indigenous networks imply an on-going process of formation of civil society and the state. Such on-going processes entail apparently contradictory combinations of local-national-international actors and institutions. Overall, we are uncovering the ways in which the term indigenous is being used and negoti-

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ated in different contexts, and how shifting notions of indigenous-ness are being constructed within transnational fora.

These observations may be illustrated by the following

- Policy debates concerned to encourage the formation of social capital (i.e. the socio-cultural basis for economic development) have increasingly focussed on indigenous peoples. Indigenous peoples' social organizations and patterns of reciprocity have been taken up by international agencies, while indigenous groups themselves are reformulating their communities and policies in response to previous neo-liberal 'shock' programmes
- National legislation to promote and structure multi-cultural policies – often internationally guided – create particular spaces and opportunities for indigenous and non-indigenous actors to exploit. Moreover, inter-ethnic relations are characterized by varying degrees of trust and mutual respect, shaping the development of social capital and productive multi-ethnic ties in local regions
- Despite increasing 'globalization' of development agendas, transnational indigenous networks understand their politics within the national and regional context where they operate. Emerging institutional arrangements for "development with identity" bring together international experts with indigenous leaders, former state employees and non-governmental organizations
- The *ayllu* (village) movement of highland Bolivia aims to reconstruct 'traditional' indigenous territories and identities, in competition with the previous union structure and utilizing new state legislation for local autonomy. The *ayllu* movement's emphasis on local culture belies its international and national operation, through which it gains recognition and funding
- The language of interculturality is becoming a means of debating indigenous development policy and social changes across national borders. Interculturality advocates the equal and respectful participation of different ethnic groups in development. The formulations of – and audiences for – interculturality are transnational, yet depend

upon a limited number of professionals and Latin American educational centres through which these ideas are diffused

Fourth, the emerging indigenous development networks are highly gendered. The experiences of indigenous women and men are differentially incorporated into the discussions around development, with implications for projects and political debates. Indigenous women have long been active in political movements and in development projects, although they are often marginalized by these same structures. Nevertheless, new debates around social development could provide an opportunity for indigenous women to provide their input into indigenous development. These observations pose a number of challenges and opportunities to the indigenous development field, namely

- Although indigenous women are not powerless actors in emerging transnational networks, they tend not to agree with the 'Gender and Development' proposals of non-indigenous development experts, arguing that the cultural specificity of their experience is not reflected in this theoretical approach
- indigenous women are working towards a different conceptualization of indigenous development in which gender issues are central, yet they often lack the full support of indigenous political organizations

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

A number of policy concerns and opportunities in Ecuador, Bolivia and beyond arise from the findings of our study.

- The displacement of an anti-poverty policy for indigenous peoples by a "development with identity" or "ethno-development" paradigm
- The growing emphasis placed on indigenous social capital reifies tradition in a rapidly changing legislative, economic and political context
- A lack of understanding of the unintended consequences of multi-cultural legislative provision under neo-liberal economic policies
- The lack of a gender perspective within the transnational development policy field to empower indigenous women in formulating their own development agendas

SUMMARY

In summary, our data suggest the following:

- There are conceptual grounds for asserting the importance of political networks that transcend national boundaries. These political and policy networks are increasingly integrating pro-indigenous and development agendas despite the complexities of identifying indigenous populations
- Indigenous peoples are negotiating for funds and support within a transnational institutional and policy framework in which they are perceived as stakeholders in future development agendas
- Transnational political processes, combined with neo-liberal state forms and civil society, are giving rise to new identities and social organizations that will have long term consequences for the development process

SOME USERS ENGAGED IN THE PROJECT

Taller de Historia Oral Andina (Andean Oral History Workshop), ICCI-Ecuador, World Bank, Department for International Development (UK), CENDA-Bolivia (Cochabamba), various indigenous organizations in Ecuador and Bolivia; diverse support NGOs in Europe and North America.

PROJECT EVENTS

Workshop – ‘Challenges to the Bolivian state: issues of gender, ethnicity and identity’, University of Newcastle, 11 November 2000

Panel symposium – ‘Latin American Transnational Communities’, to be held in New York, at the American Association of Geographers Conference, February 2001

Panel symposium – ‘New stakeholders? Indigenous politics and donor politics in the Andes’, to be held in Washington DC at the Latin American Studies Association Congress, September 2001.

CONFERENCE AND SEMINAR PRESENTATIONS

Andolina, R. 1999 ‘Transnationalism or postcolonialization? Andean indigenous movements and the Quincentenary of the ‘discovery’ of the Americas’, Seminar presented to the Centre of Transnational Studies, University of Newcastle, June 9th.

Radcliffe, S. 2000 ‘Gender, ethnicity and rights: guaranteeing the rights of indigenous women’, Seminar presented to the National Women’s Council, Ecuador (CONAMU), Quito, May 25th.

Laurie, N. 2000 ‘User identity in the Cochabamba water conflict in Bolivia’, Conference presentation at “Opportunities and challenges facing public-private partnerships in the provision of water supply and sanitation in developing areas: cases from Latin America and Africa”, Mansfield College, Oxford, July 10-11th.

Andolina, R. 2000 ‘Between local authenticity and global accountability: the *ayllu* movement in contemporary Bolivia’, Seminar presented at the Centre of Latin American Studies, University of Cambridge, November 13th.

Laurie, N. 2000 ‘The new urban indigenous? The Cochabamba water conflict’, Seminar presentation at Department of Geography, University of Leicester, 15th November.

SOME FORTHCOMING PUBLICATIONS

Laurie, N., Andolina, R. & Radcliffe, S. 2001 ‘The new excluded ‘indigenous’? The implications of multi-ethnic policies for water reform in Bolivia’, in R. Sieder (ed.) *Pluricultural and multiethnic: evaluating the implications for state and society in Meso-America and the Andes*. London.

Radcliffe, S. A. 2001 ‘Development, the state and transnational political connections: state formation and networks in Latin America’, *Global Networks*, vol. 1(1): 19-36.

Transnational Communities Programme

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