

NARRATING CLAIMS FOR LAND - THINK LOCAL ACT GLOBAL Indigenous land rights as a strategy for conservation in lowland Bolivia

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by

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Abstract

In Bolivia, the second Agrarian Reform from 1994 recognizes the privilege of indigenous lowland groups to obtain land title for a communal territory in the area they traditionally inhabited. Since 1994, a number of communal land titles have been issued - often to land adjacent to a protected area – and interestingly, environmental NGOs have increasingly supported these land claims put forward by indigenous groups. One of the reasons for the increasing support to the lowland indigenous population is that they have succeeded in arguing that sustained existence of their communities is a precondition for protection of forests and bio-diverse areas in Bolivia. In this paper I will illustrate the nature of these claims by examining how an indigenous lowland group, the Tacana, narrate and justify their land claim. The case shows how the Tacana - through representing sustainable natural resources management aspects as a feature of Tacana culture - gain access to support from environmental NGOs in their struggle for access to natural resources in and outside the neighbouring Madidi National Park. I argue that discourses of biodiversity and development has created the room for manoeuvre now being utilized by the Tacana through narrating ‘sustainability’ as an aspect of their natural resources management and thus making their self-representation fit the nature conservation agenda to be found in international discourses of development. The paper examines how representation is employed in the struggle for access to natural resources, and argues that ‘marginalized’ groups by the strategic use of internationally accepted narratives inevitably can exercise power by dominating a discourse.

Introduction

So far the socially oriented literature on protected areas has generally focused upon how protected areas have been implemented at the expense of the interests of people living in and around the protected area. This is for instance reflected in the writings of Ghimire and Pimbert who stated that the establishment of protected areas has “customarily led to extensive resource alienation and economic hardships for many social groups” (Ghimire and Pimbert 1997:2). Similarly Neuman has argued that ‘Integrated Conservation and Development projects and programs’ (ICDs) “replicate more coercive forms of conservation practice and often constitute an expansion of state authority into remote rural areas” thus reproducing the subjugation of locals by the powerful state (Neuman 1997:560).

On a global level Escobar has argued that development (and thus also ICDs) is a historically produced discourse “which created a space in which only certain things could be said and even imagined (Escobar 1995:39). Through it’s effective functioning development systematically produces knowledge of all aspects – economical, environmental, cultural and social - and establishes vast institutional networks at all levels – from the global to the very local. The productivity of development thus must be seen in terms of this efficient apparatus that systematically links knowledge and power as it deploys each one of its strategies and interventions (Escobar 1992:66, Foucault 1977, 1980; Ferguson 1990). In line with Ferguson (1990) and his epoch-making ‘The Anti-Politics Machine’ Escobar argues that the development discourse has placed the third world in a position of inferiority, subjugated by the “scientific” normalizing action

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of the Western cultural-political technologies – in even more devastating ways than its colonial predecessor (Escobar 1992:66).

But is that all there is to it? Is the development machine just another compilation of subjugating tools (knowledge, strategies, conventions, projects, etc.) that leaves the poor without means to improve their lives? And is conservation and development projects and programmes just another product of global development discourses serving to maintain the third world in a position of inferiority subjugated on a national level by the nation states and on an international level by the west through the efficient apparatus of the development machine?

This type of conceptualisation often represents locals as disabled products of a discourse unable to influence their own situation. In the following case from the buffer zone of Madidi National Park in the Bolivian lowland I will argue that development discourse not only subjugates people and agencies in the third world; on the contrary international discourses on human rights and sustainability which are integrative parts of development discourse provide spaces for contestations of the access to land and natural resources for a particular indigenous group – the Tacana - who has earlier been marginalized and oppressed by local landlords and people with political influence. Here the struggle for land is not one of revolution and armed revolt, but is instead enacted through representation of historical and sustainable natural resources management as aspects of Tacana culture. The representation of Tacana's as “ecological Indians” is taking place within the space opened up by development discourses.

The paper is structured in four parts working from the global level towards the local; first the construction of the ecological Indian is identified in a literary review and the theoretical framework for the paper is outlined; the second part shows how images of the ecological Indian have been employed at a global level and led to concrete effects in Bolivian, where trans-national cooperation and international pressure affect Bolivian legislation in favour of indigenous peoples and biodiversity; the third part explores how representations of Tacana culture forming part of the Tacana claim for land is enacted within international environmental and human rights discourses; finally the fourth part sums up the findings of the three previous parts and argue that international discourses of environment and human rights has provided a room for manoeuvre that is now being utilised on a local level by the Tacana.

PART ONE: THE ECOLOGICAL INDIAN

“I will return, and I will be millions”.

Inca rebel Tupaj Katari at his execution by the Spanish in 1781

Xavier Albo, “ El retorno del Indio” Revista Andina 9, no.2 (December 1991:312)

In the past decade indigenous peoples have increasingly pursued political strategies that link local indigenous struggles to international issues and organizations (Brysk 2000:19; Conklin & Graham 1995:695). The fight for indigenous rights has been articulated within an international discourse developed from an increasing interest in universal human rights. Through the development of human rights ‘indigenous peoples found a niche, within which they can formulate their claims and where a number of governments worldwide are ready to listen’, as the anthropologist and director of the International Work Group on Indigenous Affairs (IWGIA) Jens Dahl has put it (Dahl 1996:27). Also an increasing number of *environmental* Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO’s) worldwide - including Rainforest Action Network, World Wildlife Fund, Wildlife Conservation Society and ‘Coalition for Amazonian Peoples and Their Environment’, (which is a coalition of

northern environmentalists, support groups, and Indian Organisations) (Brysk 2000:89), have joined forces with indigenous communities in defence of native rights to land and resources. This internationalisation of local Amazonian struggles has had tremendous impact on the political situation of South American Indians. New forms of trans-national, trans-cultural encounters and alliances have emerged as native leaders became prominent in the international public sphere of environmental and human rights activism (Conklin & Graham 1995:695).

Ecological arguments have added strength to human rights organisations advocacy work for indigenous people's rights. As one representative of Cultural Survival (a prominent indigenous rights advocacy organisation) told the Political Scientist Alison Brysk in an interview "We see ourselves as a human rights organization in the broadest sense, and that was certainly our first track of contact with indigenous rights. But we've moved into ecology... clearly it works better" (Alison Brysk 1994:36). The reason why "it works better" to advocate for indigenous peoples rights with 'ecological arguments' is of course partly because there environmental movement in the west has gained considerable support for its concerns in the public. But how is the concern about nature and the protection of the rainforest related to the lives of indigenous people?

Manuels Castells has argued that the interest in the preservation of and respect for indigenous cultures extends backwards the concern for all forms of human existence coming from different times, and affirming that 'we are them, and they are us' (Castells 1997:126). People in the west tend to dwell on romantic imaginations of Indians as present symbols a unity and closeness with nature that has now been lost in the west. The environmentalist movement has presented the Indian as a monolithic figure – as the protector and friend of animals and plants - and as an integral part of nature this ecological noble savage also needs protection of his habitat (Ramos 1994:79).

In sum, the last decade's trans-national activities on indigenous issues has through the merging of human rights- and environmental discourses produced an international conglomerate - the ecological Indian - a symbol of a modern myth imbedded with positive connotations of an harmonic and close relation between Indian and nature. This stereotype image of the 'ecological noble savage' asserting that native indigenous peoples' views of nature and ways of using natural resources are consistent with western conservationist principles has created a *space* where symbolic politics, ideas and images are used as in an intercultural communication (Conklin & Graham 1995:696). Within this space indigenous peoples have since the 1980'ies become key symbols and participants in development programmes and projects trying to integrate the conservation of nature and biodiversity with development. Before analysing the ideas and images – the representations - of Amazon Indians and employed in this space I will in short outline a few key concepts of the theoretical approach taken in this paper and clarify how power is linked to representation.

The power of representation

A *discourse* is a group of statements which provide a language for talking about -i.e. a way of *representing* - a particular kind of knowledge about a topic (Hall 1992:291). The concept of *representation* is what links concepts and language and enables us to refer to either the real world of objects, people or events, or indeed to imaginary worlds of fictional objects, people and events. (Hall 1997:17). There is no one fixed meaning of a symbol or an image; rather meaning is continuously attributed and moulded through representation. In this way representations contribute to the production and reproduction of knowledge and 'truth' and these statements thus have real effects in practice. Thus, whether Amazon Indians live in close harmony with the environment or not, if we think they do and act on that 'knowledge' they in effect become Indians living in close harmony with the environment because we treat them as such (Hall 1992:293). Knowledge thereby produces definitions and 'true interpretations' of objects and language – and specify the relation

between the sign and the signified - and that is what makes it so closely linked to power. There is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time, power relations (Foucault 1977:27; Foucault 1980:27). Power is to be understood in cultural and symbolic terms, including the power to represent someone or something in a certain way – within a certain ‘regime of representation’. It includes the exercise of symbolic power through representational practices (Hall 1997:259).

If we accept that representation is what links concept and language, then representations can take various forms. The images employed in representation could be photographs displaying symbolic qualities thus linking a certain discursive meaning to the image. But images can also be drawn through representations (whether narrated lifestories or written reports or legislation) attributing a certain meaning to an image.. When analysing representations and stories of struggles over land and access to natural resources one must keep in mind that the telling of a story over and over again can affect and reshape our common memory of what actually happened (Fortman 1995:1053). Representing something or someone in a particular way involves aspects of power and contributes to the production of truth.

By structuring our experience of an event the storyteller through telling the story constructs our memory and consciousness so that we can act on this knowledge in future (Rose 1990:55). Stories and other types of representation can serve as a means to transmit and make available a system of meaning - a discourse. Representation thereby becomes a way of defining, of assigning meaning and attributing labels enabling the storyteller to tell and reshape the “truth” as to accommodate his or her own interests.

In the following I will employ this theoretical framework and analyse various representations to be found of indigenous peoples on an overall global and national level in Bolivia and in particular of the Tacana on a local level. The analysis will attend representations of various types ranging from reports produced by development agencies as well as statements from interviews with Tacana’s and other actors involved in representing indigenous people’s natural resource management.

PART II: DIMINISHING SOUVERIGNTY OF THE STATE

Trans-national cooperation on indigenous rights

Indigenous peoples from the Amazon have themselves urged the environmentalist community to promote indigenous rights and their struggle for land rights, representing themselves as the caretakers of Amazon Rainforest nature and the most effective defence against deforestation. This is for instance the case of the COICA²-declaration that was published in the journal Cultural Survival Quarterly. The second part of the declaration³ was addressed ‘To the Community of Concerned Environmentalists’ and contained the following arguments:

“What we want: we want you, the environmental community, to recognize that the most effective defence of the Amazonian biosphere is the recognition of our ownership rights over our territories and the promotion of our models for living within, that biosphere. [...] We want you, the environmental community, to recognize and promote our rights as Indigenous Peoples as we have been defining those rights within the UN [United Nations] Working Group for Indigenous Peoples [...] We propose that you swap dept for indigenous stewardship instead of swapping dept for forest because it will help “return the areas of the Amazon rain forest to our care and control” (my italics) (COICA 1989:77-78)

²COICA (Coordinadora de las Organizaciones Indígenas de la Cuenca Amazónica) is an organisation representing 229 native Amazonian groups comprising 1.2 billion people in Bolivia, Peru, Ecuador, Brazil and Colombia.

³ The first part of the declaration was entitled ‘For Bilateral and Multilateral Funders’ (Redford & Stearman 1993:249)

Thus indigenous peoples have on an international level requested donors and environmental organisations to support and promote their land rights arguing that they are the best caretakers of the Amazon rainforest. This representation complies with the Western stereotype idea of the ecological Indian – a product of western environmental discourse – and thus utilizes and reproduces the “truth” produced by much scientific work and development strategies within international discourses on development. Hence on an international level this type of representation has been used to argue that indigenous peoples are key partners and solutions to safeguarding bio-diversity and the Amazon rainforest. Even though these representations refer to a variety of groups living in different ways in disparate locations the overall message is simple and clear: indigenous people safeguard the rainforest. Moving from the international towards the national level it becomes clear that the generalized message of the indigenous movement’s representation has had tremendous effects in Bolivia as I will show in the following. By employing the power of representation the indigenous groups are to some extent able to reduce the former domination by the state.

Bypassing the Bolivian state

In Bolivia development discourses of human rights and the environment have produced additional outcomes to that of the ecological Indian such as a number of NGOs (of the environment and human rights), the ILO-Convention no. 169 on indigenous rights, strategies for donor support to indigenous peoples (see e.g. Danida 1994), a Sector Programme for Support to Indigenous Peoples (Danida 1998) and at least 7 laws aiming to secure special privileges to the indigenous population (VAIPO 1999:2). The trans-national cooperation between indigenous groups and organisations in the west to some extent surpasses the influence of the state, which has generally been conceived as one of the oppressing agencies of indigenous peoples. The state cannot simply subjugate and discriminate indigenous groups whose rights are protected by international legislation and conventions, which the individual state in this case Bolivia is forced to comply with by donor-organisations and other international organisations such as NGO’s (Brysk 124-136). Globalisation and the network society have increased the salience of a certain dimension of power: “The new power lies in the codes of information and in the images of representation around which societies organize their institutions, and people build their lives, and decide their behaviour. The sites of this power are people’s minds” (Castells 1997:359).

Non-state actors like social movements use images, models and, facts, and messages as forms of power in the international system. States are “wavering” largely because they have lost monopoly power over information. (Brysk 2000:15). In Bolivia one of the unifying demands of the indigenous rights movements is now reflected Bolivia’s constitution, that characterizes Bolivia as a “multi-ethnic and pluri-cultural nation”, recognizes traditional law, and grants legal status to both traditional and modern indigenous organisations (Brysk 2000:259). Hence the respect paid indigenous peoples within the human rights discourse has materialised in the very constitution of the Bolivian state as well as in its legislation.

Institutionalising discourses

The merging of the western environmental discourse and human rights discourse have also produced a number of institutions and interlinks between locally based indigenous peoples and the western concern for the conservation of the environment. For instance a partnership between the World Bank and an indigenous group’s organisation, CABI (Capitania de Alto y Bajo Izozog) and WCS (Wildlife Conservation Society) has been formed to assist in the elaboration of an indigenous Peoples Department Plan (IPDP). The IPDP will be part of a new program of support to Bolivia’s National Protected Area System, to be provided through the Global Environmental Facility (GEF). The IDPD “*will define issues of competing land use that need to be resolved within the framework*

of a park-centred conservation strategy, and provide guidelines for how specific protected areas can be a positive force in the development efforts of Indigenous People living in their vicinity” (WCS 1999:31-32).

Thus here global institutions like World Bank, GEF and WCS are engaged in a partnership where the IDPD shall include guidelines for how National Parks can provide a *positive force* for the development of indigenous peoples and engage in the issues of competing land use thus affecting how natural resources are managed and by whom. Indigenous peoples are not the only ones living in the vicinity of National Parks in Bolivia as frequent actors of the buffer-zone also includes landlords, colonizers and forest concessions, and illiterate Indians lacking the organisation skills of indigenous groups organised within the social movement of lowland Indians in the organisation of CIDOB. But the IDPD is clear about its will to act as *positive force* for the primary target group – the indigenous population.

In this way a number of international institutions presently working in Bolivia directly or indirectly advocating for indigenous peoples rights have contributed to the incorporation of special considerations paid the indigenous population within the Bolivian legislation. This special attention is most evident in the Ley INRA, the second Agrarian Reform that was implemented in 1996. Here the long standing demand for recognition of indigenous territories of the international indigenous movement has been acknowledged as indigenous groups within the framework of Ley INRA are given the opportunity to apply for a legal land title for an indigenous territory for the place they have always lived. This type of Territory provided mainly for the lowland indigenous population is called TCO (Tierra Comunitaria de Origen). Taking a closer look at the pamphlets produced by National Agrarian Reform Institute reveals some historical antecedents and underlying assumptions implicated in this legislation. In the following section I will attend a few interesting passages in order to show how this legislation has references to history as well as it bears implicitly expectations for the ecological Indian.

The ecological Indian conquers the law

The Bolivian Land Reform Institute (INRA) have (with economic support from Danida and other Donors) since the launch of the Ley INRA (Ley 1715 of October 1996) produced a number of pamphlets that provides an easy-to-read guide that explains the law in everyday language. These are distributed to the public and indigenous groups who are interested in knowing their possibilities within the legislative framework for obtaining a title for their territory. One of these pamphlets “Saneamiento de Tierra Comunitaria de Origen” describes a TCO in the following way:

“A TCO (Tierra Comunitaria de Origen) is a geographical area with its land, forests, rivers, lakes where an indigenous group - the original population - have always lived. It is the area where they were born and raised their kids *living in harmony with the animals, plants and the nature*; and where they have always made use of the natural resources.” (INRA a: 3) (my italics)

In this description of a TCO can be found the assumption that indigenous peoples live in harmony with nature. This definition of a territory pertaining to a group of indigenous people was developed as a key concept in Ley INRA, which was developed in order to meet the indigenous population’s demand for land rights in the Bolivian orient (lowland). As stated in the description of the TCO the theme of land and territory constitute one of the principal demands of the indigenous and original population in Bolivia, as a necessity and premise for the recognition and respect for indigenous people and above all consolidate their rights (INRA a: 2).

The TCO legislation issued and developed by the *pluri-ethnic* Bolivian state in cooperation with CIDOB and Danida open up for a high degree of self-determinacy and self-governance which has been one of the major claims made by the international indigenous movement (see for instance

IWGIA 1997:15-16 and the ILO-Convention No. 169 art. 7.1.). This is for instance reflected in the description of the distribution of resources:

“The internal distribution of the resources within a TCO is subject to the use, customs and norms of the community” (INRA a: 4).

This part of Ley INRA complies with the ILO-Convention No. 169 where it is stated that:

Article 8

1. In applying national laws and regulations to the peoples concerned, due regard shall be had to their customs or customary laws.
2. These peoples shall have the right to retain their own customs and institutions, where these are not incompatible with fundamental rights defined by the national legal system and with internationally recognised human rights. Procedures shall be established, whenever necessary, to resolve conflicts which may arise in the application of this principle.

Hence in accordance with the ILO-Convention 169 ‘Ley INRA’ provides *self-determinacy* for the internal distribution of resources based on the norms and customs of the community. In this way the TCO- legislation challenge the former influence of municipalities and the prefecture. For instance disputes on land will be solved by the indigenous group’s own organisation in charge of the TCO in this case by CIPTA - the Tacana’s organisation instead of some prolongation of state authority.

In general the TCO-legislation reduces the traditional influence of the state and other outside agencies as they cannot confiscate, buy or cheat land included in the TCO away from the members of the TCO:

It is not possible to sell a TCO or use it as security, and it is not possible to loose the right to the land not even if the community has outstanding dept’s to the state or others [...] The state cannot confiscate land in a TCO as a consequence of it being abandoned nor because of outstanding debts” (INRA a: 4).

This is an interesting note as the indigenous lowland population earlier were subject to state “development programmes” where the state encouraged people from the highland to move to the so called colonization zones (zonas de colonización) in the lowland where the indigenous peoples live. The Bolivian state’s interest in colonising the lowlands was driven by various motives. At first sight the vast forested areas might have appeared unproductive, abandoned or uninhabited for the policymakers, because the indigenous lowland population living in the Amazon used the vast areas for hunting and rotational farming where land is left fallow for years and during this fallow period the forest can recover and appear to be “unused” or “abandoned”.

Repaying a historical dept

For whatever good reasons the Bolivian state might have had to colonize the Tacana’s land in the past these motives or arguments apparently have lost momentum today. As I have revealed above Ley INRA to a high degree aim to prevent further loss of land in indigenous territories and can thus be termed as a break with past subjugation of indigenous groups by the state and other actors. The present day recognition of indigenous people’s rights to land in the Bolivian legislation can be interpreted as a ‘momentous decision to repay of a historical dept’ owed to indigenous peoples after five centuries of subjugation and marginalization (Danida 1998:14).

Trans-national cooperation and international discourses on human rights and development have thus changed the legislative situation in favour of indigenous peoples as the new privileges now offered indigenous lowland groups by the Bolivian legislation seem to protect indigenous land to an unprecedented high degree. But is land unconditional offered to indigenous groups? This question I will attend in the following.

PART III: BIO-DIVERSITY AS AN ARGUMENT

Biodiversity becomes a prerequisite

As demonstrated above the Ley INRA to a very high degree protects indigenous peoples against loosing land in the way it has happened in the past and in general it is very favourable to indigenous people, for instance owners of the TCO are not obliged to pay property taxes for their land (INRA 1999a:4). But the law not only aims to secure and protect indigenous people's rights though this might be the first hand impression. It also bears the expectation that the establishment of indigenous territories will guaranty a *sustainable natural resources management*:

The TCO is to guaranty a sustainable natural resources management. (INRA 1999a:4).

In this way the conception of the ecological Indian can be traced in Ley INRA as it is assumed that giving the land to indigenous populations will guaranty a sustainable natural resources management of the TCO. Thus the law is not only a product of a human rights discourse but also bear elements of an environmental discourse as the law aims to secure a sustainable natural resources management. The power-balance between the human rights discourse and the environmental discourse becomes increasingly evident in following phrase:

The state can expropriate to maintain and protect the biodiversity and nature as these represent the interest of the public.

Here the legislation reserves the right of the state to expropriate land of a TCO if the natural resource management does not maintain or protect bio-diversity. This last rule of the TCO-legislation makes an interesting contribution to the analysis of what are the priorities in the legislation as it reveals that the general interest of the public in bio-diversity prevails over the right of an indigenous group to have its own territory. Thus conservation of natural resources and bio-diversity becomes a prerequisite for enjoying the privileges and protection provided by the law. It becomes clear that indigenous groups are only secured the right to their territory if they comply with the image of the ecological Indian and - by their "cultural qualities" of living in harmony with nature - guaranty a sustainable natural resources management.

Within development Escobar has argued that, *bio-diversity* has become a dominant discourse formation that is linked to related discourses like the discourse of sustainable development (Escobar 1998:58). As a hegemonic construct the discourse of Bio-diversity subjugates other discourses – arguments of bio-diversity prevails over competing arguments stemming from competing discourses. This appears to be the case with Ley INRA where discourses of biodiversity, sustainability and the environment prevail over the discursive formation of human rights.

Although biodiversity has concrete biophysical referents, it must be seen as a discursive formation of recent origin. As Escobar has noted this 'discourse fosters a complex network of actors, from international organizations and northern NGOs to scientists, prospectors, local communities and social movements (Escobar 1998:54). Some of these social movements are constituted by indigenous groups who argue, that recognizing their territorial rights is a prerequisite for securing a sustainable management of the resources. Through the cultural politics they enact, these social movements advance a unique approach to bio-diversity conservation and appropriation of land and resources, what Escobar has termed an alternative political ecology framework (Escobar 1998:54).

Within this framework biodiversity debates become framed in the new terms of 'territorial control', 'alternative development', 'intellectual property rights', 'genetic resources' and 'local knowledge' of the indigenous groups in question. Thus the entire biodiversity network is transformed and marginal sites, such as local communities and social movements, come to be seen as emergent centres of innovation and alternative worlds (Escobar 1998:54). Escobar acknowledges

that one of the discourses within the discursive formation of development, namely that of Biodiversity opens up a space for alternative and culturally based development models:

Aware that “biodiversity” is a hegemonic construct, activists of these movements acknowledge that this discourse nevertheless opens up a space for the construction of culturally based forms of development that could counteract more ethnocentric and extractivist tendencies. (Escobar 1998:61)

This quotation of Escobar marks a slight change from his earlier quoted statement where he dramatically argued that “development discourse has placed the third world in a position of inferiority, subjugated by the “scientific” normalizing action of the Western cultural-political technologies – in even more devastating ways than its colonial predecessor”. Though the Biodiversity discourse is originating in the west it has actually provided a space for alternative development models and has for instance served as an argument for the usefulness of recognizing indigenous group’s rights to land.

The indigenous people’s organisation CIDOB in Bolivia seems to be aware of the powerfulness of the concept of biodiversity. This is reflected in the formulations found in the ‘Atlas of Indigenous Territories’ issued by CIDOB. Here it is stated that ‘*indigenous territories and the resources of biodiversity are intimately related*’ and that:

In places inhabited by indigenous communities you find the last natural forests, resources of bio-diversity in flora and fauna, whereas in places where these populations do not exist anymore or are in the process of social disintegration, the forests and the resources of bio-diversity have now disappeared or are in the process of disappearing. (CIDOB & CPTI 1999:18).

These passages exemplifies how the indigenous movement on a national level in Bolivia implicitly argue that they have taken care of Biodiversity as it is disappearing in the areas where indigenous people do not live anymore. As I will show in the following, arguments of bio-diversity and sustainability are also employed at the very local level when Tacana justify the land claim within the TCO. Argument Hence I will contest the general statement that development only serves to subjugate the third world and argue that some of these international discourses of development also have created a room for manoeuvre for people who have earlier been subjugated and marginalized on a national level by the Bolivian state as well as by various other agencies in the past.

Representing ecological Indians – the Tacana

When the Tacana decided to apply for a TCO the first step in the process was the development of the study “Caracterización y Evaluación de las Estrategias de Manejo de Recursos Naturales del Pueblo Tacana” (Characterization and Evaluation of the Strategies and Management of Natural Resources of the Tacana). This study was the ‘pilot project for the sustainable development of the Tacana community’ and the following report has played an important role in the TCO process as it formed the fundament for the application for a TCO –Tacana. The report was submitted to INRA together with the application and it describes Tacana culture and land use. The president of the Tacana’s organisation (CIPTA), Celin noted that the report had been very helpful because he had not only used it for the TCO-application but also when he looked for funding at meetings with various donors among others USAID who ended up financing the processing of the TCO through WCS. Thus the report developed by the Italian consultant Chiovoloni has served as a compiled representation of Tacana culture and land use, which could be brought into the city of La Paz and multiplied and sent to other agencies such as WCS who also has an office in La Paz or even abroad. The report written by Chiovoloni not only serves to represent Tacana culture and land use, but also concludes how much land should be given to the Tacana in order to maintain sustainability within Tacana land use system as it is represented in his report.

Analysing the report it becomes clear that the representation of tacana culture and land use is referring to and taking place within discourses of the environment as the concepts of *sustainability*, *conservation* and *biodiversity* are key referents. For instance the firstly stated objective of Chiovoloni's study is 'to make an approximated typology of the Tacana productive systems including the traditional models of use and conservation of natural resources' (Chiovoloni 1996:6). Similarly it is argued that without the titling of a space sufficient to continue in future with their 'own model of life the Tacana community do not have any hope of being able to continue their strategies of production, and of rational and *sustainable* management of natural resources' (Chiovoloni 1996:14).

Here it is argued that a territory is a prerequisite if the Tacana should have any chance of continuing their present 'model of life', which is rational and provide a *sustainable* management of natural resources. Thus a support to Tacana culture will not only secure the survival of a culture but also secure a sustainable natural resource management, the argument goes. And the area is still of high interest when referring to biodiversity a construct of the environmental discourse:

, the Tacana habitat still represents an elevated *bio-diversity* of vegetable and animal species with a population where each species is numerically important (Chiovoloni 1996:9) [...] **3. Tacana strategies for the conservation and protection of the Bio-diversity:** *Important is the Tacana contribution to the maintenance of the diversity of species cultivated*, in general if we compare with the quantity of the varieties cultivated of these same species with those cultivated by the Colonos of the zone. (Chiovoloni 1996:11).

Hence the solution to how to protect the treasure of nature is straight forward as the Tacana are represented as important contributors to the maintenance of Biodiversity. Similarly several places in the report it is emphasized that the *Tacana land use model* conserves *bio-diversity* especially in comparison to the other groups depending on the land for a living. Thus the bio-diversity and sustainability discourses are used to argue in favour of supporting the Tacana land claim.

Local knowledge secures sustainability

The ascription of the environmentally benign qualities of the ecological Indian nests on commonly held assumption within development namely that of *local knowledge*:

Though the Tacana cultivator cannot explain processes of succession of the forest and the flow of nutrients in the terms of ecological forestry, their *empirical system* and *cultural knowledge* permits them to understand and utilize the natural processes of their eco-system to conserve, and not degrade, their pool of resources (Chiovoloni 1996:37)

Thus according to Chiovoloni it is because of their *empirical system* and *cultural knowledge* they utilize natural resources in an environmentally benign manner. Here Chiovoloni draws on the core qualities often attributed to the ecological Indian by the environmental discourse – that 'their culture' leads them to live in harmony with nature.

This system of knowledge is based on strategies of provision, which are fruits of lived and accumulated experience during many generations, so it was possible to have food security and a sustainable model of production economy. (Chiovoloni 1996:37)

According to this explanation the Tacana's cultural knowledge of natural resources management is the outcome of alimentary strategies that was developed with the aim to have a sustainable model of production and it thus appears as if they consciously decided to achieve a sustainable management of natural resources.

In cases where it is questionable whether Tacana local knowledge actually invoke a sustainable utilization of natural resources their conscious and active role in this 'negative activity' is downplayed. This is for instance the case when describing Tacana involvement in commercial

hunting. Chiovoloni ascribes the decline in number of animals to the commercial hunting taking place in the 1960'ies and 70'ies both by *indigenous* and *non-indigenous* and 'because of the activities of indiscrete hunting, fishing with dynamite by colonos' and caused by the activities of 'operators of the sawmills and by the loggers and *cuartoneiros*' (loggers cutting lumber in pieces of four by four inches) (Chiovoloni 1996:9). Here Chiovoloni blurs the role played by Tacana's in the commercial hunting during the 1960'ies and 1970'ies by ascribing it to the more general term *indigenous* that could refer to any indigenous group and not the Tacana in particular. According to Wentzel Tacana's indeed took part in these commercial hunting activities (Wentzel 1989:144-145) but as this image does not comply with that of the ecological Indian which is a key argument within the Bio-diversity discourse Chiovoloni employ the more general term to make the Tacana's role indistinct.

Similarly Chiovoloni ascribes a decisive role to the *cuartoneiros*, loggers and operators of the sawmills who in many cases also were Tacana's working for shorter or longer periods for the logging companies. Again the Tacana involvement in 'non-sustainable' practices affecting the bio-diversity negatively is blurred by categorising Tacana's differently as *operators*, *workers*, *cuartoneiros* or *indigenous* when they are involved in these practices. The decoupling of the causal relationship between Tacana practices and environmental destruction through the use of 'cover-categories' in the representation of the Tacana thus serves to disentangle Tacana's from being guilty of causing environmental destruction. Rather an image is drawn where the otherwise local harmony between human – the ecologically noble Indian - and nature is disrupted by outside and destructive agencies.

Unsustainability - a breakdown of indigenous culture

Chiovoloni recognizes in his report that the Tacana are loosing their sustainable traditional rules of conduct but he acquits the Tacana in having responsibility for the disappearance of certain species in the area:

Even though the Tacana have progressively lost their traditional rules of conduct practised during hunting and fishing and the rational and sustainable management of the animal resources, we cannot blame this community the decline in number of some species and the almost total disappearance of others. (Chiovoloni 1996:9).

Here Chiovoloni explains the non-sustainable landuse as a *loss of traditional rules*, and disregards this non-sustainable land use as an aspect of Tacana land use. When particular practices that are not environmentally friendly from a western conservationist perspective are identified these are considered as *breakdowns of traditional culture* because traditional culture is assumed to be environmentally benign par se. This is similar to what Neuman has found in other descriptions on indigenous land use systems in the writings of for instance environmental NGOs (IUCN; see Oldfield 1988) (Neuman 1997:570). In this way Chiovolonis study, similar to other 'development reports' issued by donors and NGO's, result in a *discursive gate-keeping* where the categorization of community land management systems as 'customary', 'traditional' or 'broken down' or label individuals as 'indigenous' or 'recent immigrant' - in essence are exercising the power to assign land rights (Neuman 1997:570). The representation of one group as environmentally friendly in the reports and publications of international organisations (both NGOs and donors) and hence result in the inclusion of some and the exclusion of others when this representation is referring to a particular discourse. Because the representations of the indigenous Tacana are constructed in the image of ecological Indians as I will show in the following they are allowed enter this discursive room for manoeuvre.

Justifying land claims – the construction of truth

As stated in the information material of the Bolivian Agrarian Reform Institute the purpose of the TCO 'is to guaranty a *sustainable management* of the natural resources' (INRA 1999a:4). But what is a sustainable use of natural resources and how much land is needed to sustain the benign use of natural resources by the Tacana population?

In order to estimate how much land is needed for an indigenous group to maintain a sustainable natural resources management the Bolivian Agrarian Reform Institute (INRA) undertook a study among the Tacana. The conclusion of this study is partly based on data collected through interviews (stories and representations) undertaken in Tacana communities and thus representations of the tacanas play an important role in this process.

According to the second Agrarian Reform (Ley INRA) "*A TCO (Tierra Comunitaria de Origen) is a geographical area with its land, forests, rivers, lakes where an indigenous group - the original population - have always lived [...]and made use of the of the natural resources.*" (INRA a: 3). Hence if an indigenous group can render probable that they customarily have used natural resources this can be used as an argument for claiming the inclusion of this land within the indigenous territory (TCO). Well aware of implications of this methodology the NGO Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) supporting the Tacana in the processing of the TCO made workshops in Tacana communities before the study of INRA was undertaken in order to "help people in the communities remember" how they used the land. As the coordinator of the WCS team put it:

Often when we asked a villager what natural resources they use they would maybe include their chaco over here and some fruit trees over here. In the beginning they (the community members) only mentioned the areas just next to the community and the places where they normally go and they would not include distant places where their ancestors used to live and maybe not all the places where they have gone hunting or collected things in the forest. But as part of our workshops we made some mapping sessions in each community and asked them to think carefully whether there was nowhere else they had utilized for maybe fishing or hunting or collecting marfil or vanilla and we told them to include all kinds of use and be very aware of this inclusion when the missions arrived [of INRA and VAIPO] to make their surveys. When you use maps it is easier to visualize it for people in the communities and in this way they can themselves take part in the definitions of their TCO. Mapping is a good instrument. (Interview with WCS consultant 10th of November 2000)

The support from WCS has thus not only focussed on the juridical part of the processing of the TCO but also served to instruct the Tacana's in how to represent their use of natural resources. The workshops held by WCS has specifically prepared the community members on the arrival of the study made by INRA and encouraged them to include certain elements of their culture (e.g. ancestral land and traditional collection of plants in the forest) and utilization of natural resources hence supporting the image that the Tacana's traditionally have used and still use vast areas for own consumption. The tacanas were thus well aware of the strategic importance of their replies and representations when the survey teams from INRA arrived.

The caretakers of the environment

Many Tacana's interviewed during my fieldwork would represent themselves as the caretakers of the forest. The self-representation as the caretakers of forest and nature becomes a key argument for arguing that they (the Tacana) should have access to the resources inside the neighbouring Madidi national park. This is reflected in the following example where a Tacana argue for their access to resources inside the park:

Don Fernando: But now the park [administration] says that our community is outside the park area and that we therefore do not have any rights to use the resources inside the park. We explain it to institutions like CARE and the parks administration that we have always used the forest in this area and that we are now cut of from using it. Many people don't know what the park is and why it is there. The only thing I know that it is there to protect the environment.

Interviewer: How?

Don Fernando: Well to save the air and environment that you in the west have found out is very important, but we are the owners of this land and we are paying with poverty. The law will not change and I guess it is all right if we can just use the resources inside the park. We want access to the ANMI part of the park to establish Eco-tourism and to get access to the resources we once had for own consumption. We tell them that we only want access to an integrated use of the areas inside the National Park. They say we cannot use the resources inside the park unless we have a management plan (plan de manejo) for the area inside the park. But we have always had [our own kind of] a management plan as we only use what we need. What we ask for is only to extract things from the park for own consumption. We have always guarded this area and taken care of it. My dad and granddad were Tacana's and they knew a lot about the forest and the animals. My dad taught me and my brothers how to take care of this land and learnt us about the animals and plants.

This representation leaves out that the members of this particular Tacana community to have been involved in commercial hunting and logging. Instead Don Fernando explicitly argue that because of the knowledge he has inherited from his Tacana forefathers he is capable of taking care of the forest. Don Fernando draws the general picture that he and his community have only used what they needed for their own consumption. This self-representation is used to argue that they do not need an official management plan in order to take care of the natural resources inside the National Park as it is an inherent aspect of their land use practice. In this way the self-representation of Don Fernando complies with the western image of the ecological Indian living in harmony with nature acting as the caretaker of nature and this image is used to argue for tacanas access to the national park.

Similarly Celin the president of CIPTA has asserted tacanas rights to utilize the resources inside the national park for as he said *'there is no contradiction between the objectives of the National Park and the tacana's utilisation of the natural resources in that area'*. Here the underlying implication of Celins argument is that Tacana land use management is very benign and therefore would not threaten biodiversity and natural resources inside the park.

Tour de Vanilla

Representations do not only take the form of statements and stories told by tacanas but could also be showing that the land is used and thereby serves 'an economic and social function'. In general most Tacana's knew little of the exact phrases of the second Agrarian Reform (Ley INRA) (many of the middle aged and elders are illiterate) but one sentence had made it to even the most remote and otherwise cut off communities: "la tierra tiene que cumplir un funcion social u economico" – *the land has to fulfil a social and economic function* - as this is a prerequisite according to the law in order for both Tacana's and third parties to claim a piece of land. Hence in order to include a piece of land within the land claim for a TCO the Tacana's must convince EINE that the land serves a social and economic purpose. Celin was very aware of this, which is reflected in the following:

Celin: The state also says that the TCO must contribute to the state through its use of their sustainable natural resources management – in a sustainable way, right. All right it is the social and economic function that gives the consolidation of your right as owner of the property.

In three places we are looking at the possibilities for utilizing the forest resources and here at the centre (he points at a map) we are looking at the possibilities of using non-timber natural resources such as vanilla and Copaibo [*Copaifera reticulata*].

Now we are in one way or another giving a social or economic function to the land within the indigenous territory. Because on the contrary the state can say: well señores [you claim land] here - for what? In some areas the forest has for instance the potential for non-timber forest products, tourism, timber etc. but now you have to demonstrate an administrative management to consolidate your right as owner of the property (pero ya tiene que ver una gestion administrativa de territorio para consolidar su derecho propietario). In this case CIPTA has the possibility of negotiating - not in terms of demanding through the titling of land as TCO but because now it is constituted in some activities of use of the natural resources and thereby serve a social and economic function. For in any case they can say until here and no further will be included in the TCO but now we are executing activities of social and economic function outside

that area if they cut us off right here (he is showing where on the map). We are demonstrating that the land is serving a social and economic function. (interview with Celin 19th of October 2000).

Thus the argument of ‘we use this area and it serves a social and economic function’ has been employed by the Tacana’s in their struggle for land, which was also the request passed on to Tacana’s by the consultant from Wildlife Conservation Society. This argument has led to the (re)invention of customary Tacana land use practices where resources located far into the forested areas are said to be used. This is for instance the case with the claimed utilisation of vanilla in the forested areas east of the community of Napashi.

Notes from fieldwork

When I arrived in the community of Napashi it was late afternoon. Napashi is considered to be the ‘most traditional’ Tacana community both among tacana but also by NGO’s like CARE and WCS. This was my first visit to the community and I therefore asked for the community leader to present myself and show him my research permit issued and signed by Celin the president of CIPTA.

Three young tacana men told me that the community leader was not there and based on past experience they had agreed in the community that no investigator should be allowed to work in the community without the formal agreement of the community leader. As it was late afternoon and I would not be able to go back to the village of Tumapasa before the dark they offered me a spot where I could pitch my tent for the night.

Later after talking to some of the local women and having eaten dinner in the house of the village leaders daughter communication slowly progressed. The women were more susceptible to dialog and a bit curious to talk to the gringo couple who had just arrived. The daughter of the community leader explained that her father together with a few of the men from Napashi and the president of CIPTA had gone on a 3-day tour into a remote part of the forest to locate where the vanilla trees grow. The community had not used the vanilla trees for a long time and the only person they meant would be able to find the cluster of trees would be the aging corregidor, Feliciano Chao who had earlier been involved in the extraction of vanilla in a Barraca. The women were not certain about the purpose of the Vanilla mission but presumed that they (the men) might want to investigate whether it would be possible to extract the vanilla for commercial purposes in the future.

The vanilla mission is one example of how tacanas reinvent traditional land use practices in order to justify their land claim. Though the vanilla trees had not been used for decades all of a sudden it became important to mark that these trees still serves a social and economic function to the tacana community. By showing that a certain area serves a social and economic function by referring to a customary use of this resource they can within justify their land claim the law. Past and new customary practices are (re)invented to support the land claim in the processing of the TCO. The interpretation of Ley INRA which have been moulded by international discourses of environment and human rights, thus favours indigenous population groups who can render probable that they have customarily utilized land and resources in a certain area.

Sizing the land claim arguing within discourse

Sustainability and customary use of natural resources is not only a key term when tacanas argue that they are the caretakers of the forest but also becomes a key concept in the calculation of how much land the Tacana would claim in their application. Throughout the report of Chiovoloni represents hunting as a fundamental cultural practice of traditional Tacana culture and hunting is used as a parameter to estimate how much land is needed in order to maintain sustainability of natural resources management in future. The calculation is based on model used by Townsend among the another indigenous lowland group the Sirionó to estimate how much land was needed to support the contribution of proteins to their diet from game meat (Townsend 1996). The guiding principle is here that the game being hunted needs a certain minimum of habitat to reproduce itself and sustain the population level. Based on former data produced by Wentzel on Tacana hunting and consumption of meat among 19 families in Tumupasa Chiovoloni extrapolates how much land is

needed to sustain their level of consumption of meat (0,254 kg pr. consumer pr. day⁴) based on hunting. Chiovoloni concludes that:

The data shows that the 157 Tacana of Tumupasa need – in order to continue hunting in a sustainable manner the same amount of meat – an extension of minimum 30.000 has of forest (Chiovoloni 1996:68)

This amount of land equates 191 has of land for each Tacana (no matter age) or a total of 764.331 has if each of the app. 4000 Tacana is allocated this much land (an area the size of XXXXXX). Thus sustainability is the imperative argument when justifying how much land should be allocated for the Tacana. By referring to much land is needed to accomodate sustainability of their hunting practices Chiovoloni has justified and consolidated the claim put forward by the Tacana for 769.000 has of land in application for the TCO-Tacana. Today this area has diminished because third parties such as colonizers from the highland are occupying part of this land and the Tacana land claim has shrunked to some 549.000 has. Though this area is smaller than the original claim each of the 661 Tacana families estimated to be part of the TCO (WCS 2001:13) on average get the legal right to 831 has of land or 16 times as much land (app. 50 has) as is allocated as the minimum for each colono-family according to the law. An extension of a territory that is argued within the discourses of sustainability, bio-diversity and indigenous peoples, which are in favour of the Tacana because they through their representations are able to justify their claim for land by fitting the image of the ecological Indian and narrate customary use of natural resource management within the room for manoeuvre opened up by these international discourses.

PART IV: THE SYMBOLIC POWER OF REPRESENTATION

Advocates for indigenous peoples rights have used the image of the ecological Indian as this image carry with it stereotype positive connotations that imply that land use models of rainforest Indians secure a sustainable management of natural resources. In the examples above I have shown that traces of the ecological Indian is present from the very local to national and global levels in a Bolivian context and that it is used as a construct to argue for indigenous rights within environmental discourses like those of biodiversity and sustainability. As noted the representations of Tacana culture indeed support the image that they are the caretakers of nature and the forest. This is not only the case with their own representations but also in the report that was developed by the foreign consultant Chiovoloni and which served as a compiled representation of Tacana culture to be used for applying for the TCO itself at the National Agrarian Reform Institute (INRA) and to be used when applying for funding among donors agencies.

The present day natural resources management of the Tacana does not in all respects fit the image of ecological Indian. They have been hunting excessively, thereby contributing to a severe reduction of Caymans and other animals during the 1960'ies and 1970'ies, they have indeed been involved in the forest industry and worked as loggers and day labourers but in the representations made by themselves and in the report by Chiovoloni these aspects are downplayed by the use of cover categories and a retelling of the past ignoring or reducing the importance of the roles played by Tacana's in affecting the natural habitat negatively. Indeed the representations of Tacana land use are adapted to support the positive qualities often attributed to the ecological Indian.

⁴ This level of meat consumption seems very high. For comparison the each Siriono on average consumed 0,211 kg pr. Day (which is also a considerable high level) and a recent study undertaken by Stearman among the Yuqui found that the level of meat consumption dropped as a consequence of immigration to their area from on average 88 grams/person/day to 44 gr./person/day) (Stearman 2000).

The ‘edited representations’ of Tacana culture as guided by customs and local knowledge serve to stimulate the authenticity of the representation of an indigenous culture. Authentic ‘indigenous culture’ becomes a discursive necessity as the privileges of the legislation are specifically and foremost directed towards the indigenous part Bolivian population. Hence it becomes crucial to manifest one’s cultural origin which is indeed reflected in many recent activities and aspirations found in Tacana communities. Women want to receive training in how to produce the old weaving patterns, many would like to learn to speak Tacana again and former utilisations of natural resources are reinvented. The reinvention of tradition also render visible the distinction between what is Tacana and what is ‘other’ or non-tacana. As representation appears to be most effective in the constitution of groups through words, slogans and theories which help by imposing principles of division and thereby enacting through a **symbolic power** (Bourdieu 1991:127) the reinvention of tradition and marking of the boundary of the indigenous identity in representation thus adds strength to the symbolic power the Tacana are performing discursively.

Revitalization of indigenous culture

The revitalization of traditional Tacana culture through the reinvention of former traditions and practices not only marks a historical break with the former stigmatisation of being Tacana (read indigenous) in Bolivia. As shown in the vanilla case some of these reinventions of culture also serve particular strategic purposes in order to secure land for the indigenous territory. Here Tacana’s headed by the strategic consciousness of their leader Celin set out to identify certain areas where they would be able to claim this land as it has formerly and assertedly also recently served a social economic purpose. In the reinvention of tradition Tacana culture and land use is reconstructed to become an argument for claiming land within the Bolivian legislation. In this way the legislation not only impels but also delimits the reconstruction and reinvention of Tacana culture. The legislative framework so to speak demarcates a room for manoeuvre where only certain groups with certain cultural qualities are allowed to enter. Only groups of indigenous origin, organised as indigenous peoples and being able to represent and render probable that they will secure a sustainable management of natural resources are allowed to enter this room. Ecological lowland Indians are allowed to enter this room as the image of the ecological Indian has from the start been part of the international discourse within which the national Bolivian legislation has been developed.

As demonstrated in the discussion above indigenous people’s organisations but also western based NGO’s advocating for indigenous peoples rights have contributed to developing and added strength to the discourse on indigenous people’s rights. Indigenous people’s organisations such as COICA have themselves invited environmentalist organisations to cooperate and support indigenous land claims in order to achieve sustainability and save the rainforest. An important image used to unite the efforts of the environmentalist movement and the indigenous movement has been the construct of the ecological Indian. The ecological Indian gains its strength from several discourses, both from a human rights discourse that demand that indigenous peoples should be given back what they have long been deprived, and from an environmental discourse where Indians as part of nature are attributed with ecologically benign models of living in harmony with the environment because their ‘cultural models’ supposedly are adapted to managing natural resources in a sustainable manner.

Questioning the myth

Within Anthropology the assumption non-industrial people having ecological wisdom has been contested. Roy Ellen has depicted environmentalism of late twentieth century as drawing on a huge body of mythologies of which one myth states that certain traditional peoples are uniquely adapted

in ways which ensure that their material and spiritual resources are held in balance. Ellen demystifies the myth and argues that even though some cultures seem to idealize harmony with the environment non-industrial communities are often held in a state of apparent balance with their environment by factors other than their ideology (Ellen 1986:10). For instance small populations do not exert much pressure on the environment, but they may be kept small by other factors than deliberate planning, such as infertility and disease (Milton 1996:113). Relative isolation is another factor that helps to minimize the pressure exerted by some communities on their environments. People who interact regularly with outsiders are often involved in patterns of exchange that require them to produce a surplus of wealth. An isolated community needs to provide only for its own subsistence, and the absence of any incentives to produce more may keep the economy sustainable (Ellen 1986:12). Though many such groups have a rich belief systems and/or knowledge of plants and animals this is not necessarily synonymous with an ideology aiming to balance human activity with the surrounding environment in a sustainable manner. Thus as Milton sums up the questioning of the myth *'some of them [non-industrial societies like forest dwelling Indians] may live their lives in ways that are environmentally sound, but ecological balance, where it exists, is an incidental consequence of human activities and other factors, rather than being an ideal or a goal that is actively pursued'* (Milton 1996:113).

Thus within anthropology there has been a continuous debate at least within the last two decades contesting the myth of the ecological Indian. The American anthropologist working in lowland Bolivia A.M. Stearman has even addressed the community of western environmental conservationists in an article in the periodical *Conservation Biology* and warned that if indigenous peoples are ceded land it is unjust to and unrealistic to expect them to conform to some preconceived stereotype of "the ecologically noble savage" (Redford & Stearman 1993:254). To expect indigenous peoples to retain traditional, low-impact patterns of resource use is to deny them the right to grow and change in ways compatible with the rest of humanity (Redford & Stearman 1993:252). Thus when advocates of indigenous peoples rights argue *"that indigenous groups, with the detailed knowledge necessary for conservation, have carefully managed this environment for millenia"* (see e.g. Arvelo-Jimenez & Cousins 1992:10) - and draw on the positive connotations of the image of the ecological Indian in the representations employed when claiming land - this might be a powerful means to achieve ones immediate political goals. But if the Indians do not comply with the image of the ecological Indian in the long run they might risk displacement and withdrawal of their newly won privileges as they have 'betrayed' the precondition for these (Veber 1996:57; Kvaale 1997:23).

The ecological Indian – compromising Conservation?

Conklin & Graham have argued that Indigenous peoples are natural partners in the global ecological imaginary because of – not in spite of – their cultural difference (Conklin & Graham 1995:697). As ecological wisdom is believed to be an inherent aspect of 'indigenous cultures' they become obvious partners for organisations aiming to conserve biodiversity and global forest cover. But the interest in cooperating with indigenous peoples is not only invoked by an uncritical belief in their ecological wisdom. Another imperative factor making indigenous peoples interesting when striving to conserve protect biodiversity and the forest cover is the fact that they inhabit a large part of the areas of the Rainforest, which environmental NGO's and donors now try to protect. Therefore environmental NGO's have strategically acknowledged the need to ally with indigenous peoples and support indigenous peoples rights to land in order to stop further in-migration and keep population pressure low. This is for instance reflected in the guidelines developed by the international environmental NGO IUCN (The World Conservation Union) in the late 1980's:

Traditional lifestyles of indigenous people have often evolved in harmony with the local conditions.[...] Retaining the traditional lifestyles of indigenous people in buffer zones, where this is possible and appropriate, will encourage the long-term conservation of tropical forest protected areas. Protecting the rights of local communities ensures that they remain as guardians of the land *and prevents the incursion of immigrants* with less understanding of local environment (Oldfield, 1988:12; my italics)

Hence advocating for indigenous peoples rights to land is not only fought from an altruistic wish to improve conditions for indigenous peoples rights but also reflects an interest in stopping further immigration to the forested areas in order to keep population pressure low. Thus supporting and contributing to the production of the image of the ecological Indian might not simply stem from blue-eyed naivety as it appears at first sight. As Tania Murray Li noted from her experience in a similar Philippine context, the strategic use of stereotype representations in development work have served to accommodate political change in third world countries where policy interventions seek to link sustainable development to representations of (indigenous) communities, stressing harmony, equality and tradition (Li 1996:502). These representations, though idealized, are capable of producing strategic gains as they counter prevailing development orthodoxies, open up opportunities, and provide a legitimating vocabulary for alternative approaches” (Li 1996:503). As Li notes, communities to which these representations refer are ideal-types, unlocated in time or space, but these *‘simplified representations can be more effective than subtle ones, when deployed in a macro political context. These generalized representations open up a space for policy shifts and new programme directions’* (Li 1996: 505)

Although generalized and over simplified the representation of Amazon indigenous cultures as environmentally benign has provided a policy shift within the Bolivian legislation. Indigenous groups are increasingly involved in the management and conservation of biodiversity and applications for a number of indigenous territories are now being processed aiming to protect indigenous rights and conserve biodiversity. The fact that the issuing of indigenous territories prevents further immigration to the area have made indigenous groups natural partners for environmental organisations who have seen this support as a means to keep population pressure low and thereby protect biodiversity. As I have outlined above, “traditional land use systems” are however rarely based on a conservation ideology in the western sense. The Tacana case thus rises the question of what should we expect from indigenous group who controls areas of nature conservation interest? Should we expect these groups to maintain their traditional way of living assuming that this will conserve biodiversity and forest cover? What if they have aspirations for future development and economic and social welfare?

Few tacanas have any doubts in this respect: they would like potable water systems, electricity, better access to transportation schools and income opportunities; or as they say ‘we want development’ and felling the forest is by some regarded as one way of achieving this. Therefore securing indigenous land rights does not par se lead to conservation of biodiversity and nature. The indigenous land rights approach to conservation of biodiversity employed in several countries in South America must be paralleled with other development activities that provide locals (not only the indigenous population) with alternative ways of achieving their aspirations of development.

Who is enabled?

Though powerful when employed the simplified image of the ecological Indian as it enhances the resource rights and livelihood security of certain communities *‘leaves begging the central question of who is enabled or constrained: whose economic circumstances or security of tenure is at stake’* (Leach, 1991:18). While indigenous or ‘tribal’ communities are potentially privileged by the discourse on traditional property rights other groups, perhaps equally poor and deserving, may be disadvantaged as they are unable to draw on the prevailing discourses either because these

discourses do not attend these groups or because these groups are insufficiently organized to mobilise their cause within the discursive framework. This is for instance the case with the indigenous group the fishing nomadic *Esse ejja* (also called Chama) living on the Beni River. As they traditionally have not had any attachment to land (as they were living a nomadic life sleeping in the sand on the riverbanks) they cannot refer to traditional occupation of land when claiming land within the legislative framework of Ley INRA. Additionally they are poorly organised and NGO's have therefore abstained from cooperating with this group as a formal cooperation presupposes a minimum of organisational structure and the *Esse ejja* cannot fulfil these pre-conditional requirements. The articulation of demands through representation within discourse requires a minimum of discursive means and capacity in order to utilize the room for manoeuvre opened up by discourse.

Conclusion

The international dimension of power relations enacting locally has come to play an increasing role concurrently with increasing globalisation. The international network provided by presence of international NGO's and the increasingly stronger organisation of indigenous groups into national and international organisations and networks have generally diminished the sovereignty of the state. In the case of Bolivia this process can be conceptualised as a process where international discourses reproduce and reshape the apparatus of the Bolivian state and produce new legislation that rebuilds the relationship between the state and its citizens. Former dominant large landowners are now having their landholdings confiscated or reduced in size through legal processes and this land is in many cases given to formerly marginalized indigenous groups. As the First Secretary of the Danish Embassy in La Paz remarked:

Recently a number of senators and people with political influence have started calling me and coming to my office to make me stop the TCO-process here in Bolivia. I just tell them that there is nothing I can do as this legislation is approved by and a matter of the Bolivian parliament. It's like people down here have started to realize that this is actually is for real. [...] Ley INRA is supplemented with a number of regulations that interprets the law and these have initially acted as obstacles and prevented the law from being directly applicable. But as these obstacles gradually have been removed people are starting to feel the effects of the law. A number of Bolivian politicians had no intentions of really implementing the law but they accepted it because it was a precondition for continual and increased support from donors as for instance the World Bank. (From an interview with the First Secretary of the Danish Embassy conducted the 20th of September 2000)

Thus state policies and practices formerly favouring the white and dominating political elite are now being transformed by influence of developing agencies such the World Bank and donors like Danida introducing international discourses in the national legislation, making the continual support conditionally and related to compliance with moral and regulative constructs of these discourses. Thus when theorists like Brysk argue that indigenous peoples have gained relatively much within the last generation as compared to the seduction that has taken place over the last 500 years (Brysk 2000:20) the reasons for this must be found not only in the traditional national dynamic of the "government and the opposition" but rather one must identify the causes and the impedus for this change by examining civil society, the international system, and the interaction between them. The weapons of the new alliance between locally situated indigenous groups and international agencies is nothing like physical coercion or armed resistance towards those that have oppressed indigenous groups like the Tacana's for centuries. Rather it is fought through the use of information, images and the employment of theories and international political agreements that inevitably means the exercise of power in this global interaction.

Figure 1 shows how the transcendence of the boundaries the national state and the interaction between local, national and international actors compose a complicated network of transaction,

interaction and exchange of theories, images and information that constantly reproduce and reshape international discourses. The room for manoeuvre within which the Tacana can put forward their land claim and where they can justify and support it through their representations is thus not just the traditional relation of opposition to the state. Though indigenous groups like the Tacana formally still must achieve their aspirations within a national legislative framework international discourses have opened up a room a manoeuvre also pervading the Bolivian legislation that is favour of indigenous people's rights. Hence it is not simply a continuation of the subjugating effects of state power towards indigenous people as Neuman suggests. Neither is it fair to claim as Escobar did that the development discourse has places *the third world in a position of inferiority, subjugated by the "scientific" normalizing action of the Western cultural-political technologies – in even more devastating ways than its colonial predecessor* (Escobar 1992:66).

As I have shown above international discourses of environment and human rights form part of the development discourse and they actually open up spaces for manoeuvre for formerly marginalized groups which were held in subjugate positions of inferiority and stigmatisation by the state. But as development discourses contribute to globalisation, which inevitably bypass and transform the state development discourses have also contributed to transform the relationship between the state and indigenous peoples in a Bolivian context. Though Escobar is right when he states that the productivity of development must be seen in terms of an '*efficient apparatus that systematically links knowledge and power as it deploys each one of its strategies and interventions*' (Escobar 1992:66) it is important to note that this apparatus diminishes the sovereignty of the state but at the same time international development discourse provides actors and social movements with a room for manoeuvre where alternative and local models natural resource management can be articulated.

Discourses of the environment and bio-diversity not only produce national parks and protected areas but also new possibilities for indigenous groups. Land claims are increasingly voiced in global and trans-national arenas, and in this process disparate actors such as the Tacana seek to frame their identities as "tribal" or indigenous and representing themselves as the caretakers of biodiversity and the environment. Thereby these actors contribute to the reproduction (and transformation) of these international discourses having imperative effects on a national and local level in countries like Bolivia. Though powerful when employed the utilization of this stereotype image is unlocated in time and space. Therefore intervention policies and strategies in PA's run the risk of acting on misguided assumptions if the image of the ecological Indian is left unquestioned. Although some indigenous land use practices might be sustainable in an environmentalist sense this is rarely a consequence of some conservationist ideology serving to preserve long term sustainability, but rather a consequence of economic (typically limited integration into market economy), technological, demographic and structural relationships. Indigenous groups not only struggle for the conservation of nature but often also aspire development and higher welfare standards potentially in conflict with the conservation of bio-diversity. Therefore strategic support for indigenous peoples land rights as a means to conserve biodiversity should be paralleled with activities aiming to support and develop local sustainable models of natural resources management and income opportunities providing indigenous peoples with alternatives to degrading biodiversity and forested areas. In this way it will be possible for indigenous peoples to comply with the image of the ecological Indian and prevent the deconstruction of the powerful image that has served as a strong argument within prevailing discourses of development.

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