INFORMAL INSTITUTIONS AND PARTY ORGANIZATION: A CASE STUDY OF THE MAS-IPSP IN URBAN AREAS OF LA PAZ AND EL ALTO

by

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Diploma, Smith College 2006
Licenciatura, Universidad del Salvador 2006

THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF ARTS

In the
Latin American Studies Program
of the Department of Sociology and Anthropology

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SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY

Spring 2009

APPROVAL

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Degree: **Master of Arts**

Title of Thesis: **Informal Institutions and Party Organization: A Case Study of the MAS-IPSP in Urban Areas of La Paz and El Alto**

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Date Defended/Approved: April 17, 2009

ABSTRACT

The Movement Towards Socialism (MAS) emerged in Bolivia's rural areas in the 1990s. Born of peasant social movements, it has spread to the cities and become the country's dominant political force, as its leader, Evo Morales, was elected to the Presidency in 2005. Drawing on primary data collected through fieldwork in the cities of La Paz and El Alto, this thesis focuses on two aspects of the MAS. Firstly, it studies how the MAS is organized internally, and argues that its rural origins have indelibly shaped its contemporary structure. The MAS is currently at a movement stage and is building a base-level infrastructure, which is informal and barely institutionalized. Secondly, this thesis examines how the MAS operates in La Paz and El Alto. It reveals that while the MAS is an innovative representational institution, it has not innovated much in terms of political practices and organization in these two cities.

Keywords: Bolivia; Movement Toward Socialism; MAS; social movements; political parties; informal institutions

Subject Terms: Movimiento al Socialismo (Bolivia)
MAS – Bolivia
Political Parties – Bolivia
Social Movements – Bolivia
Political parties – Latin America

With Love for my Family,
Anne, Luis, Patricia, Rocío and Clara

To Indigenous Peoples in Bolivia,
Who Returned as Millions

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I owe special thanks to the extraordinary members of my advisory committee, all of which have been of the type every graduate student wishes to have. Dr. Eric Hershberg created the ideal conditions for the pursuit of graduate study in the Latin American Studies program at SFU. His advice, support, and friendship throughout the completion of my studies at Simon Fraser University was invaluable, and this thesis benefited extensively from his guidance. Dr. Maxwell Cameron has been a source of great inspiration. I thank him for his support, especially since, as a professor at UBC, he did not have any obligation to do so. I am so grateful for his guidance and the many hours he spent with me talking about Bolivia, and discussing politics and classic works. His precise comments on my work helped to keep this thesis on track. I also extend my sincere gratitude to Dr. Fernando De Maio for agreeing to be a part of this project, and for being a great source of encouragement. I am also grateful for his advice, support, and friendship. I thank Eric, Max and Fernando for always treating me as a colleague, even though I am just starting off. I only hope that one day I can be the type of mentor to others that you have been for me. I also extend my gratitude to Dr. Alec Dawson, who chaired my thesis defense and helped me in many ways throughout my studies.

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GLOSSARY

ADN   Acción Democrática Nacionalista
               (Nationalist Democratic Action)

ASP   Asamblea por la Soberanía de los Pueblos
               (Assembly for the Sovereignty of the Peoples)

CIDOB   Confederación de Pueblos Indígenas de Bolivia
               (Confederation of Indigenous Peoples of Bolivia)

CNE   Corte Nacional Electoral
               (National Electoral Court)

COB   Central Obrera Boliviana
               (Bolivian Worker's Central)

COMIBOL   Corporación Minera de Bolivia
               (Bolivia's Mining Corporation)

CONALCAM   Coordinadora Nacional para el Cambio
               (National Coalition for Change)

CONDEPA   Conciencia de Patria
               (Conscience of the Fatherland)

Coordinadora   Coordinadora para la Defensa del Agua y de la Vida
               (Coalition for the Defense of Water and Life)

COR-El Alto   Central Obrera Regional-El Alto
               (Regional Labor Federation-El Alto)

CSCB   Confederación Sindical de Colonizadores de Bolivia
               (Bolivian Syndicalist Confederation of Colonizers)

CSUTCB   Confederación Sindical única de Trabajadores Campesinos de
               Bolivia
               (Unique Confederation of Rural Laborers of Bolivia)

FEJUVE-El Alto	Federación de Juntas Vecinales-El Alto (Federation of Neighborhood Boards-El Alto)
FNMCB-BC	Federación Nacional de Mujeres Campesinas de Bolivia "Bartolina Sisa" ("Bartolina Sisa" National Federation of Peasant Women)
FONVIS	Fondo Nacional de Vivienda Social (Bolivian National Fund of Social Housing)
FSB	Falange Socialista Boliviana (Bolivian Socialist Falange)
IU	Izquierda Unida (United Front)
MAS-IPSP	Movimiento al Socialismo, Instrumento Político para la Soberanía de los Pueblos (Movement Toward Socialism, Political Instrument for the People's Sovereignty)
MIP	Movimiento Indígena Pachakutí (Pachakuti Indigenous Movement)
MIR	Movimiento de la Izquierda Revolucionaria Revolutionary Left Movement
MNR	Movimiento Nacionalista Revolucionario (Revolutionary Nationalist Movement)
MSM	Movimiento Sin Miedo (Movement Without Fear)
NPE	Nueva Política Económica (New Economic Policy)
PCB	Partido Comunista de Bolivia (Bolivia's Communist Party)
PODEMOS	Poder Democrático y Social (Social and Democratic Power)
PP	Plan Progreso
PPL	Popular Participation Law

UDP   Unidad Democrática y Popular
        (Popular and Democratic Unity)

UPEA   Universidad Pública de El Alto
        (Public University of El Alto)

YPFB   Yacimientos Petrolíferos Fiscales Bolivianos

CHAPTER 1: Context, Concepts, and Questions: An Introduction to the Study of the MAS-IPSP[1]

1.1   Initial Considerations

It has become a commonplace assumption that Latin America has recently experienced a

resurgence of the Left. After many years of authoritarian repression and ideological

retrenchment, the Left has experienced a revival in the search for alternatives to the

seemingly defunct "Washington Consensus" (Williamson 1990), and has assumed office

in ten different Latin American countries.[2] As a result, almost two-thirds of the

continent's population is currently under the rule of 'left-of-center' or 'left-leaning'

governments, which while proclaiming the virtual death of the neoliberal state,

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[1] MAS-IPSP (From now on simply "the MAS") stands for Movement Toward Socialism, Political Instrument for the People's Sovereignty (*Movimiento al Socialismo, Instrumento Político para la Soberanía de los Pueblos*). Although MAS-IPSP is the correct and complete name of the organization, I will henceforth refer to it simply as "the MAS." The reason for this has to do strictly with visual effects and it is to facilitate the readers' work and the writing flow. It does not respond to the author's ideological or political positioning vis-à-vis the object of study.

[2] Hugo Chávez's 1998 victory in Venezuela initiated this tidal shift. It was followed by Ricardo Lagos' victory in 2000 in Chile (where the trend continued with Michelle Bachelet's election in 2006); 'Lula' da Silva' 2002 triumph in Brazil (re-elected in 2006); Tabaré Vasquez in 2003 in Uruguay; Néstor Kirchner in Argentina in 2003 (with *Peronismo K* prolonging after the 2007 victory of Cristina Fernández de Kirchner); Evo Morales in Bolivia in 2005; Rafael Correa and Daniel Ortega in Ecuador and Nicaragua in 2006; and Fernando Lugo in Paraguay in 2008. Moreover, "It bears considering as well that Andrés Manuel Lopez Obrador, Ollanta Humala and Oton Solis nearly emerged victorious in 2006 presidential balloting in Mexico and Peru and Costa Rica, respectively, and that even where the left has failed to reach office at the level of the executive, it frequently has made important advances in legislative and sub-national arenas. Such was the case in Mexico and Colombia in 2006 and 2007, respectively" (Hershberg n.d). Finally, at the time of this writing, Mauricio Funes was elected president of El Salvador under the ticket of the left-of-center Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (*Frente Farabundo Martí para la Liberación Nacional*, or FMLN). Funes won the election with 51.3 percent of those who voted.

experiment with post-liberal political arrangements.[3] What the succession of electoral

gains does not reveal is *how* this story is unfolding as well as the domestic implications

for regional democracies. For example, there is no agreement on *what* the oft-discussed

'Left Turns'[4] really mean for Latin America and for Latin Americans. There is also little

agreement on the potential durability of this 'leftist' trend and its horizons. Moreover,

the internal dynamics and practices, as well as the organizational features of these

heterogeneous leftist forces and coalitions remain relatively under-explored in an

empirical manner.

In Bolivia, almost 25 years after its return to democratic rule, the rise to power of

cocalero leader Evo Morales Ayma and his base of support, the MAS-IPSP, which is

mistakenly deemed a 'party' by some, has introduced a series of singularities to the

national and regional landscapes. In the national elections of December 2005, Morales—

an Aymara Indian by descent and self-identification—obtained an unprecedented 53.7

percent of the popular vote.[5] It was the first time in Bolivian history that an Aymara

peasant became elected president, and the first time in Bolivian democratic history that a

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[3] According to Benjamín Arditi, post-liberalism could be understood as "an image of thought of the politics and democracy to come of the left, whether in terms of electoral contests or from a wider perspective" (2008, 74).

[4] In alluding to the "Left Turns" I refer not only to the succession of elections in which left-leaning presidential candidates have resulted victorious or almost victorious, but also to the leftist forces that perform contentious politics form non-institutionalized channels. The term is pluralized to highlight the heterogeneous nature of the lefts (both amongst and within countries). While responding to environmental changes, each of their responses might represent a turn and is susceptible of triggering a new move in a different—albeit unknown—direction or position. As a result, the term needs to be pluralized. For a lucid assessment on Latin America's 'Left Turns', see Cameron, Beasley-Murray, and Hershberg 2009; see also Levitsky and Roberts 2008.

[5] Morales won the 2005 presidential elections with 1,544,374 votes (53.7 percent of those who voted). Far behind Morales, the second place went to Jorge 'Tuto' Quiroga, leader of right-of-center Democratic and Social Power (*Poder Democrático Social*, or PODEMOS). He obtained 821,745 votes, which represented 28.6 percent of those who voted. Information retrieved from Bolivia's National Electoral Court on March 26, 2009 (*Corte Nacional Electoral*, or CNE).

candidate reached the presidency without the need of going through a Congressional run-off (*segunda vuelta*).[6] After his ascent to power, scholars and the media have quickly compared Morales to other 'leftist' regional leaders. In the first place, Morales has been routinely associated with Hugo Chávez of Venezuela because they both allegedly share 'carnivorous' or 'radical left' attributes, to use Vargas Llosa's and Castañeda's eccentric terminologies (Vargas Llosa 2007; Castañeda 2006). Among the principal reasons, Morales has been equated to Chávez because of their shared anti-American rhetoric, nationalist impulses, and Morales' *de facto* adscription to Chávez's Bolivarian project for the Americas. In the second place, Morales has also been compared to 'vegetarian' leaders such as 'Lula' da Silva of Brazil, as both come from humble origins; rose to power *from* social movements, and are close to the social base of the popular movements that they represent. But compared to these and other regional 'left-leaning' or 'populist' figures who in recent years have been elected to office in Latin America, Morales gained state power by successfully articulating the heterogeneous demands of groups and individuals disenfranchised by neoliberalism into a powerful electoral coalition.[7] The peculiarity of the Bolivian case is that this coalition-building occurred amidst an intense cycle of mass protests, in which the social movements, under the MAS banner, managed to move beyond mass demonstrations (non-electoral) and enter into the institutional (electoral) terrain. As will be shown, social mobilization of disillusioned groups played a

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[6] Morales' landslide victory allowed the MAS to become government without having to configure broad coalitions with other parties and forces. The configuration of heterodox alliances was a dominant feature in the Bolivian political arena during 1985-2005, and this political superstructure was known as the 'pacted democracy'. From 1985 until 2005, this superstructure took the form of a series of gentlemen's agreements concluded among the main party leaders in an effort to configure 'stable' governments. In practice, this system guaranteed democratic governability or, in other words, the implementation and maintaining of some of the most conspicuous neoliberal restructuring in the Latin American region.

[7] These groups included coca-producing indigenous peasants, laid-off miners and other sectors of organized labor, peasant groups with land claims, and indigenous movements with indigenous rights and cultural claims, among others.

formative role in formation of the MAS, in the consolidation of Morales' leadership within the movement, and in his ascent to state power. To his credit, Morales brought these groups together by building a strong image as a combatant of neoliberal governance and U.S. hegemony and by proposing a credible alternative to the 'traditional' political parties and class.

The MAS was born of peasant and indigenous movements in the rural areas of the Chapare region in the late 1990s. Nevertheless, to deem it solely as a 'rural' or 'peasant' party is ignore its organizational flexibility and the broader coalition of interests that it currently represents, as it has successfully expanded itself to Bolivia's largest cities and surged to the forefront of national politics. The MAS has articulated itself by building a powerful electoral coalition amidst a "great protests cycle" (Ibarra Güell 2003, 238), which initiated as a collective rejection to the neoliberal model and intensified during what could be called the Bolivian "commodity wars."[8] In alluding to these commodity wars, I refer to the so-called 'water war' in April 2000, which started as a massive rejection of increases in the water tariff in Cochabamba, and entailed a major struggle between residents of that city and the U.S. Company Bechtel over the privatization of the water utility. I also refer to the so-called 'gas war' in 2003 in the highlands of El Alto. The latter sparked as a collective reaction against President Gonzalo 'Goni' Sánchez de Lozada's intention to export natural gas to the United States through Chilean ports. During five days in October 2003 (October 12 – 17), Alteños (residents of El Alto) took

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[8] I borrow this term from Alexander Dawson n.d.

to the streets and confronted the military forces that occupied the city.[9] State repression

on the president's orders left at least 45 dead in El Alto, of 63 dead in the region. But as

protests continued, the president resigned and was replaced by vice-president Carlos

Mesa Gisbert. Although these social crises will be addressed further in subsequent

chapters, it is worth pointing out from the outset that these two major clashes, which

paralyzed the country and reflected a hollow neoliberal state, were led mostly by urban

social organizations and autonomous neighborhood associations that did not follow the

directives of any social organization.

As a new kind of representative organization, the MAS emerged and became a successful

electoral vehicle amidst a profound crisis of partisan representation.[10] High levels of

socio-political agitation and institutional volatility culminated in a change of those who

hold political power in Bolivia, with social movements playing leading roles in the

country's formal democratic institutions. As a result, that context of social turbulence

created a propitious context for deepening Bolivian democracy, but also posed a series of

challenges. The MAS' electoral success and rise to power has signified the possibility

for popular-based movements to "move beyond the framework of liberal participation"

(Arditi 2008, 66). In this respect, resistance to neoliberalism has provided popular

organizations with the opportunity to innovate in matters of political representation and

participation. Rural and indigenous popular organizations have not done so through a

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[9] El Alto is a young and rapidly growing city that borders La Paz, Bolivia's capital city. During and after the popular uprisings of 2003 El Alto has received widespread international and domestic attention, as its residents played a decisive role by helping force two presidents to resign. Alteños have also been decisive in the election of Evo Morales as the first indigenous president of the country. The increasing attention El Alto has received as a 'rebel' city parallels largely the attention Chiapas had received years before with the uprisings of the *Subcomandante* Marcos and his EZLN. For splendid characterizations of this city, see Lazar 2008, and 2006; see also Albó 2006, and Mamani Ramírez 2005; also Arbona and Kohl 2004.
[10] For a lucid assessment, see Hochstetler and Friedman 2008.

conventional political party, but rather through the creation of a self-denominated

"*instrumento político*," the MAS, a *sui generis* political organization through which they

henceforth have participated in electoral institutions. As for the challenges to Bolivian

democracy, the MAS' rise to power has defiantly transformed society by pursuing the full

inclusion of traditionally marginalized groups and individuals. Today, three years after

Morales assumed office, he and the MAS are facing difficult challenges with respect to

the implementation of their most ambitious project: the adoption of a new legal and

constitutional order into which groups and individuals can participate in previously

impossible ways.

1.2   A Balance of the Literature

The MAS' peculiar trajectory poses empirical, conceptual, and theoretical challenges to

contemporary social scientists. Its experience has transformed Bolivia into a true

historical 'laboratory'. Since its inception in the *cocales* of the Bolivian central region of

the Chapare, the MAS has resisted being uncritically classified under mainstream

categories of Liberal thought—specifically those coming from political science and

sociology—that tend to see the world as divided into distinctive 'political' and 'social'

spheres. The MAS is a new and unprecedented political animal in Bolivian and Latin

American politics. It represents a new form of political organization and collective action

whose morphological mutations constantly challenge existing theories in the social

sciences. The MAS is a hybrid species and, ultimately, its experience demonstrates that the political and social spheres are not separate worlds, but are deeply intertwined.

The emergence of the MAS and ascension to office of its undisputed leader, Evo Morales, has caught the attention of a great number of researchers in the social sciences. As a result, this process has been widely studied from a variety of disciplinary approaches. Some students of this self-proclaimed political instrument have described it as an 'atypical party', a 'social movement', a mere 'system of symbols', a 'political movement', and so forth. Others, while defining the MAS with a more pejorative tone, have long debated whether the MAS is "solely a movement, a federation of unions, social movements, together with a few NGOs" (Toranzo Roca 2008, 4), or a 'populist' or 'neo-populist' phenomena. According to Carlos Toranzo Roca, for example, the MAS resembles the old Latin American nationalist populisms. This is because, in his view, Morales' government is in line with "the older populisms that did not rely on institutions, but on the power of the leader. We are talking about a populism that distributes *el excedente*, in particular, directing it to its clienteles; a populism in which the ideas of anti-imperialism and nationalizations are very entrenched" (2008, 7). Following his argument, these discursive elements of the MAS (anti-imperialism, nationalism, and the defense of natural resources), as well as its practices in government, echo the experience of older nationalisms promoted by the National Revolution of 1952. By this account, the MAS would be placing too much emphasis on the construction of a utopian horizon that looks to the past for inspiration. Although Toranzo Roca recognizes that the MAS incorporates new elements to that old nationalism—particularly an indigenist discourse—

Bolivia's ruling party is only reviving, in his view, a populist model. Another proponent of this interpretation is René Antonio Mayorga, for whom the MAS represents a "conservative and archaic populism" (Mayorga 2004, 19).

This quick and ambiguous labelling is, however, insufficient to comprehend a complex object of study like the MAS. While it is true that the MAS constitutes an exceptional political creature, the question of how to adequately label this organization with conventional categories of the social sciences obscures more than it reveals about the MAS and about the Bolivian political process. It is essential to remove those obstacles to better comprehend how the MAS actually functions and to decipher what it has to offer to the social sciences as an organization of post-liberal representation.

Although many have studied the emergence of the MAS, the role of the coca-growers movement in its formation, and the leadership and biography of Evo Morales,[11] little research has been done on the MAS as an organization. This section critically examines some of the most relevant studies of the MAS produced by social scientists in Bolivia. The goals of this review are three-fold: to determine what the MAS is and what is new about its experience in Bolivian society, to outline its main characteristics and organizational features, and to identify the limitations of existing studies on the subject. In sum, this section will introduce readers to the most valuable contributions to the study

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[11] As Latin America's first 'indigenous' president and as an important embodiment of the rise to power of social movements in the region, Evo Morales has received impressive attention both within Bolivia and abroad. This is exemplified in the extensive body of biographies that have proliferated only in the past few years. Amongst them, it is worth highlighting *Jefazo*, by Argentine journalist and historian Martín Sivak (2008); see also *Un Tal Evo*, by Bolivian journalists Darwin Pinto and Roberto Navia (2007); also *Evo Morales: Primer Indígena que Gobierna en América del Sur*, by Chilean journalists Elizabeth Subercaseaux and Malú Sierra (2007).

of the MAS, which will in turn help to identify and establish some key analytical

boundaries. It is in the spirit of this investigation to provide a critical dialogue between

these studies and my own interpretations of the MAS.

1.3   First Task: Conceptualizing the MAS

What exactly is the MAS-IPSP? What is so distinctive about its trajectory? There are

numerous interpretations of its emergence and what that has represented to Latin

America's left turns.[12] For authors in the Marxist orthodoxy, such as James Petras and

Henry Veltmayer (2007; also 2005), the MAS' rise to state power by "the means of a

machinery of representative democracy and electoral politics" has represented a betrayal

to the popular movement's revolutionary aspirations (2007, 107). In their view, Morales'

reliance on electoral mechanisms has triggered an abandonment of the revolutionary

path—the direct action of the masses—and has demobilized the social movements, which

these authors regard as the sole agents of a socialist path. Reading between the lines, it is

possible to detect a strong class-bias in their analysis, as these authors seem to dismiss the

peasant movements for not being sufficiently revolutionary subjects and thus being

unable to conduct a socialist revolution. This doctrinaire approach, which is detached

from reality and presented with no empirical evidence, obscures more than it reveals

about the Bolivian process as it fails to consider the peculiarities of Bolivia's multi-

dimensional cleavage structures, the emergence of new social actors in the wake of

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[12]Although this study will refer to diverse interpretations of the Bolivian process, this review will be limited
to those relevant works that have treated the MAS strictly as an organization and as an object of study.

neoliberalism, as well as the challenges of the indigenous left which currently is in power

seeking social and political transformations. The MAS' phenomena cannot be explained

through dogmatic approaches in the Marxist tradition.

In a short book on the 'return of the nationalist left', Fernando Molina (2006; see also

Molina 2007) provides an alternative interpretation to the one provided by Petras and

Veltmayer (2007; 2005). From a liberal perspective, he proposes to look at Bolivian

history as a continuous struggle around natural resources and its profits. According to

Molina, social conflict in Bolivia is characterized by a constant struggle around the

control of these profits and the state, which, in his view, nationalists of every kind

conceive as trophies. In this sense, the MAS' emergence and trajectory is nothing

extraordinary in Bolivian society, as Morales' success can be explained as an "elective

affinity" between his own ideology and a resurgent "statist nationalism, which is the

principal and most profound ideology in Bolivia." This anti-liberal ideology, he

continues, "is entrenched in Bolivian society and only retreated during the 1990s for two

reasons: the loss of natural resources (and these resources are the ones which reactivated

the nationalist processes), and the subsequent arrival of neoliberalism."[13] Nevertheless,

with the demise of neoliberalism and the rise in price of commodities (through the middle

of 2008), nationalism is now back at the center stage.

Following his argument, Morales and the MAS have embodied the spirit of an era—the

resurgence of nationalism as a dominant ideology, the rise of commodity prices, etc—and

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[13] Author's interview with Fernando Molina, author and journalist (La Paz), 10 July 2008.

have managed to successfully adapt to its discourse a set of deeply rooted myths, symbols, and discourse of the old nationalism of the left. This notion involves an ideological continuity between 'old' and 'new' lefts, although—accounting for discontinuities—he recognizes that the MAS have developed an 'indigenist' discourse that had long been ignored by the old left. This 'new left' is comprised by a heterogeneous group of "post-modern Marxists, indianists, indigenists, ecologists, and individuals related to NGOs, as [the MAS] absorbed and consumed them all. Only the Trotskyites remain outside the MAS. […] But all the other groups have come together for two things: the rejection of neoliberalism and the belief in the necessity to re-build Bolivia." Molina's historical approach has serious limitations; in his efforts to provide a linear argument, the author fails to address some critical questions such as why and how new political subjects—i.e. the *campesino indígena*—emerged and created their own political/electoral institutions? Under which conditions have these new social actors been able to become influential in the political arena? How have the party system and its crisis contributed to the emergence of new subjects and their political formations? The above interpretations of the MAS—which are based on rigid, perhaps dogmatic, Marxist and liberal analyses—are insufficient to explain the emergence and trajectory of the MAS.

It has been widely acknowledged that the MAS has emerged from the coca-growers movement that long struggled against the US-sponsored "war on drugs," and that it has gained national prominence amidst an intense cycle of political and social agitation that roughly initiated with Bolivia's struggles against the privatization of the water utility in Cochabamba, which gave rise to a series of "commodity wars." These struggles were

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sparked as popular responses to the neoliberal model. The MAS was born in the late 1990s as a political tool for peasant and indigenous groups in the Chapare region to participate in municipal elections. Its first electoral experience as MAS-IPSP was in the municipal elections of 1999, in which the party obtained 3.3 percent of the national vote (65,425 votes), and it was in Cochabamba—specifically in the Chapare region—where it obtained the most votes. By that time, the MAS was a peasant political formation; it was a regional resistance movement with no presence in Bolivia's largest cities. But its fate as a resistance movement began to change at the turn of the century, when Bolivia entered into a period of social agitation, characterized by widespread challenge to neoliberal governance and crisis of the state and its institutions.

The spiral of social agitation roughly began in Cochabamba during April 2000, when urban and rural social movements, as well as independent residents and middle-classes, came together and initiated mobilizations against the privatization of the water utility. This came to be known as the 'water war'. Local mobilizations in Cochabamba, as well as others that took place in the highlands of La Paz-El Alto in September of the same year—under the leadership of an Aymara peasant leader, the *Mallku*[14] Felipe Quispe— strengthened the social movements and spawned an 'ideational shift' against the hegemonic aspirations of neoliberalism. This had effects countrywide. While the escalation of social unrest reflected an acute crisis of the state and put on display the limits of neoliberal governance, it also provided a strong blow to traditional political parties as dominant representative institutions, ignited the retreat of the political and

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[14] *Mallku* is the Aymara word for 'condor'. In addition, it roughly translates as 'prince' or 'leader'.

ideational right, and facilitated the incorporation of new political formations into the

formal political system. These new formations—particularly the MAS—would challenge

neoliberalism and the established groups of power that promoted that neoliberal project.

The MAS turned into a successful electoral machine in the general elections of June

2002, when it finished second in both the presidential and legislative elections (less than

two points behind the winner) and switched from street resistance to congressional

opposition.[15] It was after these elections that "history accelerated itself" in Bolivia

(Komadina and Geffroy 2007, 53-80; see also Stefanoni and Do Alto 2006, 71-98), as the

cycle of revolts rapidly triggered political change. This cycle reached a bloody peak in

October 2003, with the 'gas war' that forced the resignation of president Gonzalo 'Goni'

Sanchez de Lozada, and another peak in May-June 2005, leading this time to the

resignation of president Carlos Mesa Gisbert and the call for anticipated national

elections. Combining the direct action of masses (non-electoral politics) with an electoral

strategy proved to be a successful combination for the MAS. Morales' popularity

gradually increased during the 2003-05 period until in December 18, 2005, he won the

presidency in the first round with an unprecedented 53.7 percent of the vote.

Simultaneously, the MAS won an unprecedented majority in the Chamber of deputies

(Romero Ballivián 2006b). Seven months later, in June 2006, the MAS conquered a

majority of the electorate in the elections for the constituent assembly, staying barely

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[15] The MAS obtained 8 senators and 27 deputies in the 2002 elections. Although Morales and three other deputies of the MAS were elected to Congress in 1997 and gained congressional experience (institutional capital) since then, their roles during the first term (1998-2003) were closely linked to non-institutional politics. In 2002, during his first term, Morales was expelled from Congress after being accused of leading violent protests against government-sponsored coca eradication campaigns. This incident, however, only helped to boost Morales' popular support and explains, at least in part, why the MAS performed so well in the 2002 elections. It was in these elections that *masistas* multiplied themselves in Congress and when the MAS assumed the role of congressional opposition.

above 50 percent and gaining 53.7 percent of the seats for the assembly (Romero

Ballivián 2006a). More recently, the MAS imposed itself in elections for the recall

referendum of August 2008 with 2,103,872 votes (67.41 percent of those who voted), and

also managed to approve its most ambitious project—the reform of the political

constitution of the state—in the constitutional referendum of January 2009, when it

received 2,064,417 votes (61.43 percent of those who voted). Roughly ten years after its

birth in the Chapare, the MAS is now *the* dominant political force in the country.

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If a political party is "any group that presents at elections, and is capable of placing

through elections, candidates to higher office" (Sartori 1976, 64), then the MAS is a

political party. However, due to the particular conditions of its emergence as a peasant

resistance movement and its peculiar (and rapid) rise to state power, it has become clear

that the MAS transcends the minimalist definition of a political party, although it has

adapted itself to that institutional form in order to participate in a representative

democracy. Conversely, it cannot be defined simply as a social movement because,

through its electoral participation, it goes beyond that notion.

Turning to the party's perceptions of itself, party leaders at every level, both in urban and

rural settings, agree to define the MAS as a "political instrument" of the peasant

indigenous movements, rather than a political party. They usually associate parties with

institutions that, in their opinion and experience, divide rather than unite popular forces.

The instrument is, in this view, a political extension of a group of social organizations that triggered its creation as a tactical move whereby participation in the electoral process could contribute to complete self-representation in the formal political system. These organizations are the 'founding fathers' (and mothers) of the instrument, and they claim to *own* it: the CSUTCB,[16] the CSCB,[17] the CIDOB,[18] and the FNMCB-BC.[19] This idea, which implies a sort of continuity between the social movement and the electoral institution, was advanced in detail by Alvaro García Linera in *Sociología de los Movimientos Sociales en Bolivia* (see García Linera, Chávez León, and Costa Monje 2004, 448-455). As will be noted throughout this investigation, while appealing, this notion is imprecise. On the one hand, it is true that the lines that separate the party and the founding organizations are diffuse or, as some may argue, that the party and the movements are completely united. On the other hand, the MAS is more than an electoral appendage of the peasant organizations in the Cochabamba tropics, and it is more than the political extension of a social movement, as it now represents not only those who founded the instrument but a much broader coalition of social forces. Given the latter characteristic, the logical question is this: is the MAS-IPSP merely a political party with a different name?

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[16]The Unique Confederation of Rural Laborers of Bolivia is the principal labor organization of *campesino* (peasant) workers in Bolivia.

[17]The Bolivian Syndicalist Confederation of Colonizers is the main organization of the Reconstituted Native Peoples of Bolivia, often known as 'colonizers'.

[18]The Confederation of Indigenous Peoples of Bolivia is a national organization that represents the indigenous peoples of Bolivia.

[19]The Bolivian National Federation of Peasant Women—Bartolina Sisa is Bolivia's largest indigenous women's organization.

In *De la Coca al Palacio: Una Oportunidad para la Izquierda Indígena*, Pablo Stefanoni

and Hervé Do Alto demonstrate that the MAS is not a closed ideological community, as

could be exemplified by conventional parties of the left. They reach this conclusion after

having examined the variegated nature of the MAS' discourse, which they find combines

effectively three currents of Bolivian political thought: *Indianismo*, Marxism, and

Revolutionary Nationalism. What is more interesting about the MAS, however, is that

unlike what often occurs in highly-institutionalized parties, "the ideological lines are not

expressed as internal currents, but as 'personal' positions of its [*masista*] leaders, as is the

case when in *masista* congresses every representative exposes his or her positions without

clashing with other positions causing a political/ideological debate" (Stefanoni and Do

Alto 2006, 65). In part, this explains why the MAS has not yet been able to consolidate a

fixed or rigid political doctrine (it may not intend to do so) and why it resists being

categorized into clear-cut typologies.

It should be highlighted that, although divided among each other, a vast majority of MAS

leaders concur in defending representative democracy and the constitutional order, if only

because they understand them as 'popular conquests'. Stefanoni and Do Alto suggest

that, in such a context, the MAS represents a "'reformist' left that promotes a

'decolonization of power' and the re-nationalization of both the economy and the state

(which is perceived as dominated by external interests), and that operates, with tensions,

in the institutional and extra-institutional arenas" (2006, 69). With great risk of over-

simplification, and because the MAS' leaders articulate their discourse around nationalist

claims and often color it with Marxist rhetoric, these authors conclude that the MAS may be characterized as a representation of the "nationalism of the left" (2006, 69).

A recent contribution by Jorge Komadina and Celine Geffroy, *El Poder del Movimiento Político*, proposes an alternative vision. These authors define the MAS neither as a political party nor as a social movement. For these authors it is more accurate to describe the MAS as a "political movement" because it "operates between the boundaries of civil society and the political arena in a double direction: it codifies and projects both the mobilizations and the representations of diverse social organizations toward the institutionalized political arena. It does so by participating in electoral processes, even while it aspires to transform the rules of the political game" (Komadina and Geffroy 2007, 20). Hence, the novelty of the MAS is that it has one foot in the political/institutional context of a democratic regime and the other in the 'social' sphere. It combines two forms of political action—electoral representation and direct social pressure—and, in doing so, it permeates the boundaries of the two spheres. Along these lines, Do Alto claims that "depending on the scenario where members of the political instrument operate, they tend to adopt logics of action more related to the political arena or to the space of the social movements; however, depending on what political context they operate, the instrument *as a whole* tends to privilege one scenario to the other, that is, the political arena in times of stability and the space of social movements in times of crisis" (2007a, 108--emphasis added).

More than a product of political engineering, the MAS is the product of Bolivia's

singular historical, political, and social forces that converged into the great cycle of

protests initiated in the early 2000s with the 'water war'. In such a context, the MAS was

the only force able to articulate multiple demands and—perhaps most importantly—able

to effectively accommodate a tumultuous era. By achieving some degree of

institutionalization and bringing one of its leaders to the center of the scene, the MAS'

experience has forced scholars in various disciplines to re-think institutions and how

these interact with non-institutionalized channels for collective action.

As a political movement playing within the institutional constraints of a representative

democracy, the MAS can also be understood as a party yet-to-be-institutionalized. On

the one hand, it is profoundly entrenched in the rural peasant unions from which it

emerged and was conceived. The links to these popular organizations have shaped its

trajectory (organizational forms, discourse, political praxis, and so forth). On the other

hand, it currently holds the reins of Bolivia's central government and an extensive

number of municipalities and departmental governments, and it also controls the lower

legislative chamber. This provides the party with a decisive voice within formal political

channels. The sum of these two elements, which permeates the boundaries of the social

and the political and gives the MAS its peculiar characteristics, may provide the party

with comparative advantages over other political forces; it also may impose a host of

challenges, one of which is the MAS' ability to endure over time. This conundrum will

depend upon the levels of institutionalization the party is able achieve, and it seems

critical for students of the MAS to sort out what key variables for this process may be (see also Do Alto 2007a). The present investigation takes a step in that direction.

1.4   Preliminary Considerations about the MAS as an Organization

What are the key organizational features of the MAS? The above mentioned work by Komadina and Geffroy (2007) offers valuable insights into how the MAS is structured in the Department of Cochabamba, where it was founded, and their conclusions are applicable beyond this department as well. These authors provide a historical-institutional perspective and examine the MAS' organizational transformations throughout different conjunctures. Because the MAS has effectively combined two forms of collective action since its origins—social mobilizations and institutional representation—these authors suggest that it has a sort of 'dual structure'. In their view, one pillar of this structure, which was originally entrenched in the founding organizations and now includes a broader coalition of social forces, is highly institutionalized. The other pillar, in urban areas where popular organizations are not as widespread and influential, consists of a relatively conventional party structure, especially during electoral processes. As will be shown in the current investigation, this yet-to-be-institutionalized structure corresponds, albeit precariously, to the political/administrative divisions of the country. Its links to urban and rural social organizations are usually not formalized and, in many cases, remain weak. It seems important to point out that the boundaries between these two structures are often unclear, and that they are in constant

redefinition. What seems clear, however, is that Evo Morales has long been at the core of

both of these two structures. It can be argued that even today, in the absence of a

consolidated party and institutionalized leadership channels, he performs both an

"organizational function" which consists of "relating groups, leaders, and resources" and

a "symbolic function" which consists of "permanently signifying the frontiers that

separate the MAS from its adversaries" (Komadina and Geffroy 2007, 144). In sum,

Morales acts as *the* centralizing force of the movement.

In addition, the progressive accumulation of "institutional capital" after continuous

electoral successes has helped to configure a relatively stable party bureaucracy with

"functions, positions, hierarchies, legislative imperatives, and with a broad autonomy vis-

à-vis the union structure" (García Linera, Chávez León, and Costa Monje 2004, 433).

Komadina and Geffroy (2007), as well as Do Alto in a separate study (2007a), concur in

recognizing that the configuration of this 'parliamentary brigade' constitutes a serious

challenge for the popular movement and an obstacle to the practice of *mandar*

obedeciendo / "rule by obeying" that Morales anticipated beginning with his first

presidential discourses (Movimiento al Socialismo 2006, 43). According to Freya

Schiwy, "Governing by obeying means that if the organizations and social movements

that brought Morales to power find him failing to pursue their decisions, they are likely to

force the president to step down" (Schiwy 2008, 2). But there is more to it. In theory,

the adscription to this practice also supposes a more active participation of the social

bases in the formulation and—to a lesser extent in practice—the correction of public

policies. In this view, Morales is not a representative of his social bases, but just the

embodiment of their rise to state power. While it is true that Morales' social bases have remained mobilized during his government and have not been paralyzed as Petras and others claim, this Zapatista formula is, at the same time, one of the many discursive and symbolic tools set forth as the MAS qualitatively shifted from being a social movement to being the government. This discursive strategy is based on the necessity to maintain strong links between the MAS (now the government) and the social movements that facilitated its rise to power; it is also founded on the need to demonstrate that this particular government is in the antipodes of older schemes of governability that ruled the country. Following Komadina and Geffroy, one could read that a challenge to this formula comes from an ongoing process of concentration of power, epitomized through the "*oligarchization* of the party headship, which subsequently takes decisions that diverge from popular mandates, usually culminating in a sort of confiscation of the representation" (2007, 99--emphasis in the original). And according to Do Alto, this oligarchization is of a "monocratic" kind, as "parallel to a process of concentration of power in the hands of a relatively stable and homogeneous group, there exists an evident personification of the political power […] through the figure of Evo Morales" (2007a, 84).

Returning to Komadina and Geffroy's argument, it was with the above-mentioned dual structure that the MAS participated in the national elections of 2005. In addition, it celebrated and formalized alliances with other social organizations in exchange for support. Arguably, whereas these organizations have found in the MAS a place to

advance their corporate interests, the MAS has found in them a possibility to expand its

social base, especially in urban settings.[20]

In his article "*El MAS-IPSP Boliviano: Entre la Protesta Callejera y la Política

Institucional*" Hervé Do Alto seeks to understand the implications of what he calls the

"multi-dimensionality" of the MAS. Although this author provides a historical

perspective on the MAS trajectory, he is more concerned with the context initiated in

December 2005: how only ten years after its foundation in the Chapare, and later

embodying broad popular aspirations amidst an intense cycle of protests, the MAS had

become the new face of the Bolivian government. This fact, in his view, has resulted in a

series of unanticipated consequences, not only for Bolivian democracy but also

particularly in terms of "the configuration of the political instrument" (Do Alto 2007a,

101). In this new context, the MAS displays three basic "evolutions," which are all

interconnected, and which are consequences of the peculiar conditions of its emergence.

First, the MAS "is a fragile party structure and is barely institutionalized, having

innumerable *ad hoc* structures whose prerogatives often clash, both at the base-level and

at the leadership level" (2007a, 101). Second, "it is a party whose cadres have very little

experience in public management" (2007a, 102). As has been shown, the MAS only

obtained a significant number of seats in Congress in the not-too distant 2002 elections,

when it became the second political force of the country and the first opposition.

Congress has served as an elementary 'institutional school' for *masista* legislators, as

many of them assumed office with no prior parliamentary or public management

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[20] Komadina and Geffroy's work, however, is limited to 2005 and does not attempt to study the MAS after it gained control of the government.

experience. Third, because the MAS is a party whose emergence occurred during a cycle of popular protests and mobilizations, the configuration of links between government and popular organizations is peculiar. At the time of Do Alto's writing, which was about a year after Morales took power, the relations between the government and social organizations "seem[ed] to reflect the characteristics of the social movements, also demonstrating a variable loyalty toward the government which depends upon the context in which they act" (2007a, 102). On the one hand, the MAS and its social organizations have not abandoned street politics and their action repertoires; but on the other hand, the MAS now needs to abide by the rules of the institutional game. In other words, Morales and the MAS now straddle the line between street and institutional politics.

In such context, as Do Alto concludes, the MAS as an organization "does not seem to find a certain point of institutionalization [...] insofar as its organizations at the base-level continue acting under an anti-establishment logic in spite of the parallel consolidation of a party apparatus" (2007a, 109). At the moment of my writing, in March 2009, his conclusions still seem applicable, as the MAS has not yet achieved high levels of institutionalization. Some of the organizations that comprise the party and its coalition still act under anti-establishment and corporatist logic, which explains why the MAS is so susceptible to what occurs in the extra-institutional realm of the social movements. It may also explain why there is so much tension between the formal institutional channels of representation and what occurs on the street-level. As a double-headed organization, the MAS operates simultaneously in these two environments.

One of the most significant scholarly contributions about the MAS in the political

conjuncture initiated with its rise to power is *Movimientos Sociales en Tiempos de Poder,*

by María Teresa Zegada, Yuri Torres and Gloria Cámara (2008). This study promotes

thinking about social movements *from* institutional channels of power, and of re-thinking

patterns of state-society relations. To its credit, the study identifies a critical puzzle for

Bolivian democracy: whether the MAS is a government led by social movements, as it

claims to be. To answer this question, the authors look at the organizational patterns of

the MAS as well as the links between the party and the social movements. In the end,

they suggest that there are three basic linkage patterns in the new context: (1)

subordination to the party—specifically by those organizations that are organically tied to

the party—which is expressed through the "physical occupation of spaces of power;" (2)

consensus with the general lines of the party, albeit not exempt of criticism, and which

depends on the conjuncture; and (3) open confrontation, specifically between the MAS

and regional civic movements.

Returning to their initial question, they conclude that the self-declared "government of

the social movements" is simply an ambiguous rhetorical formula that possesses some

symbolic power. The composition of the MAS' government and its articulations with

social movements is "based on a network of alliances with peasant and urban workers'

organizations, but it is not based on an organic structure that may lead to consider it as a

'government of the social movements' (Zegada, Torrez, and Cámara 2008, 55). The

authors find it hard to identify a project, strategy, and synergy, which may be

characteristic to social movements. They also find the MAS organization to be volatile, flexible, and subject to changes in face of each particular conjuncture.

Moira Zuazo's *¿Cómo Nació el MAS? La Ruralización de la Política en Bolivia* is, at the moment of this writing in March 2009, the latest—and perhaps the only—book to focus exclusively on the MAS organization as an object of study. It is valuable in that it goes beyond the study of the social organizations that comprise the MAS and treats it as a more complex entity. Based on 85 structured interviews with members of the 'parliamentary brigade', who are often stigmatized and considered less legitimate by the social movements, the ambition of this study is to comprehend how the MAS organization works internally. Further underscoring the value of this contribution, the collected testimonies constitute a unique source of documentation of the diverse social groups and geographical diversity mirrored through this organization, an invaluable source of primary data that will be used in the current investigation. However, in its ambition to collect such profound diversity of testimonies and link them to the internal dynamics of the organization, Zuazo's study falls into an intellectual trap: it places heavy emphasis on the organization of the MAS in rural areas and it thus fails to make a clear connection between this and the urban organization. Moreover, this study has a major methodological shortcoming that my own research seeks to overcome: the interviews of parliamentary members were rigid, structured, and were not conducted by the author. It could be argued, from various angles, that the data collected through this methodological strategy risks being, at a minimum, imprecise.

1.5 An Alternative Analytical Proposal

As noted elsewhere, much has been written about the MAS and about the current Bolivian process. Notwithstanding the existence of a heterogeneous body of literature on the MAS, little research has been carried out on its structure in the city of La Paz[21] and virtually nothing has been written about the MAS in El Alto. These two cities in the Western Bolivian highlands are very important to national politics, as they currently hold the locus of political power in Bolivian democracy. They achieved international prominence—La Paz in September 2000 and El Alto in October 2003—when residents of these cities took to the streets and confronted military forces that occupied these spaces. Urban residents were central to the various mobilizations that had rendered the country ungovernable for several years, and they became key actors for the resignation of president 'Goni' Sanchez de Lozada in 2003 and Carlos Mesa Gisbert in 2005. Thereafter, the MAS' rapid political advance at the national level and its subsequent ascent to state power has had much to do with the—electoral and nonelectoral—behavior of the residents of these cities. La Paz and El Alto are now bastions of electoral support for the MAS. It was in these urban areas where the MAS received overwhelming popular support in the 2005 national elections that brought Evo Morales to office, as well as in the elections for the constituent assembly of 2006, in the recall referendum held on August 2008, and in the recent constitutional referendum that took place in January 2009.

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[21] For a lucid exemption, an ethnographic account of the MAS in La Paz, see Do Alto 2006.

Given this key linkage, it is particularly striking that there are few studies on these cities, and especially considering that Bolivia is a predominantly urban country and that the widely studied cycles of political and social agitation in fact rely heavily upon urban environments. In addition to these gaps in the literature, no researcher has focused on the party's informal patterns of organization in those areas.[22] As a result, the knowledge of how this organization actually functions in such urban settings is quite limited, and this comes at some conceptual and theoretical cost.

This thesis aims to fill some of those gaps. It seeks to contribute to the literature on Latin America's 'Left Turns' by providing a thorough account of how the MAS, an unprecedented vehicle of democratic representation and participation, operates on the ground. The emphasis on informal institutions will help to understand how the MAS and the progressive forces relate to it, as well as how the MAS has formed and maintained its electoral coalition. Finally, it will help to understand the prospects for its institutionalization, which are critical to ensure its endurance over time.

1.6   Field Considerations and Methodological Strategies

As my first field work experience in Bolivia began to unfold, I rapidly came to realize that studying the MAS in the urban areas of La Paz and El Alto would represent a series

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[22] The focus on informal party organization is inspired by the work of Steven Levistky on the Argentine *Justicialista* (Peronist) Party organization. See Levitsky 2001; see also Freidenberg and Levitsky 2006, 178-197. 29-66; also Helmke and Levitsky 2006, 1-30, and Helmke and Levitsky 2004, 725-740

of daunting challenges. When I arrived in the Bolivian Western highlands of La Paz, I knew hardly anyone related to my research. Luckily, a few days after my arrival, I managed to find and rent a room at a house in *Sopocachi Alto*, a middle-class neighborhood in La Paz. It was at that house where I started my fieldwork, after my host mother claimed she knew "an important person" at the *Superintendencia Agraria*. Ana María, my host mother, did in fact introduce me to the *Superintendenta* herself, Esther Ballerstaedt, who became my first interviewee as well as the first person to show clear signs of skepticism after I had enthusiastically revealed the purposes and goals of my research.

"I came here to study the organizational structure of the MAS in the urban areas of La Paz," I said in response to her first set of questions. Timidly, perhaps a little surprised, she continued with the one phrase I was not anticipating in my first encounter with someone deeply involved with the MAS, Evo, and the ongoing *proceso de cambios*. With a sarcastic tone, she said, "I'm not sure I'm following you. It [the MAS] does not have any structure that I know of. It is a party without a party, and without a structure [...] besides, if you want to study the MAS, you'd be better off going to the Chapare in Cochabamba, where it was born."[23] Clearly, she had made a good remark by pointing out that foundational fact: as will be seen with great detail the MAS has indeed a birth mark which has shaped its trajectory up to date. However, I felt that an argument like hers was rather incomplete and misleading. It was incomplete because, while it could be useful to focus on the place where the *instrumento* was born, studying the MAS

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[23] Author's interview with Esther Ballerstaedt (La Paz), July 2, 2008.

exclusively from the Chapare would not help to understand its growing presence in national politics and how it inserted itself the often-unexplored urban environments. In addition, such an argument indirectly confines the MAS to being a peasant party, which only operates in the Chapare. As a consequence, it ignores the diverse organizational forms the MAS effectively takes, a significant component of its electoral and mobilizational base, as well as the wide array of social groups it has come to represent. Despite my stance on *where* to study the MAS, this contention—that to understand the MAS I should conduct my research in the Chapare—was surprisingly a constant amongst a number of colleagues and political actors, both within and outside the MAS.[24]

Was I really in the wrong place? Would it be meaningless to study the MAS, a political instrument that emerged in the rural areas of the Chapare, in the urban areas of La Paz? Was the Chapare the only place from which to study the MAS organization? What was this the most proper field to carry out primary research on this party? Those anxieties were logical for a newcomer but, to a considerable extent, arguably unfounded. The Chapare was indeed the place where the MAS had emerged and which indelibly shaped its organizational forms and political practices. However, it is precisely the flexible organizational characteristics it adopted from its inception that facilitates its distinctiveness in each geographical space. As has already been shown, the MAS is no longer a peasant party constrained to the rural areas of the Bolivian tropics; it has spread

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[24]As I did not want to challenge her views in my first encounter, she gave me more room to discussion. A bit later, as I was slowly gaining her trust—that is, after she had asked me a number of questions about my nationality, occupation, and the like—she confessed that she was not *masista* but that she did "accompany the *proceso de cambios* led by our president Evo Morales, whom I deeply respect and admire." As the conversation continued, I began to understand that one of the reasons she was not aware that the MAS does indeed have an organizational structure was precisely because of that; because she was an '*invitada*', that is, a person single-handedly appointed by Morales (or in consultation with his closest allies) who does not necessarily belong to or has ever militated in the formal structures of the MAS.

to the cities, articulated the demands of urban social organizations, won a parliamentary

majority in the lower chamber, and is actually *the* national political force that holds the

reins of the Bolivian government. Having considered all of these elements, I was

convinced of my methodological strategy and, despite the criticisms noted above, I

believed I was in the right place. I was also certain that despite its rural origins, the MAS

was not merely a political force operating in the rural areas of the Chapare and that,

indeed, it did have an organizational structure in the cities.

In fact, it is in the cities of La Paz and El Alto (also in Cochabamba, but for reasons of

scope it is not addressed in this study) where the MAS has achieved its highest—and

relatively stable—electoral support, as proven in recurrent electoral cycles since

November 2005.[25] What organizational forms does the MAS take in such urban areas?

How is the MAS related to other social organizations and parties of the left? What kind

of linkages has it tried to forge with different sectors of society? What kind of informal

interactions have emerged between MAS and society? What political practices has the

MAS put in place in urban areas? What are the implications for the Bolivian democracy

in this current post-(neo)liberal period?

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[25] Since November 2005, these two cities have become bastions of electoral support for the MAS. In those national elections, the MAS obtained 222,533 votes (56 percent of those who voted) in the city of La Paz. In El Alto, the MAS received 236,015 votes (77 percent). Seven months later, in the elections for representatives to the Constituent Assembly, the MAS imposed itself in these two cities, receiving 561,009 votes in the department of La Paz (63.892 percent). In the recall referendum held on August 10, 2008, Morales obtained 274,269 votes in (67.25 percent) in the city of La Paz. In El Alto, on the other hand, Morales obtained an overbearing triumph with 311,633 votes (91.14 percent). More recently, in the constitutional referendum held on January 25, 2009, Morales managed to push forward a new constitution of the state. In the city of La Paz, the constitution was approved with 262,180 votes (60.20 percent); in El Alto, it was approved with 317,651 (85.87 percent). Information retrieved from Bolivia's CNE on March 26, 2009.

This thesis seeks to answer the above questions and is based on the combination of extensive use of secondary sources and primary field work, the latter carried out in the Bolivian cities of La Paz and El Alto between July and September, 2008. On the one hand, the use of secondary sources was useful to analyze the emergence of the MAS, reconstruct its historical trajectory and rise to power, and to trace its emergence in the cities of La Paz and El Alto. During my field work, on the other hand, I used the following tactics for collecting qualitative data:

> **1)** *Conducting in-depth interviews* with key informants who are (or were) involved with the organization of the MAS. I interviewed academics, leaders of social organizations linked to the MAS, party leaders at the national, regional, and local levels, legislators who represent the urban areas being studied, *dirigentes intermedios*, and party militants at the *distritos zonales*. The participants were both men and women and were selected based on their belonging to different levels within the party structure and its ancillary organizations. The complete list of interviewees is included in the Appendix and although most of them graciously accepted that their names be included in this text, others preferred to remain anonymous. In such cases I note that their names are fictional.

> The diversity of the interviewees reflects a plurality of accounts. The semi-structured in-depth interviews focused on life stories and the political trajectories of the interviewees, stories that helped me to understand how the actors perceived the organizational structure of the MAS at the local level, and how that organization was related to the national instances. The questions also sought to capture which perceptions regarding the political practices that operate within the organization prevail among the participants.

2) *Conducting institutional ethnography*[26] in party offices of the MAS, which helped me to understand the ways in which power is distributed amidst the organization at the local level. In these offices, I also looked at internal party documents, such as registration books, membership forms, and memorandums. At all times, I was allowed to record conversations between members as well as my informal conversations with local party authorities. When appropriate, I was also allowed to take pictures and notes as needed.

3) *Participating in party meetings* as an observer. For a period of two months, I participated in several party meetings as a silent observer in the *distrito zonal* six, in Villa Copacabana, La Paz. Observing these meetings permitted me to better understand the inner workings of the regional district, its decision-making and problem-solving processes, and the internal mechanisms for deliberation; they also helped me to capture the main topics discussed in the meetings and how they relate to the wider party organization.

I took notes and occasionally taped meetings upon agreement by the organizers and participants. Before the meetings, I usually conducted unstructured interviews with organizers, which provided me some insights on organizational and mobilizational issues. Later, after the meetings were done, I generally conducted semi-structured and unstructured interviews of organizers and participants to complement my observations. These interviews permitted me to capture spontaneous reactions to the underlying topics discussed during the meetings.

4) *Document gathering*. I gathered information of the MAS' organizational structure from the MAS-IPSP official website (http://www.masbolivia.org/). There, and also in the CNE's website (http://www.cne.org.bo/), I had access

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[26] Institutional ethnography consists of the use of interviewing as a "part of an approach designed for the investigation of organizational and institutional processes […] In this alternative to conventional forms of interview research, investigators use informants' accounts not as windows on the informants' inner experience but in order to reveal 'the relations of ruling' that shape experiences" (DeVault and McCoy 2004, 191).

to the party statutes, which I contrasted to what really happens "on the ground." I also collected other relevant documentation like the official publication of the MAS, the periodical *Soberanía*, which provided fruitful insights on the strategies carried out to build the "political instrument" since its inception.

I analyzed the primary qualitative data by producing content analysis of primary documents and interviews.

Finally, I complemented my primary fieldwork by reading the major Bolivian newspapers, magazines, and local journals on a daily basis and by looking at previous editions. These sources include: *La Razón* (La Paz), *El Diario* (La Paz), *El Alteño* (El Alto), *Bolpress* (La Paz), *Pulso* (La Paz), *Nueva Crítica y Buen Gobierno* (La Paz). This tactic was aimed at helping me understand the conjuncture as well as the previous political processes in which the MAS-IPSP had been involved. Some of the material I collected through this means is included to support my general arguments.

1.7 Structure of the Thesis

This thesis is divided into four chapters. This introductory chapter reviews the most relevant interpretations about the MAS, and lays the conceptual and methodological groundwork for this thesis. Chapter 2 discusses the origins and contemporary structure of the MAS organization. To explain how this organization is structured, this chapter analyzes the peculiar conditions of its emergence arguing that these have shaped indelibly

its organizational features. I argue that the MAS is currently at a *movement stage* and is currently building a base-level infrastructure, which at the moment of this writing is essentially informal, decentralized, and remains to be institutionalized. Chapter 3 explores how the MAS functions in the cities of La Paz and El Alto. While it is true that the MAS has emerged from peasant and indigenous social movements in rural areas, these two cities are currently bastions of its electoral support. The MAS is no longer a peasant political formation. The thesis concludes in Chapter 4 by providing some final reflections on the MAS as an institution of post-(neo)liberal representation and participation and on the implications of this flexible and dynamic organization to Bolivian democracy.

CHAPTER 2: The Emergence of the MAS and its Contemporary Structure: An Anatomy of its Organizational Features

2.1 Preliminary Considerations

Drawing on secondary sources and on primary data collected during my fieldwork on the MAS organization, this section examines how the MAS is organized internally and how it functions in practice. I trace the origins of the MAS and outline the implications of its emergence to its contemporary structure, arguing throughout the chapter that its singular birth and distinctive historical trajectory have shaped, perhaps forever, its organizational patterns as a political instrument. As outlined in the introduction, some accounts pejoratively portray the MAS government as 'populist' because, in some authors' view, Evo Morales and the MAS are echoes of an 'archaic' or, borrowing Petkoff's terminology (2005), a 'bourbon' populism (see Toranzo 2008; also Mayorga 2004). Following this view, the MAS government simply echoes the 1952 MNR-led National Revolution, as it is leading statist economic policies and has hegemonic aspirations. Evo is labeled as populist among other reasons because his personalistic form of leadership is often unmediated, is directed against the political establishment, and occurs in the absence of a bureaucratic party structure and institutional channels of interest intermediation. According to this view, Evo represents the 'anti-politics'. While it is

undeniable that Morales is a charismatic leader, that he has clearly concentrated power in his hands, and that he frequently incurs unmediated relationships with the masses, I challenge the 'populist' view by arguing that Evo's leadership is rooted in social mobilization from below which, at times, imposes constraints on his leadership. In addition, the MAS, which is at a *movement stage*, is building a base-level infrastructure— at this moment one that is informal and decentralized. This party infrastructure, together with the social movement one, turns the MAS into a very powerful political organization and creates accountability mechanisms that—still more rhetorically than in practice—can check the leadership's power. This occurs under a new proposed way of governability which seeks to emulate the Zapatista formula of ruling by obeying.

Following Levitsky and Roberts (2008), the government of Evo Morales and the MAS exemplifies a sub-type of Latin American leftist politics that, for lack of a better term, could be labeled as *movement left*. In their view, as opposed to populism and neopopulism, this kind of left "represents the emergence of a new political force that displaces traditional party organizations" (Levitsky and Roberts 2008, 17). Moreover, "its political leadership is directly spawned by, and largely accountable to, popular movements organized from below" (2008, 17). With that framework in mind, the MAS stands as an 'ideal type' of leftist politics, that is, in the Weberian sense of the term. As will be shown with greater detail in this chapter, the MAS is a newly created party that came to power only ten years after its inception. It has emerged from autonomous rural and peasant social movements that have long struggled against neoliberalism and the eradication of coca crops, as well as to control Bolivia's wealth of natural resources.

These movements spawned a party—dubbed a 'political instrument'—that in a quick succession of elections was capable of gaining state power. But there is more to this story. The MAS' emergence and continuous success in the electoral arena is also a by-product of a particular institutional configuration, which facilitated the formation of new parties and allowed their incorporation into the institutional (electoral) game. Amidst severe crisis of democratic representation, the above noted social and popular movements led a series of mass mobilizations that forced two presidents to resign. The MAS managed to articulate a coalition with these groups, to use the rules of the game to its advantage, and to finally reach electoral majorities in the December 2005 national elections.

This chapter provides some empirical evidence and analytical reflections that add to the above category developed by Levitsky and Roberts. By providing a detailed account of the MAS experience, the central purpose of this chapter is to contribute to the larger debate about the role of parties and social movements in the Latin American 'Left Turns'. Because the contemporary structure of the MAS has been indelibly shaped by its peculiar emergence, I first examine the origins of this structure. After assessing the birth of the MAS, I then turn to exploring how this organization works internally.

2.2 A Necessary Stop: A Glance at Bolivian Political History (1952-present)

Bolivia has a long and convoluted history that cannot be told in a single chapter and a comprehensive history of Bolivia would go well beyond the scope of this thesis. But there are some elements of its republican period (1825-present) that need to be addressed to better comprehend the emergence of the MAS and its contemporary structure. It is in this spirit that the following section will succinctly review Bolivian political history. For reasons of scope, this story begins with the 1952 National Revolution as this revolution represented a 'critical juncture' in Bolivia's twentieth century.[27] Not only would this revolution spur significant and lasting social, political and institutional change; it would also serve as a point of reference for future revolutionary movements.

The National Revolution was led by the MNR, which in its origins in the early 1940s was a center-left political party organized around middle-class professionals, urban intellectuals and students. Guided by the party, the revolution spearheaded as a social upheaval by its radically mobilized workers and peasants allies. According to Hylton and Thomson, "It was the powerful mobilization of these subaltern groups that swept away the remnants of the old order: landlords in the countryside, the *rosca* elite and its retinue in the mining centers and the capital, as well as the repressive apparatus of the state"

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[27] I borrow this concept from David Collier and Ruth Berins Collier, for whom a 'critical juncture' is defined as "a period of significant change, which typically occurs in distinct ways in different countries (or other units of analysis) and which is hypothesized to produce distinct legacies" (Collier and Collier 1991, 29).

(Hylton and Thomson 2007, 77).[28] The MNR came to power in 1952 and, with state

power in its hands, it implemented a set of 'revolutionary' or 'populist' policies. During

the first twelve years of the revolutionary process (1952-1964), for example, the MNR

decreed and implemented a far-reaching land reform and nationalized the major tin

mines. In an effort to organize society along class lines, successive MNR governments

denied multiculturalism (for example, by eliminating of the word *indio* from the lexicon

and replacing it with *campesino*) and promoted public schooling while imposing, in an

assimilationist fashion, the use of Spanish as the sole language of instruction (forcible

Hispanization). And in an effort to incorporate the countryside into the formal political

system, the MNR instituted universal suffrage and expanded civil rights to the

'peasantry'. According to Yashar (2005), the MNR class-based transformative project

was institutionalized by the land reform and through the emergence of corporatist peasant

unions. In her view, this resulted in the expansion of a corporatist citizenship regime

which became consequential in the emergence of future indigenous movements and their

relationship to parties and the state.

In successive governments, the MNR sought to transform the countryside through an

extensive agrarian reform. Indian peasants largely benefited from the reforms, as these

gave them access to lands as well as freedom from landlords and a more flexible labor

regime. Along with these changes, agrarian policies "coincided with an effort to create

corporatist modes of interest intermediation – part of which included the

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[28] The *Rosca* (small kernel) was the popular term for the small oligarchy composed by three tin mining companies. It is frequently argued that this group largely dictated state policy in the pre-revolutionary period.

institutionalization of peasant unions that were formed in decades prior to the MNR

governments" (Yashar 2005, 159). In part as an effort to build hegemony, the MNR

sought to transform indigenous communities into peasant trade unions. Although the

creation of these 'unions' did not erode every local community institution, it initiated an

era of MNR hegemony over indigenous peasant communities. But this hegemony was

not circumscribed to indigenous peasant communities. The MNR also attempted to

capture corporate interests of popular organizations within its structure, and its scheme of

interest representation "included a logic aimed at co-opting functional groups (such as

labor, *campesinos*, private sector, etc) into a single party structure" (Gamarra 2003, 294).

It thus initiated an era of corporatist representation and weak linkages between parties

and society that would be in effect, under democratic and authoritarian regimes, until the

mid-1980s. As the MNR and other parties claimed exclusive prerogatives for

representing societal interests, political parties stood as *the* sole mediator between

organized society and the state.

According to Eduardo Gamarra (2003, 294), "the MNR's reliance on a corporatist

scheme of representation subsequently conditioned the way in which all contemporary

political parties attempted to establish intermediation links with the electorate."

Logically, this functional-corporatist scheme has simultaneously been consequential for

civil society organizations, as these institutions have also organized themselves along

corporatist lines. As the state, moreover, had turned into an *estado empresario* during the

post-revolutionary period, and as parties became vehicles to capture state resources for

patronage and patrimonial distribution, the fate of civil society organizations became

dependent on parties. One of the most significant cases of this type of relationship was the one between the MNR and the Bolivian Worker's Central (*Central Obrera Boliviana,* or COB). This confederation of labor unions maintained autonomy from the MNR which, not surprisingly, was one of the principal sectors to challenge the government once the corporativist arrangements were dismantled during the mid-1980s. Parties in post-revolutionary Bolivia have failed to represent interests of civil society and build programmatic and ideological linkages. This legacy of the National Revolution would have lasting consequences in terms of social and political organization.

The National Revolution suffered a series of setbacks after 1964, when a coup d'état brought an authoritarian regime to power. Between 1964 and 1978, counter-revolutionary regimes dominated the political arena. But the MNR's hegemony was challenged not only by counter-revolutionary regimes but also by groups of peasants and workers that did not have ties to the party as well as by the emergence of new political parties. While authoritarian regimes sought to control the peasantry by what came to be known as the 'military-peasant pact', some groups with no commitments to parties or the military developed degrees of autonomy vis-à-vis parties and the state. And as a result, political currents of *indianismo* and *katarismo* quickly developed. At the same time, key political parties came into existence: the Revolutionary Left Movement (*Movimiento de Izquierda Revolucionaria*, or MIR) and the Nationalist Democratic Action (*Acción Democrática Nacionalista*, or ADN). But parties failed as intermediaries between state and society, as this role was matched and at times undermined by both the COB and the military. Years later, the MNR, MIR and ADN would be partners in the construction of

the 'pacted democracy' that, together with neoliberal re-structuring, dominated much of the political arena after Bolivia returned to democracy in 1982 and until early 2000s.

In October 1982 Bolivia returned to democratic rule, as the winner of the 1980 elections, Hernán Siles Zuazo was finally confirmed president. Siles Zuazo had been one of the great leaders of the MNR Revolution and was now in the Popular and Democratic Unity (UDP) party. He led a left-leaning coalition government that was in power for three years, during which hyperinflation swamped the country.

Hyperinflation ended in 1985 with the imposition of a 'shock treatment' dubbed as the New Economic Policy. Between 1985 and 2002, "Bolivian political parties formed significant coalitions that ensured support for executive branch initiatives, such as the NPE and other profound economic reform measures" (Gamarra 2003, 299). The logic of what was commonly referred to as 'pacted democracy' was justified by the need to provide the executive with a relatively autonomous space for decision-making, particularly in matters of economic development. Parties had become essential to make neoliberalism 'workable', as they became the vehicles through which neoliberal 'democratic' governance was implemented. Hyperinflation was controlled and further economic reform followed. But while parties constituted the basis of neoliberal governance, they "failed to articulate the interests of civil society at a time in which the old structures of corporatist representation were breaking down" (Gamarra 2003, 300). In this context, for instance, coca growers emerged as organizations with strong, and perhaps healthier, links to society. Parties during the democratic period simultaneously

failed to build bonds with these emerging civil society organizations, in a fashion similar to that of their predecessors of the post-revolutionary period. These organizations quickly began to challenge the hegemony of political parties and the institutional (electoral) politics played by them.

To sum it up, volumes could be written—and in fact, they have—about the consequences of the National Revolution alone, but this is not the purpose of this thesis. Among its relevant consequences for this study are the expansion of the role of the state in economic development, the implementation of government policies guided by nationalist goals— such as the nationalization of mines, an extensive agrarian reform and the introduction of universal franchise—and the emergence of a strong labor movement that lost power and influence with the neoliberal turn. These elements would be consequential for future movements in terms of their ideational horizons. Apart from these well-known consequences, it is worth highlighting that the 1952 Revolution helped to consolidate Bolivia's first socially-rooted political party, the MNR. It also gave rise to an era characterized by the establishment of corporatist schemes of interest mediation between the MNR and society, and this has been consequential for other parties and organizations in the country in terms of their own structuring. It is a challenge for the MAS and other contemporary forces to move beyond this scheme and build healthier intermediation linkages with society.

2.3 The Origins of the MAS

More than a product of crafted political engineering, the MAS is the result of Bolivia's singular historical trajectory and how this course has affected the configuration of social forces as well as the incorporation of new actors into the political system. To be schematic, the MAS' emergence and rapid rise to state power has been influenced by four historical, economical, political and social factors. These factors include, but are not limited to: the implementation and crisis of a conspicuous neoliberal restructuring project; the emergence of a new political subject that wanted to be heard and soon claimed prominence; a permissive institutional context (rules of the game) that facilitated the incorporation of new actors (players) into the system; and the crisis of the state and representative institutions that became evident during Bolivia's 'commodity wars'. The order and sequence of these factors is not historically sequential, as these are all intertwined and often operated simultaneously. What follows is an account of the gestation and rise to power of this new political creature.

2.3.1 Neoliberalism and its Crisis

Narrowly conceived, neoliberalism can be understood as an economic, political, and ideological project with hegemonic aspirations across the globe that places all its faith in the 'invisible hand of the market' for the achievement of wealth. Bolivia adopted one of the most conspicuous neoliberal programs in the Latin American region during the mid-

1980s, the consequences of which are critical to understanding the current configuration of social forces and the emergence of the MAS.

On the economic front, Bolivia's move to neoliberalism represented a rupture with the effects of the 1952 revolution and was accompanied by perhaps the single most important change in Bolivian economic history. Neoliberal reforms paved the way for the closure of most tin mines, thus signaling the virtual end of the age of tin, which had dominated politics and society of the country since the 19th century. The closure of state-owned and -operated tin mines, in turn, led to a rapid increase of the coca and cocaine economy; as prices were on the rise, masses of miners and peasants were forced to "relocate." Some of them found a new home in the *cocales* of the Chapare and, although it was not easy to become a *cocalero*, some also managed to find jobs in the profitable coca economy. Others found a new home in urban areas and became informal workers. Relocated workers, in particular miners, would bring along considerable 'militant capital' as many had been involved with the National Revolutionary Movement and the Bolivian Communist Party (*Partido Comunista de Bolivia*, or PCB). These workers quickly influenced the coca growers' discourse (as well as that one of other organizations) by introducing elements of nationalism and Marxism that they had learnt at the mines.[29]

On the political front, the move to neoliberalism also involved a rupture with the effects of the 1952 National Revolution, as neoliberalism gave rise to a new type of relationship between the state and civil society organizations. As has been noted elsewhere, during

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[29] Author's interview Sebastián Michel, MSM leader of La Paz (La Paz), 4 August, 2008.

the post-revolutionary period parties, civil society organizations, and individuals largely interacted with each other under patrimonial and clientelistic dynamics. Patrimonialism emerged as a result of Bolivia's turn into an *estado empresario* which publicly managed the main industries of the country, including tin and silver mining. With the contraction of the private sector, the state became Bolivia's main employer. Political parties, in turn, became more like employment agencies than institutions of democratic representation and interest mediation. This logic dominated politics for much of the post-revolutionary period. Parties used state resources to distribute amongst patronage networks and thus enhance their electoral bases. But by pursuing this strategy, parties failed to build wider organic linkages with civil society. This has been highly consequential for how parties and civil society organizations structured themselves. Of particular importance is that, years after the return to democracy, the dismantling of the corporativist arrangements in force under the state-development model, neoliberalism broke old structures of interest representation. For example, neoliberalism "dramatically weakened old structures of union politics centered on the COB and the miner's union" (Domingo 2005, 1735) and as a consequence, the labor movement entered into quick decline and lost its historical role as *the* vanguard of the Bolivian proletariat.

With the turn to neoliberalism civil society organizations, such as miners, artisan workers, *microempresarios* and many more, lost the tutelage of the state that they had enjoyed during the post-revolutionary period. In Jorge Silva's words, this tutelage entailed that the state acted as "the distributor of concessions, subventions, and protection to social organizations." With the introduction of neoliberal reforms, however,

the state transformed itself into a simple regulator of privatized enterprises. And in this new scenario, social organizations found themselves at a crossroads, as they had rapidly lost the protection of the state. We found ourselves without any protection, and facing businessmen that did not care at all about those sectors that had no connection with privatized companies, such as the *microempresarios*, artisans, and the informal labor.[30]

As a consequence, social organizations had to adapt themselves to the new times and establish new agendas independent of the state. Neoliberalism also signaled a major setback for the traditional left whose inability to handle the economy opened up the field for an ideational shift, and served to justify an ambitious market re-structuring program. At the beginning of what is commonly known as the Latin American 'lost decade', Bolivia's economy, while ruled by the left, was suffering heavily: "GDP declined every year between 1981 and 1986, with a 9.2 per cent drop during 1982 alone" (Kohl and Farthing 2006, 54). Further, the 1985 tin crash had demonstrated the risks associated with over-reliance on commodity exports. The government reacted by printing large amounts of money to support clientelist and patronage networks and to therefore maintain political support. As a result, inflation skyrocketed.

"*Bolivia se nos muere*," was the diagnosis of President Víctor Paz Estenssoro amidst the economic chaos. Arguably, his assessment provided the necessary justification for radical action that before would have been unthinkable; it also provided international support, or pressure. It was paradoxically the MNR, a mass-based and nationalist party, which was in charge of implementing a neoliberal policy path. As a consequence of this

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[30] Author's interview with national deputy for La Paz Jorge Silva (La Paz), 30 July, 2008. Silva initiated his political career during Bolivia's turn to neoliberalism, when he served as a legal advisor to social organizations of *microempresarios* and artisans. He became a national deputy after the organizations he represented signed a strategic agreement with the MAS on the eve of the 2005 national elections.

shift, the left suffered a severe retreat. It took almost twenty years to revive and, as will be shown in this section, this time the left would re emerge with an indigenous leadership.

2.3.1.1 The New Economic Policy

Unlike the leaders of the National Revolution of 1952, which had implemented a nation-building project characterized by attempts to construct a Bolivian 'national' identity and a state-led growth model, neoliberal technocrats would not be concerned with building a national identity or a powerful state; still, their project was revolutionary both in scope and reach. Neoliberals put all their energy into dismantling the proto state-capitalism that was implemented during the revolutionary process, and they achieved this effectively.

After a period of military governments, Bolivia had returned to civilian rule in 1982 under the center-left coalition government of the Democratic Popular Unity (UDP) and the presidency of Hernán Siles Zuazo (1982-85). This government attempted to restore the inefficient state-led development model but soon failed to do so. Later, the 1985 elections brought back into office one of the ideologues and leaders of the 1952 National Revolution, Víctor Paz Estenssoro (1985-89). Paz Estenssoro would be in charge of reversing the state-led development model by introducing an aggressive neoliberal agenda, the so-called 'New Economic Policy'. Although the neoliberal reforms had the initial positive impact of controlling rampant inflation and stabilizing growth, these

reforms profoundly changed the relationships between the Bolivian state and society. The transformation of the Bolivian state triggered the emergence of complex problems, as its terrific social costs quickly became evident.

The New Economic Policy included "the curtailment of state subsidies, the elimination of much public sector employment, wage freezes, and the retrenchment of state agencies dedicated to social welfare activities such as health and education, and the privatization of their services" (Gill 2000, 13). These reforms paved the way for the closure of state-operated tin mines, causing a rampant increase in the unemployment rate—more than 90,000 public workers were fired, almost one third of these being miners employed by the state-owned mining company COMIBOL—and the phenomenon of 'relocalization'.[31] Some of these 'relocated' miners and peasants moved to cities, especially to El Alto, which could not absorb this labor force and hence this situation gave rise to the rapid growth of the informal, predominantly artisan economy. On the other hand, other relocated workers moved to the lowlands to grow coca, both for supplying "the internal (mainly indigenous) demand for coca leaf as well as the rising cocaine economy" (Hylton and Thomson 2007, 96). As will be shown, whereas by attacking the miners neoliberal restructuring disempowered one of the most combative political forces—the vanguard of Bolivian proletariat—many relocated miners took with them their strong class consciousness and history of militant struggle and solidarity. As a paradox of the 'relocalization' process, the move of miners to coca production contributed to the

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[31] Termed by the Bolivian government as "relocalization," this phenomenon consisted of the mass dismissal of miners. As the New Economic Policy deregulated the mining industry, the government threw hundreds of thousands of Bolivian miners out of work. Relocalization initiated a process of mass migrations that has been consequential for the configuration of social forces in the country.

emergence of a powerful movement that opposed neo-liberalism and the US-sponsored 'War on Drugs'. The struggle against this war had a positive impact on the country in terms of social and political organization: it brought the majority of Bolivians closer together.

Although neoliberalism has had mixed results, the state's overall poor performance in a number of areas, including the reduction of poverty and inequality, has directly affected patterns of political mobilization and impacted the quality of the institutions of democratic representation. First, by dismantling the corporativist arrangements in force under the state-development model, neo-liberalism "dramatically weakened old structures of union politics centered on the COB and the miner's union" (Domingo 2005, 1735). Second, "the impact of privatization on specific sectors and the change in terms of exporting natural gas in favor of foreign companies have prompted various incidents of social mobilization, with varying degrees of organization and structured strategies" (Domingo 2005, 1736). Examples of the latter are the 'water war' of 2000 and the 'gas war' of 2003, which initiated an agitated cycle of great protests (2000-05). The 'water war' sparked in Cochabamba as a collective rejection of the arbitrary increases in the water tariff. It then turned into massive mobilizations in response to local effects of privatization. The 'gas war' ignited a massive reaction against the government's attempts to sell natural gas to the United States via Chilean ports. It then turned into a generalized protest that led to the resignation of president 'Goni' Sánchez de Lozada and the virtual collapse of the Bolivian party system. As will be shown in subsequent sections, these crises were reflections of a hollowed neoliberal state and a loss of legitimacy on behalf of

political parties. Lacking organic bonds with society, and associated with corruption,

parties were rapidly identified as the principal forces responsible for the general crisis.

2.3.2   Campesino-indígena: The New Political Subject

The emergence of a new political subject in Bolivian society is closely related to the

politicization of the rural/urban divide and the rise of ethnic politics. These elements, at

the same time, have deep roots in the country's colonial history and their tensions have

been perpetuated since the first foundation of the republic in 1825. A key element of this

initial foundation is, according to Moira Zuazo, that it instituted "mistrust as the center of

the relationships between the indigenous peoples and the Bolivian state" (Zuazo 2008,

19). The tensions between the state and indigenous populations, which have often been

accompanied by state-sponsored violence and/or indifference toward those marginalized

groups, helped to fuel sentiments of rage, solitude, and injustice. It should be noted,

however, that this perception of mistrust has not been static by any means and that, on the

contrary, it has taken different forms, as the military-peasant pact in the 1960s, to name

one, might exemplify.[32]

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[32] In February 1964, the military government of General René Barrientos signed a pact with the peasantry.
This was institutionalized in what came to be known as the 'military-peasant pact'. Because the
authoritarian government claimed a peasant base, the pact responded to Barrientos' efforts to build strong
support in the countryside. It was also an attempt to link the peasantry to the military government. Under
this agreement, however, the military government sought to impose union leaders on communities and to
hinder their autonomy vis-à-vis the government. The military controlled the peasantry through the
deployment of patronage resources and by articulating a discourse of peasant support. But this
'honeymoon' did not last forever: Barrientos' attempt to impose taxes on peasants resulted in a violent
response and loss of support in rural areas, as peasants quickly felt betrayed.

The politicization of the urban/rural cleavage, as well as the emergence of the new

political subject in the mid-1990s and its participation in electoral politics, cannot be

understood without consideration of the consequences of neoliberal reforms and the US-

sponsored 'War on Drugs'. Whereas the former, as noted elsewhere, have bolstered the

number of coca growers and imposed terrific social costs in the country, the latter

contributed to the criminalization of these 'relocated' workers. The state-sponsored

violence targeted *cocaleros*; however, it also acted as a unifying force for the emerging

political subject, the *campesino-indígena*, and gave way to a cycle of severe mistrust

which increased the sentiments of rage and injustice from the oppressed toward the state.

The massive use of technology, principally radio but also TV, helped to spread the

demands of this new subject throughout the country, to increase the levels of social

agitation, and to build unity among diversity.

Although political mobilization from indigenous and peasant communities was intense

since Bolivia's return transition to democracy in 1982, it was with the 1008 Law that

such groups were able to unify their demands and gain strength. This law, which was

promulgated under US pressure in 1988 as an effort to fight the cocaine economy,

provided the legal framework for the eradication of coca crops. The promulgation of this

law was followed by intense state repression and quickly the Chapare region—which was

one of the primary targets for coca eradication efforts within the 1008 Law—became a

virtually unregulated territory. This period was characterized by heated clashes between

coca growers and the military; it was also notorious for the systematic violation of the

most essential human rights by the forces of order. The political consequences of the

1008 Law were, at the time of its promulgation, difficult to foresee; however, what we know *post facto* is that state repression worked as a catalyst for the coca growers movement to redefine its identity and to decide to participate in the formal political system by constituting a relatively united political front.

In such a violent context, the peasant and indigenous groups demonstrated a tenuous capacity to engage in collective action. They also demonstrated a commitment to unify themselves, based on ethnicity and a collective identification with the *los de abajo* or the 'marginalized', while (temporarily) leaving aside their own divergences. Among these groups, the coca growers envisioned the creation of a 'political instrument', which they conceived as a 'political branch' of the peasant unions and as a tool which would allow them to participate in the formal political game.[33] Led by Evo Morales, coca growers quickly gained preeminence within the Unitary Syndical Confederation of Peasant Workers of Bolivia (CSUTCB), which is Bolivia's most extensive campesino organization and which falls under the umbrella of the COB; they also became the champion of those 'at the bottom'.

A critical landmark in the foundational process of the political/electoral vehicle was the campaign for the "500 years of Indigenous, Black, and Popular Resistance." This campaign took place across Latin America between October 1989 and October 1992 and,

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[33] According to Dionicio Núñez, a founding member of the MAS and current *cocalero* union leader, at that point the peasant unions had "the union branch, with the CSUTCB; and the economic branch […] But we didn't have a political branch." Núñez also served as national deputy for La Paz. Author's interview (La Paz), 19 August, 2008.

in Bolivia, it helped to reunite the indigenous organizations of the highlands and the

lowlands, whose relationships had previously been tense. As such, this campaign

constituted "a moment of visualization, presence, and development of a common identity

and it represents, in this sense, the moment of the emergence of the *campesino-indígena*

as a political subject" (Zuazo 2008, 27). What soon became clear was that this new actor,

composed of the synergy of diverse indigenous and peasant organizations and

individuals, wanted to be heard. Only two years later, in 1994, a Congress organized by

the CSUTCB approved the 'thesis of the political instrument' for the rural and indigenous

groups and called for a congress to be celebrated in March 1995. Still in 1994, during the

March for Sovereignty and Dignity, the coca growers movement further consolidated its

leadership among the *campesinos* and—perhaps critical to their future success—brought

awareness of the movement's demands and fears to most Bolivians. It was at this same

time that Morales, as leader of the coca growers, emerged as the charismatic face of the

oppressed, and he performed a visible role during the march. Finally, in March 1995,

participants of a congress over "Land, Territory, and Political Instrument," organized by

the CSUTCB, and which took place in Santa Cruz de la Sierra, decided to materialize the

creation of the political instrument and henceforth be able to participate in the December

1995 municipal elections. The instrument would be initially named Assembly for the

Sovereignty of the Peoples (ASP) and its leader would be Alejo Véliz, a *quechua* peasant

from Cochabamba. As will be shown, the rivalries between Morales and Véliz would

soon become notorious. Notwithstanding the tensions that quickly emerged within the

political instrument, one thing would be clear henceforth: there was a new political

subject in Bolivian society and it was claiming prominence.

2.3.3 A Permissive Institutional Context

Although peasant and indigenous groups had attempted to form their own ethnic-based electoral vehicles on several opportunities, until 1995 no ethnic-based party had achieved electoral viability.[34] Drastic changes to the institutional context have had a profound effect on the emergence and feasibility of these parties and, in particular, of the MAS, as a close examination of the reforms will show.

Bolivia's decentralization process of the 1990s was one of those drastic changes. As a political component of the neoliberal project, the package of institutional reforms included the 1994 Popular Participation Law (PPL) and the 1995 Law of Administrative Decentralization, among other reforms that for reasons of scope will not be addressed. Taken together, these two major laws involved the creation of more than three hundred municipal governments throughout the country and instituted unprecedented direct municipal elections. In addition to allowing the election of local authorities, these laws directed government revenues to be distributed to the newly-created municipal governments. Although it may be fascinating to analyze the real intentions of the authorities who promoted these institutional reforms, it would inevitably lead to speculation. What is somewhat clear in retrospect, however, is that these institutional changes have allowed the incorporation of new social forces, particularly indigenous populations, into the formal political system through which they would henceforth channel energies, demands, and expertise.

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[34] For a lucid assessment on the waves of ethnic party formation in Bolivia, see Van Cott 2005, 29-98.

According to Zuazo (2008), the institutional reforms have unleashed a process of 'ruralization of politics'. Unlike Zuazo, I would call this process the 'politicization of the rural cleavage', because it has facilitated the entrance of the new political subject into the formal political game and allowed this actor to express its discontent through institutional channels. This process, which occurred amidst a profound crisis of political parties, has had two basic effects that are worth highlighting to better understand the emergence and configuration of the MAS. In the first place, the creation of municipal governments, which was simultaneously accompanied by changes in the electoral system, benefited geographically concentrated groups. Coca growers in the Chapare, as well as other concentrated groups, would henceforth be able to elect their own candidates at the local level (see Van Cott 2005, 29-98). The institutional reforms also "fostered the erosion of traditional linkages between parties and social organizations, and particularly linkages with indigenous movements" (Mayorga 2006, 157). Amidst a context of crisis of the traditional parties, the reforms facilitated the institutionalization of an ethnic-based party. Hence, despite its real intentions, the creation of municipal governments and the PPL actually contributed to redrawing the political landscape in Bolivia and to strengthening the participation of indigenous social movements at the local level. Coca growers and other social forces have rapidly filled political spaces vacated by traditional parties, built new political formations like the MAS, and brought the latter into the institutional terrain.

In the second place, the rural municipal governments became "structures of political integration between peasants, *originarios*, and indigenous peoples" (Zuazo 2008, 23). In this sense, they acted as a sort of 'institutional school' for the leaders of the emerging

MAS, as they provided the newly-elected municipal authorities with the opportunity to learn how institutional politics worked from within. Considering that before becoming local authorities many of these leaders had had leadership experience only at rural and social organizations, the rural municipal governments also allowed local authorities to practice politics within normative frameworks. The municipal governments would quickly become a training ground that allowed these leaders and their constituents to innovate in matters of politics and public administration. From there, a new political class would emerge and its members would prove to be effective in combining their *know how* on (anti-institutional) social mobilizations with (institutional) electoral politics. Last but not least, the financial component of the municipalization process, which would be based on the transfer of 20 percent of government revenues from the national to the municipal level, gave a lesson to subaltern groups: by electing authorities that truly represented them and by administering their own resources, they could transform the world.

To sum up, institutional reforms empowered rural and subaltern groups within the boundaries of formal politics. This may explain why coca growers decided to resist and pursue the transformation of society through the creation of a political instrument rather than through the creation of rural armies or guerrilla movements, to name a few alternatives. From 1995 onward the Chapare peasant unions and their political instrument became the driving force in the local municipal arena. The incorporation of the new political subject into the formal democratic system had a dramatic impact on Bolivian politics, as this group would soon prove able to mediate and channel broader

social interests and demands. This actor would rapidly extend its electoral advances to the national level and fill in spaces vacated by the traditional political parties.

2.3.4   State Crisis: Great Cycle of Protests and the Crisis of Political Parties

As has been shown, the MAS emerged from the coca growers' movement and became electorally viable thanks to a favorable institutional context. The 'political instrument' for rural and indigenous organizations quickly gained prominence by advancing from the local to the national level, as it managed to articulate social demands that came to light during a great cycle of protests. In alluding to this period I refer to the 'water war' of April 2000, which was a struggle between residents of Cochabamba and a multinational consortium over the privatization of the water utility. This local event triggered an unprecedented social, political, and institutional crisis that reached national dimensions. The second commodity war was the 'gas war' of October 2003, in the highlands of El Alto. This conflict started as a massive urban insurrection against the government's attempts to export natural gas to the United States. Like the 'water war', the 'gas war' quickly reached national dimensions. These struggles were peaks amongst a generalized context of popular insurrection, which was a reflection of a pervasive crisis of state institutions and political parties. They initiated a new 'revolutionary cycle' (see Hylton and Thomson 2007) characterized by the repudiation of neoliberalism, the opening of spaces for direct political participation, and the confrontation between popular forces and the traditional political class.

Although the crisis of the Bolivian state had multiple sources, I will focus on two of them

as they will help to explain the emergence and configuration of the MAS. In the first

place, the direct background for social agitation was the state's negative performance in a

number of areas such as addressing chronic problems of poverty and inequality, and

dealing with corruption and crime. In the second place, the economic crisis that swept

Bolivia in the late 1990s made visible the social deficits of neoliberal policies. The

economic crisis made evident the lack of transparency and corruption of a political class,

which in turn generated a growing dissatisfaction with the 'traditional' political parties.

The MAS was able to understand the general crisis, to strategically articulate the

demands of the popular forces, and to channel them through elections.

The great protest cycle started in April 2000 in the city of Cochabamba, a predominantly

urban setting, and began as a clash between residents of the city and the Bechtel

Corporation over a rise in the prices of water. The conflict gave way to the emergence of

a popular urban movement, the Coalition for the Defense of Water and Life (the

Coordinadora), which "brought factory workers, coca growers and green activists

together to stop privatization" (Hylton and Thomson 2007, 103). Led by urban

organizations[35] and a visible leader, factory-worker Oscar Olivera, this social force

"reclaimed natural resources for the region, defended the user rights against property

rights, expelled a multinational water consortium sanctioned by the Bolivian government

and international financial institutions, and called for a constitutional assembly that

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[35] The organizations that participated in the conflict included: teacher and labor unions, informal-sector organizations, and peasant unions, among others. Although the 'water war' was led by urban organizations, rural and indigenous organizations also participated in the conflict and incorporated mobilization strategies rooted in indigenous uses and costumes.

would draft a new charter for political representation" (Hylton and Thomson 2007, 5; see also Olivera et. al. 2008). In sum, a movement that began with a particular demand—the battle over water rates—quickly shifted into one with broader demands and capacities of transformation—the expulsion of Bechtel Corporation, the rejection of neoliberalism, and the re-writing of a national constitution. As urban protesters incorporated "a repertoire of indigenous symbols to appeal to indigenous peoples in the area, who rose in solidarity with their urban counterparts" (Dawson n.d.), a by-product of this war was the increasing politicization of indigenous movements. The MAS participated in this conflict and, according to Komadina and Geffroy, its participation was sparked by the "need of establishing alliances with other social groups, such as workers, teachers, neighbors of the city, and peasant *regantes*, and thus avoid the isolationism generated by repressive policies of the last governments" (Komadina and Geffroy 2007, 45).

In October 2003, the protest cycle continued with the 'gas war', which took place in the city of El Alto. This popular uprising would be a critical juncture for Bolivian society, as protesters managed to bring down the government of Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada and thus turn the tide of Bolivian democracy. The uprising was initiated in September 2003 by protests of police officers over inadequate pay. In October of the same year, popular uprisings were sparked by protests over the export of Bolivian gas through Chilean ports. As had occurred during the 'water war' protesters incorporated an array of indigenous symbols and mobilization strategies, all of which further politicized the ethnic cleavage.

Although many urban and rural organizations[36] participated in the 'gas war', this struggle

was led by a network of neighborhood organizations in El Alto—what Aymara

sociologist Pablo Mamani Ramírez (2005) calls "*microgobiernos barriales.*"[37] As will

be shown in Chapter 3, although the MAS played a marginal role in the 2003 uprisings, it

managed to strengthen itself by articulating the demands of discontent masses. After the

conflict, the MAS would expand its electoral base by incorporating into its discourse the

demands of El Alto residents, as well as the demands of the social organizations that

participated in the uprising. One of the consequences of the 2003 'gas war', was the

increasing gap between parties and organized civil society. Thereafter, the MAS would

channel social agitation through participating in elections. The MAS would become the

only real alternative to the traditional, and at that point illegitimate, parties.

In sum, the protest cycle initiated in 2000 reflected a structural crisis of the state. It also

symbolized the end of a chapter: the uprisings showed the failures of neoliberalism as a

dominant economic, political, and ideological project. This revolutionary cycle also

reflected the growing separation between political parties and society and a shift in the

balance of power between the two, as parties had proved unable to mediate societal

conflicts and incapable of delivering public policy. In the eyes of most Bolivians, they

also had proved to be inefficient, undemocratic, and corrupt. In light of such

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[36] The main organizations that participated in this conflict were the following: COR-El Alto, FEJUVE-El Alto, the CSUTCB (the branch directed by the *Mallku* Felipe Quispe), and the Public University of El Alto (UPEA).

[37] Pablo Mamani Ramírez is an Aymara sociologist based on El Alto. He suggests that indigenous customary forms have become defining means of creating micro-governments in urban areas of El Alto. In his account of the October 2003 events, Mamani claims that neighborhood associations, organized along Aymara forms of governance, were the key actors of the uprisings, leaving syndical organizations occupy a secondary (or marginal) role.

representational deficits, organized society challenged the hegemony of parties as vehicles of representation and expressed itself through a combination of anti-institutional and institutional means. In a context of crisis of political parties, the MAS, as a new formation, was there to incorporate societal demands into its discourse and to bring those demands to the institutional terrain. Born of peasant unions, the MAS had expanded itself to the national level and understood the challenges of the new era.

2.4   The Roots of the MAS Organization

As has been shown, a permissive structure of opportunities facilitated the emergence of the MAS, but that is not the whole story. Its leadership was able to react before such opportunities by incorporating the demands of discontented masses into its discourse, and to gradually enhance its support from the municipal level to the national one. The MAS was born as a political instrument for the coca growers in the Chapare, but to say that it is currently a party of peasant and rural forces is to overlook the diversity of interests currently represented therein. A close examination of the roots of the MAS organization will shed light on the complexities of its contemporary structure.

The contemporary structure of the MAS is rooted in its peculiar emergence and trajectory. Although the MAS originated as a rural political instrument in 1995, the organization experienced significant change as it became electorally successful. Unlike other parties that emerged from social movements (such as the Brazilian PT), which

consolidated a relatively autonomous and institutionalized bureaucratic structure, the

MAS emerged as an extension of indigenous social movements. During its initial stages

there was no clear distinction between these movements and the party structure. In its

origins, the linkages between social organizations and the political/electoral vehicle were

solid as rock. As Dionicio Núñez put it, the political structure is, even today, "married to

the social structure" and, because of that it may be "hard to visualize a divorce between

the social movement and the political instrument."[38] It is for this reason that some

authors still insist on calling the MAS a "federation of social movements" (Toranzo Roca

2008), or simply a 'social movement', rather than a 'real' political party. However, as

will be shown, both Núñez' and those authors' views reflect a normative perspective of

the MAS—that is, a reflection of how the MAS *should be* according to the 'political

instrument thesis', but not how the MAS actually is. What follows is a succinct account

of the MAS electoral trajectory and its organizational features.

In the municipal elections of 1995, peasant organizations participated under the banner of

and in alliance with the United Left (*Izquierda Unida*, or IU). The results in the

Cochabamba department were striking: they won 11 *alcaldes* and 49 *concejales*—all of

them *quechua* peasants, and most of them from the Chapare. The first time that peasant

organizations participated in elections with their own political instrument was in the

national elections of 1997 and—still in alliance with the IU—the results confirmed a

trend. At that point, while using the ASP ticket, peasant organizations won four

congressional seats to represent the Chapare region: Evo Morales, Román Loayza, Néstor

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[38] Author's interview with Dionicio Núñez (La Paz), 19 August, 2008.

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Guzmán, and Félix Sánchez became uninominal deputies for the Chapare. However,

Alejo Véliz, who was both presidential and congressional candidate for the ASP formula,

did not result elected to congress. Following his defeat, Véliz accused Morales of

sponsoring the 'crossed vote'[39] in the Chapare, and thus the alliance between the two—as

well as the ASP—dissolved. Although the rivalries between the two *caudillos* could be

interpreted as a crack in the peasant movement and a deviation from the political

instrument thesis (which pays tribute to 'unity' and rejects verticalism and personal

rivalries), Morales stood victorious in the conflict and his bases remained loyal to him.

Amidst intensified state repression towards coca growers during the Hugo Bánzer

government (1997-2001), in 1999 Evo Morales and Román Loayza founded a new

organization. They labeled it Political Instrument for the Sovereignty of the Peoples

(*Instrumento Político por la Soberanía de los Pueblos*, or IPSP). This organization

would replace the defunct ASP and would share its organizational ideals: it would be an

instrument for popular forces, and both the instrument and the organizations that

comprised it would be a solid unit. For legal reasons, Morales and Loayza acquired the

nearly-defunct MAS, [40] and participated in municipal elections as MAS-IPSP, as rural

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[39] The "crossed vote" consisted of voting Jaime Paz Zamora (the MIR candidate) for the presidency, and voting Evo Morales (the ASP candidate) for a uninominal deputyship. According to several testimonies collected during my fieldwork, Morales sponsored the "crossed vote" to neutralize the leadership aspirations of Alejo Véliz within the peasant movement.

[40] The MAS used to be a faction of the Bolivian Socialist Falange (*Falange Socialista Boliviana*, or FSB), which was a right-of-center party established in 1937. According to most official accounts David Añez Pedraza, who was the former president of the MAS, gave the MAS acronym to Evo Morales and the coca growers. This explains why in article 86 of the party charter Mr. Pedraza is formally recognized as life and honorific president of the MAS. Accepting the acronym, the colors (blue, black, and white), and the flags of the MAS was not an easy process for popular and indigenous movements. For instance, the *Mallku* Felipe Quispe rejected being associated to the MAS, as this party was formerly related to the right-wing falange.

peasants were identified with the IPSP and, at that time, were not identified with the

MAS.[41] This time rural and peasant organizations would participate in elections without

building alliances with political parties, as they claimed that political parties had used

them. The MAS obtained significant results in the Cochabamba department, as it won

nine *alcaldias*. These results anchored the MAS social bases in rural Cochabamba, and

consolidated a victorious trend for peasant forces. Having established an anchor in the

Chapare and having decided to pursue the transformation of society by becoming

government, the challenge was now how to win as many votes as possible at the national

level.

The June 2002 presidential and legislative elections were a critical moment in that

direction, and it is necessary to remember that they occurred in the midst of a great cycle

of protests and crisis of political parties. The decision to participate in the contest made

the MAS leadership move from the local level of the Chapare to the national one. In

order to do that, the MAS opted to pursue a 'supraclass strategy' of electoral recruitment

(Przeworski and Sprague 1986, 70).[42] The MAS needed to articulate demands and

interests of contentious groups into its discourse, and it successfully did so; it also

celebrated alliances with urban organizations such as the *Coordinadora* in Cochabamba,

which bolstered the voting mass of the MAS. In addition to articulating the demands of a

broad array of social movements into its discourse, the MAS had decided to expand its

electoral base with a simple vote maximizing strategy: by incorporating urban middle

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[41] Author's interview with Dionicio Núñez (La Paz), 19 August, 2008.

[42] This vote-maximizing strategy entails turning for support to groups other than the core constituencies of a party in order to gain electoral majorities. Leaders are willing to pursue this kind of strategy once they know they enjoy sufficient support among its core constituencies. See Przeworski and Sprague 1986.

class intellectuals into its structure, and thus turn for support to urban middle-sectors. A central component of this strategy was the *en masse* invitation of intellectuals and public figures to fill prominent positions within the MAS, which reflects the degree to which since those days career paths within the organization have not conformed to what the party statutes stipulate. One of these intellectuals, José Antonio Quiroga, was invited to run as Morales' vice presidential candidate but declined the offer, alleging personal reasons.[43] Since Quiroga quickly declined the invitation, Morales then selected Antonio Peredo, a renowned journalist and teacher associated with the PCB, and Peredo accepted the candidacy.[44] Turning for support to 'urban middle classes' proved to be advantageous from the electoral point of view, and the MAS saw an impressive electoral performance obtaining 20.94 percent of the votes nationwide—less than two points behind the winner. This guaranteed 8 of 27 seats in the Senate and 27 of 130 seats in the lower chamber for the MAS.

In the end, however, the MAS did not become government in 2002 as Sánchez de Lozada was able to craft a heterodox (and fragile) coalition that allowed him to get to the

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[43] The invitation of José Antonio Quiroga to run as vice presidential candidate for the MA S was "an attempt to reverse the formula that 'Goni' had used in the past." In that occasion, 'Goni' (a middle-class *mestizo* candidate) invited Víctor Hugo Cárdenas (an Aymara indigenous leader) to add an indigenous face to his formula and thus attract the indigenous vote. Author's interview with José Antonio Quiroga, 18 July, 2008.

[44] According to Filemón Escóbar, who was one of the main ideologues of the political instrument, the incorporation of leaders like Antonio Peredo represented the entrance of the traditional left into the MAS. See Escóbar 2008, which are Escóbar's political memoires.

presidency.[45] Despite the final outcome, these elections were "a clear sign that the social movements […] had decisively altered the balance of formal political forces" (Hylton and Thomson 2007, 106). Moreover, this new balance of forces would shape the MAS, which would emerge as the principal force "fighting neoliberalism both in the halls of Congress and on the streets" (Hylton and Thomson 2007, 171). Notwithstanding these changes, one thing was clear at the time: in a predominantly urban country, coca growers and peasant unions would never be a majority. Alliances with urban organizations, celebrated in both formal and informal ways, and the incorporation of intellectuals into the structure proved to be useful to obtain electoral profits. But reaching into the middle sectors to generate votes involved a set of trade offs for the peasant unions, as the recruitment of allies generated ideological and—often anomic—organizational transformations to the political instrument which, in turn, elicited derision from its founding organizations and core constituency.

One example of such trade-offs was related to the newly-elected parliamentary brigade. Anchored in rural Cochabamba, the MAS had expanded to the national level and managed to place 27 deputies in the lower chamber in 2002. While some of these deputies were representatives from the Chapare and had been selected by the bases,

[45] Only three days before the June 2002 elections, U.S. ambassador Manuel Rocha warned Bolivians about the risks of voting for a candidate associated with drug-trafficking, coca growing, and terrorist activities. Together with Morales' expulsion from Congress months earlier, Rocha's statement appears to have contributed to the increase of support for Morales. Inspired by Juan Peron's electoral campaign in 1945, who campaigned with the slogan "Braden or Perón" (Spruille Braden was then the U.S. ambassador to Buenos Aires), campaign advisors of the MAS used Rocha's words to inflame feelings of nationalism and anti-Americanism, and this boosted the support for the MAS. Voters rejected the US intervention in domestic politics and in the campaign, and many who were likely to vote for Reyes Villa or Jaime Paz Zamora decided to vote for the MAS as a sign of protest to the U.S. Embassy. Author's interview with Marcelo Quezada, campaign advisor for the 2002 elections, journalist, and current ambassador to Paraguay (La Paz), 11 July, 2008.

others were directly 'invited' by the leadership and had no history of militancy in the MAS.[46] When all of these members initiated their work at the Congress, they "didn't even know each other, we all met for the first time at the hallways of Congress."[47] Still, since unlike peasant representatives, many of the 'invited' leaders had had parliamentary experience or were refined intellectuals, the latter quickly became the voice of the MAS, as they related to the media very effectively. In Peredo's words, whereas on the one hand "in 2002 the MAS became national," on the other hand the elections signaled the "beginning of the difficulties to structure the instrument."[48] According to Komadina and Geffroy, the emergence of this parliamentary brigade brought forth an "*oligarchization* of the party leadership, which subsequently takes decisions different than the popular mandates, usually culminating in a sort of confiscation of the representation" (2007, 99).

As has been demonstrated elsewhere, much went on between 2002 and the national elections of 2005. Nonetheless, it was with this same basic structure that the MAS participated in that electoral contest. On this occasion, the electoral formula Morales-García Linera—an Aymara Indian and peasant leader as presidential candidate and a *mestizo* middle-class intellectual as vice-presidential candidate—was elected to the executive in an unprecedented landslide victory (53.7 percent of those who voted). But to win electoral majorities, the MAS had once again undergone thorough ideological and organizational adjustments. This time, it had incorporated into its discourse the demands

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[46] The candidate selection process sheds light on the tensions between the formal rules and how the party operates in reality.

[47] Author's interview with national deputy César Navarro, 27 August, 2008. Navarro is the president of the MAS' parliamentary brigade in the lower chamber.

[48] Author's interview with senator Antonio Peredo, 12 July, 2008.

of the 'October Agenda'[49] and had celebrated pre-electoral alliances with a wide array of

urban organizations which would exchange support for spaces of power in the

government. These social organizations included, but were not limited to: cooperativist

miners,[50] pensioners, neighbor associations, landless movements, and teachers, among

others. Whereas urban organizations found in the MAS a place to advance their

corporate interests, the MAS found in them a possibility to expand its social base,

especially in urban settings. The linkages between the MAS organization and these

social movements would not be explicitly recognized in party statutes and the

relationship between political structure and social organizations would be loosely

structured, which has been a source of tension between the two since the MAS became

government. As Zegada, Torrez, and Cámara (2008) suggest, there are two basic societal

linkages between these two in the new context: (1) *subordination* to the party—

specifically by those organizations that are organically tied to the party—which is

expressed through the physical occupation of spaces of power;[51] (2) *consensus* with the

general lines of the party, albeit not exempt of criticism, and which depends on the

conjuncture.[52]

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[49] The October Agenda was a list of popular demands to re-found Bolivia in the name of the poor and the indigenous majority. It emerged from the insurrection of El Alto in October 2003. Among the key demands included in this agenda were the nationalization of hydrocarbons, an agrarian reform, and the call for a constituent assembly to remake Bolivia.

[50] There are two basic groups of miners in Bolivia: the cooperativists (those who are self-employed) and the wage earners (those who are employed by the state through the COMIBOL). Prior to the 2005 national elections, the MAS fostered a strategic alliance with the former. This explains the (ephemeral) presence of Walter Villarroel (leader of the cooperativists) in the ministry of mining during the first months of the Morales' government.

[51] As an example, Morales is the president of the country and, simultaneously, the highest authority of the coca growers' movement and of the MAS.

[52] The third linkage—open or direct confrontation—occurs specifically between the MAS and regional civic movements. Because the relationship between these two actors is not directly relevant to the general argument, it will not be addressed in this section.

The rapid growth of the MAS and its expansion to urban areas changed the internal

dynamics of the organization. It altered its linkage mechanisms with social organizations

as well as its power construction logics. With regard to the peasant organizations that

founded the MAS in the '90s, there has been since its origins a 'bottom up' construction

of power. The strategy to expand to urban areas, on the other hand, involved the

negotiation of spaces of power wherein urban and mining social organizations exchanged

support for quotas of power. This gave rise to clientelism and patronage within the MAS,

which, in turn, helped the party to exercise control over leaders of social organizations

sympathetic to the process. The use of these mechanisms seems to indicate the

perpetuation of practices that have long pervaded Bolivian parties. In some cases, the

pervasiveness of clientelism and patronage within the MAS has fostered social

demobilization and distanced social leaders from their bases, as these alliances "ended up

being an alliance with specific leaders, more than a stable alliance with the [social]

organizations" (Zuazo 2008, 33). In addition, this has generated an asymmetrical

relationship between the MAS leadership and the leaders of social organizations. The

pre-electoral pact celebrated between the MAS and FEJUVE-El Alto[53] exemplifies some

of these tensions. The pact guaranteed the water ministry to Abel Mamani, who was the

highest authority in the neighborhood association and an active militant in the 'gas wars'.

His appointment was rejected by his social bases, which felt betrayed by Mamani. They

claimed that his appointment was not achieved by reaching consensus within the

organization.[54] At the same time, the pre-electoral alliances generated discontent from

peasant organizations, which perceived that 'non-organic' members were taking

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[53] FEJUVE-El Alto is one of Bolivia's strongest organizations in terms of its mobilizational power. It played an important role in the "gas war" of October 2003.

[54] Author's interview with Luis Huanca, executive of FEJUVE-El Alto (El Alto), 13 August, 2008.

prominent roles within the government and the MAS. According to Román Loayza, for

example, "we [indigenous peasants; organic members] saw that leaders of social

organizations that did not struggle like we did soon became spokespersons of the MAS

and they tried to use the MAS for their own interests. We were upset as we watched this

happen…"[55] Another key example of the nature and consequences of pre-electoral

alliances relates to the one celebrated between the MAS and cooperativist miners. This

alliance guaranteed the mining ministry to Walter Villarroel, a leader of the cooperative

sector who, once in the executive, defended the interests of his sector. This generated

tension between cooperativists and wage-earning mine workers, and reflected the

weakness of the linkages between the MAS and its electoral allies as well as the strong

corporate features that pervade Bolivian civil society organizations.[56] These two

examples indicate a new way of power construction as well as new linkage patterns with

social organizations, which in some cases are rooted in corporative logics and sustained

by patronage resources. They also reflect the lack of institutionalization of the party and

its chronic inability to build an organic structure with urban organizations.

Finally, the expansion of the MAS to urban areas was accompanied by the creation of a

territorial-based party structure, which is vastly informal and remains to be

institutionalized. This will be examined in the following section.

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[55] Author's interview with Román Loayza (La Paz), 22 July, 2008.

[56] In October 2006, cooperativist and wage earner miners clashed in Huanuni over the control of mining activities in the Posokoni hill. The conflict left 16 deaths and more than 68 wounded, and led to the expulsion of Walter Villarroel from the ministry of mining.

2.4.1   Evo Morales and the MAS in Government

Amidst great expectations, Evo Morales took the reins of Bolivian government the 22 of

January, 2006. Change had come to Bolivia, and at that moment Morales called for a

'socio-cultural' and 'democratic' revolution, while emphasizing that he would rule by

obeying the people. Once in power, Morales sought to fulfill the demands of the October

Agenda and accomplished this at least partially, as he quickly declared nationalization of

hydrocarbons, proclaimed an agrarian reform, and called for a constituent assembly to re

found the nation (the constituent assembly drafted a controversial constitution that at the

moment of this writing its implementation is being debated). According to Hylton and

Thomson, it may be argued that while "the MAS reforms represent a response to the

popular mandate, they are also a bid for state hegemony, intended to consolidate the

medium-term governing plans for the MAS" (2007, 128). Those demands were fulfilled

by rapidly centralizing power at the executive level (president, vice-president, ministry of

the presidency), by bypassing institutional channels and, to a certain extent, by

controlling the social movements that had transformed the party into a national force.

For this reason and others, authors and the media have long portrayed Morales as a

classic *caudillo* or as a populist and authoritarian leader. For the same reasons, critics in

the Marxist autonomist tradition lament that Morales' rule has demobilized and

fragmented the social movements that brought him to power.

Such simplistic views obscure more than they reveal about Morales and the MAS. There

is little doubt that *el Evo* is a charismatic figure, and that he is *the* leader of the MAS.

However, unlike other 'populist' leaders, the consolidation of his leadership has roots in years of struggle and social mobilization from below which, following Kenneth Roberts (2007a; see also 2007b), constitutes the antithesis of populism in all its conceptions.[57] It is true that Morales has direct contact with his core constituencies and that he relates to them in a face-to-face manner, and that this may be understood as populist features. It is also true that Morales has centralized executive power, but that is not to say that he can do as he pleases, as there are check mechanisms to his leadership and they are deeply rooted at and shaped by the union structure. Morales is not the owner of the MAS, although he often acts as *the* centralizing force within the decentralized structure. I argue that the ways in which the MAS is structured imposes challenges to the 'populist' perspective as well as limits to Morales' charismatic leadership. However, it is the same structure, which is informal and not institutionalized, that, at times, assigns Morales a central role. What follows is an account of how this informal party structure operates in practice.

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[57] It should also be noted that 'populism' and 'populist' are slippery and ambiguous concepts in Latin American politics. Often used with pejorative connotations, to define or disqualify charismatic leaders, these concepts have become 'empty signifiers'. For a lucid assessment on the ambiguities and uses of the terms, see Laclau 2005.

2.4.2   An Informally Organized Party

"We don't have a structure," party leaders like to repeat. However, the MAS does indeed have one, or even two.[58] The MAS is an *informally organized* party and it is decentralized. Since its foundation in the 1990s, it has been closely intertwined with rural and peasant unions in the Chapare. In fact, as was shown elsewhere in this chapter, before the 2002 elections the union structure and the MAS were indistinguishable, so much so that MAS leaders say that the two were "married." After 2002, when the MAS became a national force, but particularly after the 2005 elections, when the MAS became government, it underwent a major organizational transformation. This was a consequence of the vote-maximizing strategies to attract middle classes, its expansion to the cities, and, since 2005, simply because being the ruling party has inevitably altered internal dynamics, as the MAS cannot govern the entire country as a 'political instrument'. Because the MAS combines two interconnected forms of political action—electoral representation and direct social pressure—it may also be characterized as a 'political movement', more than as a traditional political party. As a movement, and following the work of Steven Levitsky, the MAS shares features with 'movement organizations',[59] in the way that its structure is segmented and decentralized, allowing the proliferation of autonomous and *ad hoc* structures. From the outset, this constitutes a

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[58] As was discussed in the introductory chapter, the MAS is a two-headed creature. One head is the organization at the rural level, which was originally anchored in the coca growers' movement and since 2002 includes a broader coalition of actors. This structure reproduces organizational features and political practices akin to peasant unions. The other head is the electoral/territorial structure at the urban level. This structure replicates organizational forms of conventional political parties. See Komadina and Geffroy 2007, 81-113.

[59] According to Gerlach and Hine (1970), movement organizations may be distinguished from bureaucratic organizations in that they are *segmented* and *decentralized*. Movement organizations lack a central authority capable of making binding decisions to *all* the components of the movement, cited in Levitsky 2001, 36.

source of tension in a country with centralist tendencies.[60] A close examination of how this organization actually works will shed light on its behavior, and will provide insights into the possibilities for institutionalization. The fate of the MAS political project depends upon its institutionalization, as Morales' charismatic authority has limits.

Following Komadina and Geffroy (2007), the MAS has a dual structure. In their view, one pillar of this structure was originally anchored in the founder organizations but now includes a broader coalition of social forces. This structure constitutes the core constituency of the MAS. The other pillar, in urban areas where popular organizations are not as widespread and influential, consists of a relatively conventional party structure, especially during electoral processes. It corresponds, albeit precariously, to the territorial division of the country. Although the party statutes were an attempt to formalize this double-headed structure, the party is still not fully institutionalized. The links between the MAS and urban and rural social organizations are usually not formalized and, in many cases, remain weak. It is important to point out that the boundaries between these two structures are often unclear and that they are in constant redefinition. The MAS is, then, a double-headed creature. One head consists of organized civil society and the other head takes the form of a political party. It is necessary to understand how the two are connected to each other and how they actually work.

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[60] Author's interview with Antonio Peredo (La Paz), 12 August 2008. This point was also emphasized by José Antonio Quiroga, who in several occasions has been invited to run as vice president, senator for La Paz, and major of La Paz, among other offers, under the banner of the MAS.

There have been attempts to understand how the MAS actually works but, for the most part, too much emphasis has been placed on the rural level. Zuazo's study (2008), for example, has shed light on the organizational features of the MAS at this level. One of her main findings relates to the decision-making processes for the selection of authorities. She claims that, at the rural levels, there are horizontal decision-making mechanisms for the selection of authorities to run for Congress. These mechanisms vary for each organization and each region, and they are rooted in indigenous customs and traditions that are not codified on a single written norm. The most important decisions regarding the political line of the MAS and selecting national authorities usually happen in National Congresses, which are typically "largely crowded meetings where the multitude— composed by a great number of social organizations—decides by public acclaim."[61] According to Ramiro Llanos, however, "this is a partial truth" as, in the end, "the selection of candidates ultimately depends on Morales' approval or, at a minimum, is conditioned by Morales."[62] As a result, whereas there are some representatives in the congress who were selected by their social bases and through mechanisms of direct democracy, others, the so-called 'invited', have become authorities by *dedazo*[63] and "without the support of any social or popular organization."[64] This clearly bypasses the party statutes, in which article 42 says that "candidates for national and municipal

[61] Author's interview with Samuel Guarayos, president of the MAS-La Paz *dirección departamenta*l (La Paz), 28 July 2008.

[62] Author's interview with Ramiro Llanos (La Paz), 6 August, 2008.

[63] In this context, the *dedazo* is an informal practice that allows authorities to single-handedly (or in consultation with political cliques) determine who is going to be a candidate to office or an appointee in the public administration.

[64] Author's interview with senator Antonio Peredo (La Paz), 12 July, 2008. Moira Zuazo (2008) also found that when the district is large and its inhabitants are not closely linked to social organizations, there is a tendency toward the invitation of candidates by *dedazo*. The selection of candidates through mechanisms of direct democracy is not common in such areas. The same occurs with plurinominal deputies and with national senators, as most of them are "invited."

elections" should be selected "by the bases through direct vote, in *ampliados*, *asambleas*, *cabildos* or other democratic forms that each sector considers adequate."

"*El dedo utiliza el Evo*," affirmed Ramiro Llanos, who was an active member of the MAS in its origins in the Chapare and a privileged witness of the decision-making processes. Similar conclusions were drawn by José Antonio Quiroga, who was another privileged witness of these mechanisms.[65] The extensive use of the *dedazo* reveals a gap between formal rules and how the party functions in practice. At the same time, the discrepancy reveals a degree of decentralization in terms of decision-making processes within the MAS.

Despite the decentralization in the selection of candidates, the locus of authority in the MAS is currently Evo Morales, who defines the lines of the MAS.[66] Formal leadership bodies such as the *dirección nacional*, *direcciones departamentales*, and *direcciones regionales* were created and formalized in the statutes as an attempt to consolidate a party structure and control the territory, especially in urban areas (see Do Alto 2007a). Even though those bodies do exist on paper and they perform important tasks, in reality they lack independent authority vis-à-vis Morales. This perception is shared by José Antonio Quiroga, for whom "for Evo it is hard to delegate, to share the power […] he is very perceptive of what social leaders tell him. He is in constant contact with his bases and he listens to them. But there is not an organic linkage between that and his decision. It is

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[65] Author's interview with José Antonio Quiroga (La Paz), 18 July, 2008.

[66] Before the 2005 elections, the parliamentary brigade enjoyed a greater degree of autonomy vis-à-vis Morales.

true that he listens, but that he rules by obeying is far from reality."[67] In addition, due to

intra-district tensions that will be addressed in the following chapter, some bureaucratic

bodies which exist on paper do not exist in practice. For example, according to the

statutes, there should be a sequence of leadership bodies in the form of *direcciones* and at

different levels: district level, regional level, provincial level, departmental level, and

national level. In reality, however, there are regional *direcciones* neither for La Paz nor

for El Alto to coordinate the organization and the activities of the MAS militants, just to

name an example.[68] Therefore, in the absence of regional directions, "the work is

concentrated by the departmental direction."[69] The lack of clear and stable rules to

regulate behavior helps to explain why the locus of authority is ultimately Morales, who,

in the absence of an institutionalized party structure, remains the ultimate decision-

maker.

The MAS' central bureaucracy is virtually inexistent and, in Guarayos' words, "it cannot

even exist."[70] The inexistence of a party bureaucracy often "leads to improvisation, as

there are no secretaries, no administrative bosses, and no professionals or technocrats.

This means that the 'rules of conduct' are not usually respected."[71] It is important to note

that although the statutes recognize the existence of departmental directions, regional,

provincial, and other directions, they say nothing about their infrastructure and how they

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[67] Author's interview with José Antonio Quiroga (La Paz), 18 July, 2008.

[68] As will be closely examined in Chapter 3, these bodies ceased to exist "on the ground" because of internal fights between members.

[69] Author's interview with senator Antonio Peredo (La Paz), 12 July, 2008.

[70] Author's interview with Samuel Guarayos, president of the MAS-La Paz *dirección departmental* (La Paz), 28 July, 2008.

[71] Author's interview with deputy Jorge Silva (La Paz), 30 July, 2008.

should be financed. This leaves a lot of room for improvisation. As a result, for

example, the office where the departmental direction of La Paz works was actually lent

by a peasant organization and it currently works as *the* office for both entities, which

could generate conflict of interests between the two. Notwithstanding the

underdevelopment of a bureaucratic structure, the departmental directions, al least that

one in La Paz, keeps good records of membership and activities of the territorial-based

distritos zonales. These districts are mentioned in the party statutes and, as Guarayos

claims, "we keep record of all of them. If a *compañero* wants to open a party office

within his district, he has to notify us. Otherwise it doesn't work."[72] These territorial-

based structures perform a variety of functions such as coordinating demonstrations and

campaigns, organizing informative events, fundraisers, cultural activities, and so on.[73]

For the most part they do not perform candidate selection tasks, as these structures lack

real power, and this is a source of tension between the rank and file and the MAS. An

important aspect is that these structures are largely funded by contributions of its

members and contributions are unregulated.

The MAS' grassroots organization is decentralized and largely informal. According to

the statutes, the MAS is structured according to the territorial, political, and

administrative divisions of the republic.[74] As it was seen, especially in urban areas, the

MAS is organized around territorial districts, and these structures constitute the base of a

pyramidal structure. Directly above these are, in theory, the regional directions, which

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[72] Author's interview with Samuel Guarayos, president of the MAS-La Paz *dirección departamenta*l (La Paz), 28 July, 2008.

[73] Comments based on participatory observations in district six, Villa Copacabana, La Paz.

[74] Movement Toward Socialism, *Estatuto Orgánico o Carta Fundamental*, article 8.

then are followed by the departmental and the national directions. In practice, however, the districts coexist with multiple *ad hoc* structures that are autonomous of the party bureaucracy and leadership, and their bases of articulation are not territorial. These structures are usually the creation of "spontaneous leaders that emerge within the MAS,"[75] as for example, Gustavo Torrico, who is a national deputy for La Paz and has never been an 'organic' member of the party. In Torrico's view, "the districts were not working. They did not include independent individuals and those who did not want to participate in the activities of the districts."[76] For that reason, he decided to create autonomous groups called the *Satucos*, which are recognized neither by the party statute nor by the departmental directions, but which coordinate activities with districts especially during an electoral period.[77] According to Samuel Guarayos, "they are outside the organic statutes, but they work for the same cause. That's why we don't have anything against them. What we can't do is treat them as a district. We have no jurisdiction over them and they have no representation in the departmental direction."[78] Although the *Satucos* do not formally exist in the party statutes, they are very well organized; they have a nation-wide presence, and they have their headquarters—*casa de campaña*—in the city of La Paz. From there they recruit members (predominantly urban), carry out fundraisers, provide political (not ideological) education, campaign in

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[75] Author's interview with senator Antonio Peredo (La Paz), 12 July, 2008.

[76] Author's interview with deputy Gustavo Torrico, founder and head of the *Satucos* (La Paz), 29 July, 2008.

[77] Other examples of these *ad hoc* structures include Cori, Inti, the Sumas, and many more. However, *Satucos* are the better-organized structure amongst these groups and the only ones with national reach. None of them are included in the party statutes but they perform a number of activities and they are a considerable voting mass.

[78] Author's interview with Samuel Guarayos, president of the MAS-La Paz *dirección departamenta*l (La Paz), 28 July, 2008.

elections, and offer an array of social services to their members. As for their

membership, in Torrico's words:

> we don't ask for an inscription, *Satucos* are not official party militants; we don't ask for
> any requirements, but we expect that they become political activists; we just look for
> volunteers and we let them participate carrying out campaigns, etc. And as you saw
> yesterday, even lawyers volunteer their cars. They [*Satucos*] see that they are
> participating in a process of change in which no one obliges them to do anything […] so
> this empowers them, they appropriate the Movement Toward Socialism for themselves,
> and that's better than a militant. It's strong what's being created. It's a powerful bond
> that embraces them, that brings them close to the MAS and to our leader Evo Morales.[79]

In weekly meetings, members have the opportunity to exchange ideas with Torrico, with

other authorities of the MAS, and with other loyalists to the process of change. This

creates strong bonds between members and the leadership. In other words, the *Satucos*

are a paradigmatic example of what Roberts calls "encapsulating linkages" between party

and society (Roberts 2002, 9-34). They are the closest local branches in the MAS that

compare to Levitsky's descriptions of Peronist *unidades básicas* (Levitsky 1998, 448; see

also Levitsky 2003). Although *Satucos* are not incorporated into the formal structure of

the MAS, and their activities often clash with those of the districts (in the pre and post

electoral periods), they play fundamental roles during, between, and after electoral

processes.

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[79] Author's interview with Gustavo Torrico (La Paz), 29 July, 2008.

In a country constantly agitated by elections, the MAS membership is informal and it is growing incessantly. There is no application process and, to become a member, one just needs to sign a simple form which serves exclusively for legal purposes. What distinguishes the MAS from the 'traditional' parties is that, as Guarayos emphasized, "we don't impose conditions on our militants and we don't exclude. You simply need to be an honest and consistent person and fight for this country."[80] Virtually everyone can become a member of the party—even an Argentine student with no Bolivian ID, as many attempted to register me.[81] Unlike many other parties (particularly those on the left), members of the MAS do not have a set of fixed obligations to comply with and the level of commitment is very low. In fact, "there are no screening mechanisms and there is no ideological formation. There is nothing of that. The MAS is and will always be like this, as that is its nature. This supposes the coexistence of different [ideological] conceptions under a single master plan of government. Because, unlike ideology, politics unite and do not separate."[82]

The MAS maintains strong linkages with a wide array of urban and rural social organizations but, for the most part, these ties are informal. Since its origins in the Chapare, the MAS' strongest and closest bonds have been to peasant unions of the region and these linkages have been formalized in the party statutes. However, as the MAS

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[80] Author's interview with Samuel Guarayos, president of the MAS-La Paz *dirección departamenta*l (La Paz), 28 July, 2008.

[81] Despite these repetitive attempts and pressures to register in the MAS, I did not become a member. However, I did sign attendance sheets in every meeting I attended in district 6, Villa Copacabana, La Paz. These attendance sheets are an example of a mechanism of social control used by the MAS in urban spaces. Militants perceive that those with the best attendance record are the ones who have more chances of getting jobs in the public administration.

[82] Author's interview with Antonio Peredo (La Paz), 12 July, 2008.

grew and expanded to urban areas and to the national level, it established alliances with

urban, mining, and peasant economic organizations, but these linkages have not been

formalized. Due to the tacit agreement between these social organizations and the MAS,

the social organizations have guaranteed for themselves a degree of participation in the

government structure, be it as a representative at the congress or in the executive. Such is

the case of Jorge Silva, a representative for urban artisan organizations, who claims that

"this lets us [artisans] propose laws that facilitate and give more opportunities to the

sector."[83] By establishing these kinds of alliances, the MAS has guaranteed for itself

allies as well as an impressive voting mass, as the combination of these sectors

constitutes more than 80 per cent of the country's economically active population. These

alliances, however, do not involve an organic participation in the MAS' structure and this

stands as a source of tension between organizations, which compete to control spaces of

power, and also between organizations and the MAS, which has not yet been able to

incorporate the interests and demands of these groups into its discourse and its program.

In many cases, the relationship between the two would be driven by pragmatism,

corporatism, and patronage. Also, although in many cases the linkage pattern is

instrumental, it also reflects the lack of political cadres within the peasant movement. It

remains to be seen how the MAS can incorporate the variety of demands, interests, and

representation of these organizations into its formal structure and discourse; it also

remains to be seen what mechanisms the MAS can implement to solve the differences

within, in an effort to democratize the MAS organization and to formalize its channels of

participation.

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[83] Author's interview with Jorge Silva (La Paz), 30 July, 2008.

In the absence of such mechanisms for articulating demands and solving differences between organizations, Morales' leadership plays a predominant role within the MAS. As Jorge Silva says, "he is a referee and no one challenges his decisions."[84] However, Morales is not the owner of the party and he does not have absolute control over it, as some may claim. According to Román Loayza this has to do with the unique features that shape a 'political instrument' and that contrast to conventional understandings of political parties. In his words,

> that the MAS is a 'political instrument' means that social organizations appropriate the MAS for themselves; there is no *mandón* (big boss), but a leader and that leader is now Evo Morales. We have made him our leader and now he is the president [of the MAS]. This does not mean Evo Morales is the owner of the 'political instrument'. Its owners are the indigenous peasants. And now, after 2005, not only we [indigenous peasants] are its owners, but also the impoverished people and even the middle classes that made us reach a 54 percent in the national elections. […] And we are not Evo Morales', but Morales is ours. Unlike the 'traditional parties' like the MNR, MIR, NFR, and others, which had big bosses, we have a leader and not a boss. Instead, his bosses are the social organizations.[85]

It is also true that due to the unique configuration of the MAS, Morales has face to face contact with his social bases on a periodic basis and this is not mediated by a bureaucratic structure. As such, this constitutes an attribute of conventional understandings of populism. But the absence of a consolidated party structure leaves lots of maneuvering room to the umbrella of social organizations which shape the MAS. This umbrella of different groups and ideologies, at the same time, remains vastly decentralized, as each

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[84] Author's interview with Jorge Silva (La Paz), 30 July, 2008.
[85] Author's interview with Román Loayza (La Paz), 22 July, 2008.

organization has its own internal structure and individual features. In most cases, these

organizations are not integrated into the statutes and they are often autonomous from the

MAS, mobilizing both for and against the government and placing limits on Morales'

charismatic leadership. The clash between miners in Huanuni was just one tragic

example of the power of corporatism in social organizations, and reflected some of the

limits of Morales' omnipotence. This explains why it is so important to consider what

occurs at the level of the social movements (see Do Alto 2007a). It also helps to explain

why Morales is still a social movement leader. In the end, it is important to point out that

he is simultaneously the president of the country, of the MAS, and also the executive

secretary of the Six Federations of the Tropics of Cochabamba.[86]

Career paths are also largely informal and non-bureaucratic within the MAS. There is no

single channel for career advancements within the organization. One method is to pursue

a career within an organization, then to move up in the departmental level, and then move

to the national level. The other channel for career advancement takes place through

personal ties to Morales, through corporate arrangements between social organizations

and the MAS, through 'invitation', and through a sort of internal clientelism. But there

are no clear rules and procedures to regulate career paths. Something similar occurs with

the expulsion of leaders from the MAS, which usually takes place in the form of personal

disqualification and almost never follows formal channels. As will be demonstrated, the

expulsions of Filemón Escóbar and Abel Mamani exemplify how the party actually

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[86] Morales still participates in most of the meetings organized by the Six Federations of the Tropics of
Cochabamba, which is the main coca grower's federation. It is worth pointing out that his leadership
within the Six Federations was ratified by public acclaim in 2008. He has been leading this syndical
structure for over twelve years.

works in these regards. Although the party statutes stipulate the existence of an honors

tribunal "to judge the faults and crimes committed by militants and leaders of the MAS,"

these mechanisms do not function in practice. While conducted by omitting respect to

any formal and democratic channels and by appealing to campaigns of personal discredit,

it has become clear that the decisions to expel Escóbar and Mamani did not respond to

"faults and crimes" committed by these leaders. In the case of Escóbar, for example,

evidence has not been found to support his quick expulsion from the MAS with

corruption charges.[87] A close witness of this process was José Antonio Quiroga, who

claims that Escóbar's expulsion "responded to growing political differences between

Morales and Escóbar; it was an effort to neutralize him. Escóbar was finally expelled

from the MAS without having passed through any ethics court or internal commissions.

These bodies do not exist, or at least they did not exist when I was there [in the MAS]."[88]

In the case of Mamani, a surprising number of interviewees agreed that the expulsion was

conducted unfairly and did not follow 'democratic' procedures. In the words of an

interviewee from El Alto, who preferred to remain anonymous, "even he [Mamani]

wasn't as transparent as he could have been, they never found evidence to prove that he

was corrupt as they claimed he was. They didn't even want to look for evidence.

Mamani was expelled to resolve matters of political and personal differences, and this is

entrenched in the undemocratic political culture of our parties." According to Moira

Zuazo,

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[87] Escóbar was expelled from the MAS accused of being a CIA agent who, after having received a large amount of money from the US embassy, helped to approve a law that guaranteed immunity to US military forces in the country. For Escóbar's own reflections on his expulsion from the MAS and his public response to Morales, see Escóbar 2008, 270-278.

[88] Author's interview with José Antonio Quiroga (La Paz), 18 July, 2008.

Mamani was expelled from the MAS in a very dramatic way. Had they attacked him alleging bad public management, Mamani could have gone back to El Alto and, from there, organized a mobilization to overthrow the government. And they did not want to upset El Alto. Nobody wants to upset El Alto. So what did they do? They disqualified him as a person by conducting a severe campaign of personal discredit. As a consequence, Mamani lost the social and moral authority he once enjoyed.[89]

Issues related to the bonds between the MAS and social organizations, like the one led by Mamani before he became a minister, will be addressed in the following chapter. But what needs to be clear in this section is that the absence of clear rules further concentrates the power in Morales, who can expel leaders as he pleases and in the absence of democratic mechanisms. The same logic is replicated at lower levels, as "local leaders can expel members just for being leaders."[90]

To cap it all, "the statutes are a legal requirement, but they are impossible to follow."[91] An examination of the MAS statutes does not say much about how the party works on the ground. They say little about its national and local organization, its membership, its mechanisms of decision-making, as well as the procedures for candidate selection and career paths. In the absence of a consolidated party structure, as well as formal and democratic channels for participation, Morales occupies *the* central role in the organization. But he does not own it and, at times, his leadership may be challenged by

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[89] Author's interview with Moira Zuazo, author and professor of political science (La Paz), 8 July, 2008. It is worth highlighting here that at the time of this writing, in March 2009, Santos Ramírez, a former national senator and director of the state-owned petrol company *Yacimientos Petrolíferos Fiscales Bolivianos* (YPFB), was expelled from the MAS after facing charges of corruption. Although on this occasion Ramirez was judged by an honors and ethics tribunal, the process was still guided under unclear pre-established procedures.

[90] Author's interview with Jorge Silva (La Paz), 30 July, 2008.

[91] Author's interview with Antonio Peredo (La Paz), 12 July, 2008.

what occurs at the relatively autonomous level of the social movements. For instance, what occurred in Huanuni during October 5 and 6, 2006, demonstrated that social organizations have not been neutralized under the Morales' government. In this particular case, the presence of cooperativist miners in the government structure did not impede this sector from expressing an autonomous position against the government and from spurring on social conflict. Another example relates to the crisis of Cochabamba in January 11, 2007. On that occasion, peasant social organizations—and other sectors related to the MAS such as the *campesinos regantes*—came together to ask for the resignation of Manfres Reyes Villa, who was the prefect of Cochabamba. According to Do Alto (2007a), these organizations ignored Morales' desires to deactivate the protest, and they moved with relative autonomy vis-à-vis the government. There is no doubt that Morales is a charismatic leader. He is *the* leader, but not the boss. And in the absence of a formal party structure, his leadership is critical to maintain unity amongst diversity and to keep some organization in what seems to be an anomic disorganization.

CHAPTER 3: The 'Urbanization' of the MAS: A Peasant Party in Urban Areas of La Paz and El Alto

"La Paz y El Alto eligen gobiernos y expulsan neoliberales"

Samuel Guarayos

As has been shown throughout this thesis, the MAS is a political formation that has emerged from peasant and indigenous social movements that have long struggled to oppose the eradication of coca crops and to control natural resources. Born of peasant and indigenous popular movements, its core social bases and constituency still are the coca growers in the Chapare region, which claim to own the *instrumento*. It has also been shown that the peculiar conditions of its emergence and rapid rise to power have indelibly shaped its organizational features. Judging from its peculiar birth and experience, some may still insist that the MAS is a peasant party.[92] The success of the MAS, however, is due only in part to peasant and indigenous mobilization. It is also "owed to members of the urban and informal economy, to popular, working-class, and

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[92] As noted in Chapter 1, it was a constant amongst interviewees that to understand what the MAS was all about I would be better off studying this party in the Chapare region.

middle-class rejection of the neoliberal governance in Bolivia that made their lives more difficult" (Albro 2007, 314). Although the MAS is anchored in the Chapare region, it can no longer be considered a peasant party. To treat it as such is to overlook its organizational flexibility and the broader coalition of interests that it currently represents, as it has successfully expanded itself to urban areas and surged to the forefront of national politics. Moreover, since 2005 it has become Bolivia's first and dominant political force, currently controlling the presidency, holding a parliamentary majority in the lower chamber, and commanding majority support in six of the nine departmental governments. Since 2005 the MAS has been almost unbeatable at the polls, with the cities of La Paz and El Alto standing as its most powerful voting mass. How does the MAS operate in this metropolitan area?

In the context of Latin America's 'Left Turns', the MAS has introduced singularities to the regional landscape: it is an organization spawned by popular movements amidst an intense cycle of protests, and is currently holding the reins of government while being at a *movement stage*. Because its leadership is generated through a bottom-up manner and is largely accountable to social mobilization from below, the MAS has been classified by some authors as a 'movement left' (e.g., Levitsky and Roberts 2008). By looking at how the MAS operates in the cities of La Paz and El Alto, this chapter is an attempt to provide some empirical evidence in support of that classification and, eventually, to refine it. The chapter is also an attempt to assess breaks and continuities between the MAS and older parties in terms of political practices and organization in urban settings.

3.1 The Cities of La Paz and El Alto

Drawing on primary fieldwork carried out in the cities of La Paz and El Alto, this section examines how the MAS is structured in these cities as well as the political practices it has put in place in these urban areas. On the one hand, to understand how the MAS is structured territorially, I participated for a period of over two months in the activities of district number six, in Villa Copacabana, La Paz. There I combined participatory observation, institutional ethnography, and semi-structured interviews with social actors involved with the political life of the district. This methodological strategy was complemented by conducting informal unstructured interviews with leaders, activists and militants in other districts (number 2 and 20 of La Paz, and number 15 in El Alto). On the other hand, to understand the MAS' networks with urban social organizations in these cities, I interviewed local and national level authorities, such as deputies, senators, and cabinet vice-ministers. I also interviewed leaders in social organizations such as FEJUVE and COR, in El Alto, and I interviewed leaders whose organizations have not formed an alliance with the MAS. What follows is an account of how the MAS operates in these two cities based on this fieldwork.

But let me begin with a question: Why are these cities relevant to understanding the internal dynamics of the MAS? My general argument is that the MAS' rapid political advance at the national level and its rise to power has had much to do with the (electoral and non-institutional) behavior of the residents of these two cities. Their residents' mobilizations helped force two presidents to resign. Moreover, it was in these urban

areas that the MAS received overwhelming popular support in the 2005 national elections

that brought Evo Morales to the presidency, in the elections for the constituent assembly

of 2006, in the recall referendum held on August 2008,[93] and in the recent popular

referendum for the new political constitution which took place in January 2009.[94]

Moreover, these cities are deeply interdependent and according to Xavier Albó, "If La

Paz is still the political heart of the country, El Alto is still the lungs of La Paz. […]

during key political moments Paceños and Alteños have united themselves 'with only one

heart', to jointly decide the fate of the country" (Albó 2006, 332).

The conurbation of La Paz and El Alto consists of an area of more than 1.5 million

people of diverse ethnic backgrounds, social classes, and places of origin. La Paz is

Bolivia's principal city and its administrative and political capital; it has a total

population of 789,585 inhabitants. Together with El Alto, which has more than 650,000

residents, it comprises the biggest urban area of Bolivia, making both cities decisive

players in national politics. As such, these cities are often seen as a desired ally that

should be treated with care, as they may rapidly turn into an electoral threat. This is

perceived by party leaders, who claim that "[the one] who wins in La Paz and El Alto, is

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[93] In August 10, 2008, Bolivians participated in a recall referendum for the first time in their history. This institutional innovation was suggested by the government and approved by the opposition-controlled senate. It was held to determine whether Evo Morales and Alvaro García Linera, as well as eight departmental prefects (excluding Chuquisaca's prefect), should stay in office. On the one hand, Morales and his vice-president received a majority of the votes in 6 departments (Chuquisaca, Cochabamba, La Paz, Oruro, Potosi, and Pando). One department (Tarija) was much contested, and the other two voted to recall the president (Santa Cruz and Beni). On the other hand, while six of the eight prefects were reaffirmed by substantial margins the prefects of Cochabamba and La Paz were defeated.

[94] In January 25, 2009, Bolivians participated in a constitutional referendum. Drafted by the Constituent Assembly in 2007 and partially modified as an agreement between the government and opposition, the new constitution was approved in the referendum. The new constitution was approved with more than 61 percent of popular support.

the one who wins the contest; the one who loses them…"[95] Although the MAS has

broadened its constituency to urban sectors and won the hearts of Paceños (residents of

La Paz) and Alteños (residents of El Alto) it has not accompanied this process with the

consolidation of a solid party structure that incorporates the interests and demands of

these urban populations. Fearing that one day the MAS can lose the hearts of these

sectors, some party leaders believe it is imperative to "start building organically"[96] in

these two cities.

The cities of La Paz and El Alto gained increasing attention, both nationally and

internationally, in the cycle of great protests initiated in 2000. In September-October

2000 the conflicts that initiated in Cochabamba spread to the highlands of La Paz. An

Aymara peasant leader, the *Mallku* Felipe Quispe led a series of indigenous social

mobilizations and road blockades against the Bánzer government. He later formed his

own political party, the Pachakuti Indigenous Movement (*Movimiento Indígena*

Pachakuti, or MIP). The uprisings revealed an existing crisis of representation of the

traditional political parties as well as an increasing gap between parties and social

movements. The June 2002 elections would later bring emerging indigenous parties,

such as the MAS and the MIP, into the formal political system and to the center of the

stage.[97]

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[95] Author's interview with Samuel Guarayos, president of the MAS-La Paz *dirección departamental* (La Paz), July 28, 2008.

[96] Author's interview with MAS' deputy for La Paz Gustavo Torrico (La Paz), 29 July, 2008.

[97] According to René Antonio Mayorga, "because both Indian parties combined obtained 27.03 percent of the vote and 26 percent of the seats in Congress, the elections brought about a historical shift in political representation" (2006, 160).

In 2003, a spiral of urban protests ignited in the city of La Paz and then quickly expanded to neighboring El Alto. The first protest ignited during the so-called *Febrero Negro*, when the Sánchez de Lozada government decreed an *impuestazo* (tax increase) that directly affected wage workers, as an effort to control the fiscal deficit. The tax increase triggered a police insurrection in the Plaza Murillo, the heart of La Paz. The uprising was soon repressed by the military, resulting in an open confrontation between the police and the military that resulted in 15 deaths and more than 70 wounded. This uprising expanded to El Alto and Alteños who, in solidarity with their Paceño neighbors and frustrated with their government and the neoliberal state, decided to burn banks, political party offices, and—most notably—their own *alcaldía* (henceforth known as the *alcaldía quemada*). Eventually, the protests led 'Goni' to reverse his law, which constituted a popular victory over the hollowed neoliberal state. It should be noted that these protests were carried out by autonomous organizations and individuals and were not coordinated. It should also be noted that the MAS played a marginal—and even absent—role throughout, and did not mobilize its militants.

Urban insurrections were reactivated in September 2003 in El Alto. On this occasion the protests, and in particular the government reaction, gave rise to what came to be known as the 'gas war', or according to other accounts as *Octubre Rojo*. These popular uprisings were sparked by the government's attempt to sell natural gas to the United States through Chilean ports. A variety of urban (and rural) social organizations participated in this struggle to reclaim the natural resource for Bolivia, but the principal actors were autonomous neighbor associations. United under the slogan *gas para los*

bolivianos / "natural gas for the Bolivians," they sought to defend national ownership

over natural resources. The situation quickly got more convoluted and the protests more

generalized. To the government's repression *con bala* / "with bullets," Alteños

responded by incorporating other local demands, such as the opposition to the Maya and

Paya registration forms,[98] and national demands, like the resignation of Sánchez de

Lozada, the nationalization of natural resources, and the call for a constituent assembly.

The more repression, the more radical their positions became. The protests had opened

associational spaces as they increased the possibilities for a convergence of interests,

which some actors—such as the MAS, the *Plan Progreso*, and individual politicians such

as Roberto de La Cruz—sought to use to their benefit. Although the MAS organized

marches and protests throughout the country—including in La Paz and El Alto—it was

not a major player in El Alto and it was not recognized as such by Alteños. However, the

MAS quickly incorporated the demands, interests, and symbols of Alteños into its

discourse and sought to channel the popular discontent through elections.

Contrary to all kinds of forecasts and expectations, the MAS did not perform well in El

Alto in the municipal elections of 2004.[99] But two years later, in the 2005 national

elections, Morales received an overwhelming support in this city as it managed to

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[98] The Maya and Paya—one and two in Aymara—forms were designed by the municipal authorities of El Alto to redesign the tax system in the city after the municipal building was burnt in February 2003. Residents of El Alto suspected that these forms were aimed at retrieving personal information and at increasing their income taxes. Consequently, they protested against these forms organizing marches and street occupations.

[99] José Luis Paredes' civic association, the Progress Plan (*Plan Progreso*, or PP), won these municipal elections with more than 53 percent of the popular vote. The second place went to the MAS, which only obtained 17 percent of the total vote.

channel the climax of generalized protest.[100] It is thus possible to affirm that its success

is, at least in part, owed to the struggles and votes of El Alto and La Paz. What follows is

a succinct account of how the MAS entered into these important cities.

3.2   How has the MAS Inserted itself in the Cities?

As has been shown in Chapters 1 and 2, the MAS participated for the first time in

municipal elections in 1999. Unlike in 1997, this time peasant and indigenous

organizations did not enter into an alliance with political parties and, for the first time,

they used the banner of the MAS. They selected most of their candidates through

mechanisms of direct democracy and obtained a significant amount of votes (3.3 percent

in the whole country). However, these votes were mostly concentrated in the department

of Cochabamba and, more specifically, in the provinces of Chapare, Carrasco, and

Ayopaya. At that time, the MAS' performance in urban areas was still insignificant, as it

failed to win urban *alcaldías* and *concejalías*; its presence in urban conurbations was

minimal and even resisted by urban residents.

The MAS' experience in urban areas of La Paz and El Alto is thus relatively recent, and it

can be traced to 2002 when the MAS shook up the party system nationwide. A series of

factors facilitated the MAS entrance into the cities of La Paz and, to a lesser extent, to El

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[100] Massive protests took place between May-June 2005 against the transitory government of Carlos Mesa Gisbert, and these protests eventually led to his resignation and call for anticipated elections in December 2005. The MAS was a major player during these protests and emerged as *the* political force able to provide governability.

Alto. In the first place, this process is related to the above mentioned road blockades led by Felipe Quispe in El Alto during September 2000 and the residual effects of the 'water war' in Cochabamba. As has been shown elsewhere, these mobilizations acted as a strong blow to traditional political parties in the whole country, ignited the retreat of the political and ideational right, and facilitated the incorporation of new parties into the formal political system. In a context of rejection of traditional parties and neoliberal governability, residents of La Paz and El Alto welcomed the MAS as a viable alternative.

In the second place, it is only possible to understand the urbanization of the MAS in the context of a partisan dealignment,[101] as its consolidation in La Paz was only possible once Conscience of the Fatherland (*Conciencia de la Patria*, or CONDEPA) started to lose power and influence in cities. Founded by Carlos Palenque in 1988, CONDEPA had emerged at the end of the 1980s to represent popular sectors that were "affected by adjustment policies and unrepresented by the established parties" (Mayorga 2006, 154). This party was built around the charismatic leadership of the *compadre* Carlos Palenque, and its political practices combined the extensive use of clientelism, paternalism, plebiscitary appeals to the masses, unmediated relationships to constituents, and a strong anti-systemic discourse (Revilla Herrero, Carlos J. 2006; Alenda 2003). In part because CONDEPA failed to consolidate party structure and to forge organic linkages with its constituency, once the charismatic leader died in 1997 the party practically died along

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[101] Partisan dealignment is a trend or process whereby a large portion of the electorate abandons its previous partisan affiliation and voting behavior. Contrasted to 'partisan realignment', this process does not necessarily involve the development of a replacing party affiliation.

with its founder.[102] The loss of political power of this neopopulist party, however,

"opened the doors of La Paz so that the MAS could incorporate itself into the city."[103]

The MAS entered into the city and occupied vacated spaces which were created by the

retreat of CONDEPA. I argue that along with CONDEPA's evanescence, there was a

transfer of their political practices to the MAS, and this occurred as ex-CONDEPA

operators and leaders quickly became *masistas*.

The MAS emerged as Bolivia's first electoral force in the municipal elections of 2004,

which consolidated the voting trend initiated in 2002. In the aftermath of the *Octubre*

Rojo, the 2004 elections were deeply affected by those tumultuous events and its results

confirmed a parallel trend: the decline of the traditional political parties. After the

popular uprisings of 2003, the MAS came out as *the* political force able to articulate

popular discontent into a coherent political project. Although it won almost every

municipality in the country, it could not win the municipal governments of Bolivia's

principal cities—including La Paz and El Alto. In these cities, the MAS competed with

more established political parties of the left such as the MSM (principally in La Paz), and

José Luis Paredes' *Plan Progreso* in El Alto.

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[102] The *compadre* Carlos Palenque died in March 1997, just a few months before the national elections. He was replaced by the *comadre* Remedios Loza. Although CONDEPA obtained a significant share of the votes in the 1997 elections, it ended in third place and became a partner of the Bánzer's coalition government for one year. This generated discontent in its constituency, which voted largely for the Movement Without Fear (*Movimiento Sin Miedo*, or MSM) in the municipal elections of 1999 in La Paz, and for the MAS in the national elections of 2002.

[103] Author's interview with Sebastián Michel, MSM leader in La Paz (La Paz), 4 August, 2008.

Evo Morales and the MAS participated actively in the rebellions of May-June 2005,

which forced the resignation of Carlos Mesa (17 Oct. 2003 – 6 Jun. 2005). However, the

blockades and other pressure mechanisms were not well regarded by urban middle-

sectors, particularly in the city of La Paz. Polls show that Morales and MAS suffered a

clear decline in popularity during these events particularly in urban areas, but it was still

the referential force for the rest of the left. Recognizing this, after the resignation (or fall)

of Carlos Mesa Gisbert in June 6, some urban forces attempted to configure a Broad

Front (*Frente Amplio*, or FA) as a mechanism to incorporate a coalition of progressive

forces into the MAS; in order to develop a comprehensive long-term program of

government; and as a collective effort to democratize the MAS. It is worth noting here

that individuals such as José Antonio Quiroga (Independent), René Joaquino, Juán del

Granado (MSM), and others, had attempted to articulate a similar front in 2002 but with

no success, as the MAS refused to form alliances with political parties. History repeated

itself in 2005 and the attempts to configure a strategic Broad Front failed to materialize

once again, as the MAS insisted on the 'zero alliances' formula. But perhaps as a sign of

political opportunism, some of these forces—particularly the MSM—decided to

accommodate with the MAS and negotiated informal alliances that guaranteed some

spaces of power for their own candidates. Days or even hours before the presentation of

lists to the National Electoral Court (*Corte Nacional Electoral*, or CNE), the MSM

managed to place some of its candidates into the MAS' lists. These two parties never

formalized their accord before the CNE and their linkages remain to be loosely

structured. Some of the MSM candidates—particularly the uninominal candidates—

performed fairly well in the elections. And this situation has had implications for the

configuration and dynamics of the MAS in urban areas, particularly in the city of La Paz,

as this generated discontent in the MAS' urban bases.

For the 2005 elections the MAS also articulated an umbrella of alliances with urban

social organizations in these cities and incorporated a wide array of popular demands into

its electoral platform. It also appealed to urban middle- and popular-classes that were

discontented with a corrupt and inefficient political class. As a result, Paceños and

Alteños "finally changed their attitude and voted massively for *Evo Presidente*."[104]

3.3   The MAS in the Cities: The Importance of the Territory

Following Komadina and Geffroy (2007), the MAS is a political creature with a dual

structure. One pillar of this structure, which was originally entrenched in the founding

organizations and now includes a broader coalition of social forces, is highly

institutionalized. In this section, I will call this the 'social MAS'. The other pillar, in

urban areas, consists of a relatively conventional party structure and is structured around

the administrative divisions of the cities. This structure, which I will henceforth call the

'territorial MAS', gets activated with greater emphasis during electoral processes. As has

been shown elsewhere, although there have been attempts to institutionalize this

territorial structure in the party statute, it remains highly informal and not

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[104] Author's interview with Román Loayza, a founding member of the MAS as well as former national
deputy and elected official for the Constituent Assembly (La Paz), 22 July, 2008.

institutionalized. What follows is an account of the organizational forms that the MAS

adopts in the cities of La Paz and El Alto.

Born of peasant and indigenous unions in the Chapare region, the MAS was initially

resisted by residents of La Paz and El Alto. In Román Loayza's words, "we were not

politically accepted in the cities at the level of the political instrument."[105]   When the

MAS stomped into these cities, it sought to articulate a local organization throughout the

territory. And it rapidly managed to do so. In La Paz, this process was facilitated by the

retreat of CONDEPA, which had left militants and leaders "*a la deriva*." But on the

other hand, it was complicated by the strong presence of the MSM, which since the late

1990s has been the dominant force in the city. The strong presence of the MSM in this

city pushed MAS' leaders to negotiate a strategic alliance with this party, although they

formed this alliance without making big public announcements. According to Román

Loayza, this alliance was detrimental to the MAS as it forced the party to adopt political

practices of the MSM and to include its militants into the public administration. The

alliance with the MSM generated tensions between *emesemistas*[106] and *masistas*, as it

triggered a competition for public office candidacies; it also represented more

competition (between *emesemistas* and *masistas*) for limited jobs in the public

administration.

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[105] Author's interview with Román Loayza (La Paz), 22 July, 2008.
[106] Militants of the Movement Without Fear are known as *emesemistas*.

The articulation of the MAS in El Alto was even more complicated, as a series of political parties had long dominated the political life of that city, and because this city was particularly shaken by the events of 2003. To simplify my argument, it is possible to understand the articulation of the MAS keeping in mind two distinctive periods of time: before October 2003, and after October 2003. Before October, leaders such as Bertha Blanco[107] and Cristina Martínez[108] sought to build a structure in the city in the late 1990s, and managed to gain some votes in the municipal elections of 1999. But during those days such efforts were timid, as "Alteños did not like the MAS. Further, El Alto neither was important to Evo nor to anybody, as it was [dominated by] CONDEPA."[109] CONDEPA did indeed have a party structure and that structure was solidly consolidated in El Alto. In 1999, after what some consider the 'lost decade' of CONDEPA's rule (Revilla 2006, 5; see also Alenda 2003), the MIR returned to power with José Luis Paredes as the highest municipal authority. This party entered into a terminal crisis during the October events, and Paredes resigned while forming his own civic association—the *Plan Progreso* (PP).[110] The PP won the municipal elections of 2004 and—as a surprise to the growing body of *masistas* in El Alto—obtained a substantial portion of the total votes in the city. Although by this time the MAS had already built a (precarious) structure in the city, it only managed to win two out of nine *concejalías*.

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[107] According to many accounts, Bertha Blanco was the person who brought the MAS to El Alto. Ms. Blanco is a former member of the National Federation of *Campesina* Women of Bolivia-Bartolina Sisa organization who has worked actively to build a *masista* structure in the city of El Alto. An active advisor to the Indigenous Parliament, she is currently estranged from the MAS.

[108] Cristina Martínez is currently one *concejal* (out of two) for the MAS in El Alto.

[109] Author's interview with Bertha Blanco (La Paz), 14 August, 2008.

[110] *Plan Progreso* was originally the name of Paredes' government and development plan for the municipality of El Alto.

The MAS was usually resisted and, until 2003-05, it was regarded by residents in these cities as "a party of *pichicateros* and drug dealers."[111] The MAS was not a direct product of these cities, but it was inserted as something foreign. I argue that the MAS has faced obstacles in its articulating in these cities, as it has sought to organize a structure on top of political configurations that already existed in these cities. Along this organizing, the MAS incorporated militants and party operators that had previously militated in other parties. These incorporations were accompanied by a transfer of political practices that are now characteristic of the MAS in these settings. But before examining the political practices of the MAS, it is important to sketch how the party organized itself.

3.3.1   Local Party Infrastructure

To be schematic, the MAS' local infrastructure is shaped in the form of a pyramid. It is composed of territorial districts, the *direcciones regionales*, and the *dirección departamental*. Although there have been attempts to institutionalize this structure in the party statutes, in practice it remains informally organized. It should also be noted that this basic structure coexists with innumerable spontaneous branches.

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[111] Author's interview with Román Loayza (La Paz), 22 July, 2008. Bertha Blanco described this as a situation in which "they [residents of El Alto] would look at us as if we were drug dealers and addicts" (La Paz), 14 August, 2008. I should point out that *pichicateros* is a Bolivian slang word for 'drug users'.

Figure 3.1: Party Infrastructure
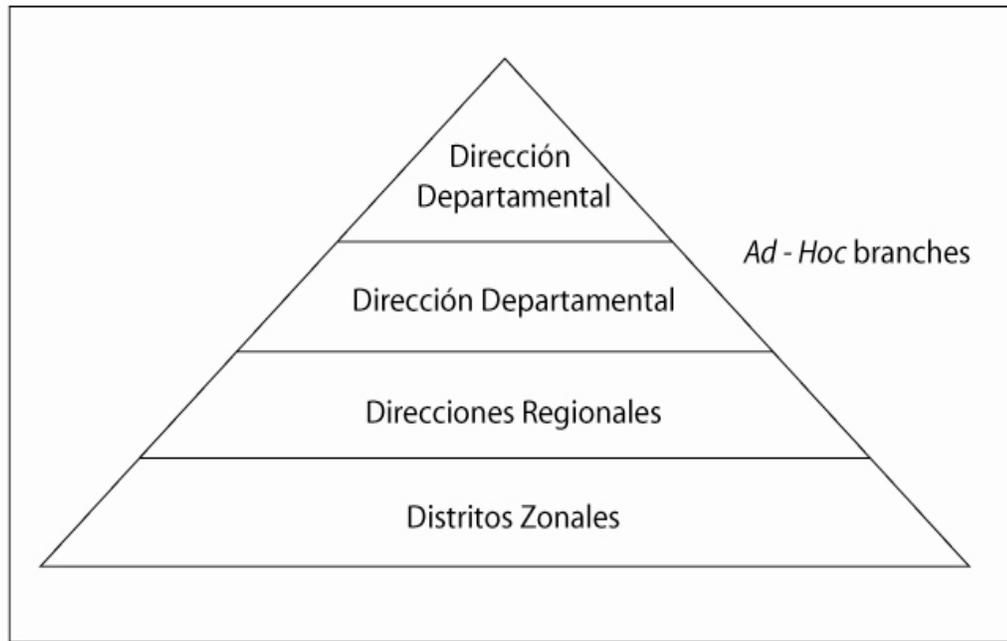
Distritos Zonales. In La Paz and El Alto, the territorial MAS is structured following the

administrative divisions of the cities made by the CNE, which consists of electoral

districts. Originally, these districts serve for electoral purposes, as ballot boxes are

spread throughout them during electoral processes. But most importantly for this thesis,

the MAS has transformed these administrative divisions into political districts in order to

articulate a party structure in the cities and thus spread itself throughout the territory.

These emerging local subunits have been called *distritos zonales* and they constitute base

of the MAS' structure in urban areas. Districts are not stipulated in the party charter, but

they are the only local branches recognized by party authorities. And it is worth

mentioning that, although they are very important to mobilize people and recruit militants in the cities, districts are usually not very well regarded by the social MAS—including Evo Morales.

The Direcciones Regionales and the Dirección Departamental. According to the party charter, the immediate higher instances in the pyramidal structure are the *direcciones regionales*, and these are followed by a *dirección departamental* for each department in the country.[112] These bodies emerged in rural areas and were later replicated in the cities; however, in many cases their creation was not possible and as a result these entities only exist on paper. During the time I conducted my fieldwork, for example, the *dirección regional* of La Paz was not functioning. According to the president of district number 20, Freddy Ticona, this regional direction was not active because "in La Paz we're always fighting with each other. We're never in agreement, and we could not make it [the *regional*] work."[113] The same problems occur in El Alto, as the last few congresses to elect the regional leadership for the city ended without reaching any consensus and leaving the MAS disunited. The last regional congress in El Alto, which was held on February 2006, reflected the high levels of fragmentation that the MAS has in this city, as well as the leadership vacuum at this level (Bolpress 2006). This information was confirmed by national senator Antonio Peredo, who claimed that

> There aren't *direcciones regionales* in the cities of La Paz and El Alto. They don't exist.
> But they should exist, as this is established in the party charter. And they existed not too

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[112] Movimiento al Socialismo, *Estatuto Orgánico o Carta Fundamental*, article 10.
[113] Author's interview with Freddy Ticona, president of district 20 (La Paz), 1 August, 2008.

long ago. Why do they not exist now, why did they cease to exist? As long as districts remain fragmented and having two or even three internal divisions, there are no chances of having a single leadership in the *direcciones regionales* of these cities. How could districts configure a regional direction when they are internally divided?[114]

The reasons why the *direcciones regionales* for the cities of La Paz and El Alto ceased to exist are more complex than Peredo's explanation. From the point of view of local politicians, these entities are spaces to consolidate leaderships. They are also spaces that help leaders position themselves vis-à-vis other leaders within the party and increase the possibilities of getting a job in the public administration. As Elvira Parra put it, "we used to have regional directions, but since authorities kept fighting for political spaces and jobs, we no longer have these bodies."[115] A national deputy for El Alto provided another interpretation of the regional directions as, in his view, "they did not work because of power struggles between our militants. But we [party leaders] decided not to force the functioning of a regional direction in an effort to maintain a level of horizontality within the organization."[116]

And as a result, the *dirección departamental* is the political body that channels all the activities and politics of the MAS in these cities. The *departamental*—as is commonly known by urban militants—is composed by executives of territorial structures (district) in the department, and it is also composed by departmental executives of social

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[114] Author's interview with Antonio Peredo, national senator for the MAS (La Paz), 12 July, 2008.

[115] Author's interview with Elvira Parra, elected official for the constituent assembly in El Alto under the MAS ticket and active member of the National Federation of *Campesina* Women of Bolivia-Bartolina Sisa organization (La Paz), 14 August, 2008.

[116] Author's interview with Oscar Chirinos, national deputy for El Alto (La Paz), 19 August, 2008.

organizations. It is the body with capacity to impose discipline on local branches and leaders, and these usually rely on the *departamental* to solve the problems that emerge within the districts.[117] As Samuel Guarayos put it, "if there happens to be a problem, we try to solve it. We have to struggle so that these local structures remain united." When I asked him about the causes of the disunities, Guarayos responded that

> these cities are very complex, as people from all over the country live here. We have *Potosinos*, *Orureños*, *Benianos*, miners 'relocalizados', and others. So it is difficult to maintain our unity. But we are working in these cities with priority, as they have more than 800,000 voters. We take care of these cities personally.[118]

Presidents of districts communicate the social value of unity in every meeting, and this could be epitomized with the formula: "*hoy más que nunca, tenemos que estar unidos compañeros*."[119] Leaders who are able to maintain unity within their districts receive the *visto bueno* of the *dirección departamental*. Because the *departamental* also acts like a public forum, and it is there where presidents of every district interact with each other, having the *visto bueno* helps local authorities to be better positioned vis-à-vis other presidents. Moreover, because the MAS' structure is pyramidal and to climb the hierarchical ladder—for example, to become an authority in the *dirección regional*—local presidents need to obtain the support of other presidents, it is important for these

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[117] Although the *dirección departamental* has *de facto* capacities to impose discipline to local branches, there are no formal bureaucratic mechanisms to regulate these processes.

[118] Author's interview with Samuel Guarayos, president of the MAS-La Paz *dirección departamental* (La Paz), 28 July, 2008.

[119] This phrase was repeated constantly in every party meeting I attended to during my observations in district six, Villa Copacabana, La Paz.

authorities to show that they are able to maintain unity within their own districts. But

maintaining unity is usually something very hard to achieve.

The *departamental* is *the* body entitled to organize urban congresses to select authorities

for the districts. Following the party charter, these congresses take place every two years.

And this, together with limitations to re-election aspirations, supposes a frequent

renovation of the local leadership. Congresses may adopt different formats and

modalities, as there are no fixed rules and procedures on how they ought to be regulated.

This aspect is very important and will be examined in the next section.

Finally, it should be noted that this articulation through *direcciones* does not constitute a

formal and institutionalized structure of decision-making within the MAS. But these

bodies bring together and amalgamate both the territorial and the social structures that

configure the party.

Ad-Hoc Branches. Although districts are the only territorial structure recognized by

party authorities, they are not the only local branches that operate in cities. Districts

coexist with innumerable *ad hoc* structures that perform similar functions. These parallel

structures take various organizational forms and emerge as a result of different factors.

Some structures, such as the *Satucos* and the *Fundación Inti-Coco*, for example, are

created by spontaneous and usually charismatic leaders. And in most cases, these leaders

happen to be *invitados* to the MAS.[120] These branches are autonomous from the party

leadership and their existence is not stipulated in the party statutes. They are usually built

around and led by public officials—especially national legislators—and have numerous

followers in the cities. According to Samuel Guarayos, "these groups operate outside the

party statutes, but they work for the same cause that we do. But in the MAS we don't

exclude. We have nothing against them, but we cannot treat them as districts."[121] Other

authorities, however, perceive these structures in a more negative way as "pressure

groups that try to co-opt the state apparatus and bring along their people."[122] And along

these lines, some militants in districts conceive of these branches and its authorities as

"employment agencies and their employers."[123]

Other autonomous structures have emerged as a consequence of power struggles between

militants and leaders at the local levels, as these struggles often leave room for the

articulation of rival and autonomous factions. My observations reinforced the

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[120] *Satucos* is a group that provides popular support to national deputy for La Paz Gustavo Torrico. Prior to his incorporation into the MAS, Torrico was an executive of the Bolivian National Fund of Social Housing (*Fondo Nacional de Vivienda Social*, or FONVIS) and was related to the Revolutionary National Movement (*Movimiento Nacional Revolucionario*, or MNR). The *Fundación Inti-Coco* is a group that provides support to national senator Antonio Peredo. A journalist and candidate for the vice-presidency in 2002 with the formula Morales-Peredo, Peredo was the founder of the Communist party in Trinidad and is usually associated with the 'traditional' left.

[121] Author's interview with Samuel Guarayos, president of the MAS-La Paz *dirección departamenta*l (La Paz), 28 July, 2008.

[122] Author's interview with former national director of Bolivian Penitentiary Regime, Ramiro Llanos (La Paz), August 6, 2008. A native of El Alto, Mr. Llanos has been an active member of the MAS since its inception in the Chapare region. He has witnessed how the MAS emerged as well as the problems it has faced while inserting itself in the cities of La Paz and El Alto. In this interview, Llanos said mentioned that Torrico "*hizo entrar a su gente*," meaning that his followers could obtain a job in the public administration with his sponsorship.

[123] Author's interview with Tito Guzmán, advisor to Fidel Surco (highest authority in the National Coalition for Change, or CONALCAM) and active militant in district six, Villa Copacabana, La Paz (La Paz), 26 August, 2008. It should be noted that Gustavo Torrico, in particular, has suffered serious accusations of nepotism and influence peddling, as his relatives and *Satucos* militants quickly occupied positions in the public administration once Torrico became a national deputy. See La Razón 2006, April 30.

conclusions drawn by Hervé Do Alto who, in a recent study, has shown that districts in

the city of La Paz are far from being homogenous units (see Do Alto 2006). After

carrying out extensive ethnographic work in district 15, his investigation verified the

existence of competing factions within the district, which are usually the result of not

ideological or political divergences but "correspond to political loyalties" (2006, 63-86).

These parallel structures take the forms of "*inter-distritos*" and "*comités políticos*

vecinales." For the most part, factions are structured around a local leader; they are

usually ephemeral, as they emerge for internal elections and usually dissolve soon after.

According to Ramiro Llanos the existence of these competing systems of loyalties and

the lack of programmatic *líneas internas* organized around lines of thought, are a

structural problem for the urban MAS. In his view, this situation gives rise to pervasive

logics of "*la ley del más fuerte*," which lead to growing fragmentation, and generate

violent power struggles within the movement.[124] The sum of these elements is inimical

to internal democracy, as it damages the deliberative mechanisms within the MAS. In

Llanos' words,

> In light of this problem, I have long been talking about the configuration of political and
> ideological factions. The thing is that we are not building organically. We need to allow
> the configuration of tendencies and organize them around lines of thought within the
> movement. […] That way, when these tendencies participate at a congress, they can
> express their positions and they should be heard. Now it doesn't work this way. It works
> with the logic of 'the one who has more people is the one who wins'. This way, we lose
> the intellectuality, we lose everything. And people of cities remain invisible.[125]

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[124] In alluding to violent power struggles, I refer to the explicit use of violence in urban congresses. Several
accounts by presidents of local districts make reference to physical fights in these congresses, as well as to
interventions by the police to stop the fights, the imprisonment of militants and aspiring leaders, and more.
[125] Author's interview Ramiro Llanos (La Paz), August 6, 2008.

In sum, the MAS' local infrastructure takes a pyramidal and segmented format. In the cities of La Paz and El Alto, the MAS is organized in districts—the *distritos zonales*— and these constitute the bases of the pyramid. This organizational pattern reflects an ongoing process of 'territorialization of politics' at the urban level that highlights the importance of the occupation of territorial spaces (see Do Alto 2006). On the other hand, lacking *direcciones regionales* and established regional leaderships, urban districts interact with each other at the *dirección departamental*. The *departamental* coordinates party activities and it is there where a 'horizontal linkage' is being forged, as it provides local authorities the opportunity to relate with their counterparts of other districts. The absence of *direcciones regionales* also means that local sub-units find it harder to control higher level authorities.[126]

Because districts organize and finance themselves, they enjoy relative autonomy from higher level authorities, which do not impose a strict party line. However, the *dirección departamental* oversees the conflicts that emerge in the districts and is *the* body capable of imposing discipline on these sub-units. Lacking effective mechanisms to impose discipline, it generally does so through indirect means. In theory, there should be a 'vertical linkage' between districts and the *departamental* in the way that the former

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[126] Author's interview with Antonio Peredo (La Paz), 12 July, 2008.

could check the power of higher level authorities. But in reality, districts lack effective mechanisms to check the power of departmental authorities.[127]

In the cities of La Paz and El Alto, districts coexist with innumerable autonomous structures which are neither 'organic' nor integrated into a central hierarchy. These sub-units represent a diversity of ideas and adopt different shapes. Like the Argentine PJ party, the urban MAS "functions like an organizational 'big tent', containing within it diverse and often contradictory elements" (Levitsky 2001, 50). And as Peredo put it, the MAS "will always be like this. This guarantees the coexistence of diverse ideological conceptions that coexist, and that don't confront with each other. […] Our militants can have fights and disagreements but, however, when it is time to be united and confront an external enemy, they are all there. You have seen them."[128] One problem, however, is that this cult of unity is usually enforced and maintained "*a punta de palos*."[129]

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[127] For example, the districts had no say in the selection of the current authorities at the *dirección departamental*, when a group of social organizations endorsed Samuel Guarayos' term as president of this body after being accused of power dealing. Author's interview to Freddy Ticona, president of district 20 in La Paz (La Paz), 1 August, 2008. Local party militant Tito Guzmán regarded this lack of accountability as "unfair and unfortunate" and lamented that such "unclear procedures" are detrimental to the internal democracy of the MAS. Author's interview with Tito Guzmán (La Paz), 26 August, 2008.

[128] Author's interview with Antonio Peredo (La Paz), 12 July, 2008.

[129] Author's interview with Ramiro Llanos (La Paz), August 6, 2008.

3.3.2   A Closer Look at the Urban Districts and How They Relate to Other Structures

I should begin by insisting that local subunits in the form of districts are not even

prescribed by party statutes.[130] But they do exist in practice and are actually the main

branches out of which urban militants operate; they are also *the* local branches that link

the party to its urban base. From the outset, the failure to incorporate these structures into

the party charter creates a legal vacuum which shapes the entire life of the local subunits

in the cities under consideration. As will be seen, districts are autonomous from the party

leadership and they are self-created, self-operated, and very importantly, self-financed.

The idea that underpinned the creation of districts was "to expand the mobilizational

capacities of the MAS in urban areas."[131] According to Samuel Guarayos, who is the

highest authority in the *dirección departamental* of La Paz, this body has officially

recognized a total of 19 districts in the city of La Paz, and a total of 15 in the city of El

Alto. These numbers, however, do not reflect the actual number of active districts in

these cities. Although the *dirección departamental* claims to keep a good record of the

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[130] Movimiento al Socialismo, *Estatuto Orgánico o Carta Fundamental*, articles 8 and 10. These articles refer to the organizational structure of the MAS and its decision-making bodies. Article 10, section d, mentions the existence of a National Direction (*Dirección Nacional*); article 10, section i, mentions Departmental Directions (*Direcciones Departamentales*); and article 10, section k, mentions regional, provincial, sectional, and sectoral directions (*Direcciones Regionales, Provinciales, Seccionales y Sectoriales*). The rest of the sections in article 10 mention additional decision-making bodies that, for matters of scope, as well as to simplify the argument line, are not addressed in this thesis.
[131] Author's interview with Antonio Peredo (La Paz), 12 July, 2008.

districts under its jurisdiction,[132] the inaccuracy of information reflects a lack of accurate

control over how many districts are active in reality.

Districts carry out the vast majority of the MAS' mobilizational work in the cities. They

mobilize their militants for activities organized by the *dirección departamental*, and they

also coordinate demonstrations and campaigns. According to Samuel Guarayos,

> we [the *dirección departamental*] usually make a public convocation through our own
> means of communication. This message then gets distributed to the territorial units by
> their respective authorities. We then send the presidents a note, and a reminder of the
> struggles of the Bolivian peoples.[133]

As a local authority put it, for example, "if the *departamental* notifies that [Hugo] Chávez

is coming on Saturday and he will give a talk, we just make a couple of phone calls and

you'll get a public square full of people."[134] The same occurs when the *dirección*

departamental sponsors other kinds of public acts and political campaigns.[135]

Districts also provide an array of activities and services for party militants. They

organize informative events for militants, identify and recruit local leaders, conduct

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[132] Author's interview with Samuel Guarayos, president of the MAS-La Paz *dirección departamental* (La Paz), 28 July, 2008.

[133] Author's interview with Samuel Guarayos (La Paz), 28 July, 2008.

[134] Author's interview with Samuel Guarayos' personal secretary, Román Hensi Martin (La Paz), 25 July, 2008.

[135] I witnessed from within how the *dirección departamental* organized and coordinated the *caravana de fin de campaña* and the proper act of *fin de campaña* for the recall referendum held on August 10, 2008. I also witnessed how local authorities in district 6, Villa Copacabana, communicated the campaign agenda to their militants.

public fundraisers, and perform other activities as guided upon the political conjuncture. But it because districts are autonomous from the party leadership, they have considerable room for establishing their own agenda. This notion will become clearer with an example about the education of leaders (or lack thereof). In this regard, a key element for the life of every political party is the articulation of a set of ideological principles, and the dissemination of these to its militants. But as an authority lamented,

> there is not such a thing here. We are not educating our leaders in the cities. The only thing that exists (or at least existed) is the political education in the rural unions. But even there, we only learned how to oppose to the government. In the cities we are not building organically, and we're not educating our leaders. Instead, there are 'enlightened' authorities that show up to the districts, tell them how things are, and then leave.[136]

These perceptions were verified by my observations in district six, as in several occasions cabinet ministers and other authorities visited the local branch to inform militants about what their respective ministries were doing. The informative sessions I observed were often carried out in a top-down manner, leaving practically no room for critical debate and profound analysis of the conjuncture.[137] However, it is worth pointing out that not every district works in the same way. Because districts are operated and financed by themselves, they enjoy relative autonomy from higher level authorities. Some districts, for example, do hold activities of political education. And because the MAS still does not have a unified doctrine (which it will probably never have), all these efforts are

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[136] Author's interview with Ramiro Llanos (La Paz), 6 August, 2008.

[137] I should point out that I carried out observations in the midst of an intense political campaign and at a decisive moment for the Morales' government, as in August 10, 2008, he would submit himself to a recall referendum.

uncoordinated and autonomous from the party leadership. These activities ultimately

depend on the resources that each district is able to collect.

The internal organization of the districts tries to replicate the hierarchical structure of

higher level bodies of the MAS, such as the *dirección nacional* and the *direcciones*

departamentales. Therefore, each district has an elected president, a vice-president, as

well as a number of commissions and secretariats. Being president of a district allows

this person to be elected to a regional, departmental, or even national leadership

position.[138]

According to the party charter, there should be a *dirección regional* in the city of La Paz

and one in El Alto, and these bodies should be in charge of coordinating the activities of

the lower level entities; however, these instances do not exist in reality. In the absence of

direcciones regionales, there is a crisis of leadership at the regional level in these two

cities. Local authorities perceive this as an unfortunate "loss of political and participatory

spaces,"[139] as a regional body would give districts more spaces or representation in

higher level bodies. And as a result, the *dirección departamental* is the body that *de facto*

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[138] This process is gradual, however, and party members cannot be elected to higher-level positions
(regional, departmental, national) without first serving as presidents of a district. According to Samuel
Guarayos, "In order to be a president of a district, a candidate needs to prove its loyalty and needs to be
approved by its territory. He then needs to have a minimum of four years of active militancy in the MAS,
and no experience as an authority in the 'neoliberal' parties that have massacred our people and have
championed corruption." Author's interview with Samuel Guarayos, president of the MAS-La Paz
dirección departamental (La Paz), 28 July, 2008. It should also be noted that the party charter prohibits the
occupation of multiple spaces of power (*dobles cargos*) within the organization. This means that, for
example, a national deputy or any other elected official cannot be an authority in another decision-making
body (regional, departmental, national *direcciones*).

[139] Author's interview with Freddy Ticona and Angélica Apaza, president and vice-president of district 20
in La Paz (La Paz), 1 August, 2008.

coordinates the districts, and it is also the body in which local leaders seek to advance their political careers.

Lacking an effective body of leadership at the regional level, each local president represents his or her district directly in the *dirección departamental*. Because the departamental acts as a public forum, it is there that a 'horizontal linkage' is being configured among districts. And it is there where presidents can voice the concerns of his or her militants to higher level authorities. But on the other hand, districts have little say as to how departmental authorities are selected, and they lack effective mechanisms of control over higher level authorities. As a local leader put it, "the territorial representations have, in theory, the capacity to select and control departmental authorities. But this time, for example, this process has been reversed. The departmental president has been elected first, and now he oversees the organizational problems in the districts." The same authority lamented that this 'vertical linkage' is top-down. In his words, "what occurs at the departmental level does not respond to a socialist structure that we believe we're participating in. This is not a bottom-up approach to politics."[140]

Presidents and the rest of authorities within districts are elected every two years, often at a congress organized and monitored by authorities of the *dirección departamental*.[141] However, the party statutes fail to specify a set of procedures—such as registration and

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[140] Author's interview with Tito Guzmán (La Paz), 26 August, 2008.

[141] According to the statutes, the direccion regional should be in charge of organizing these congresses. As I have noted, however, this body does not exist. As a result, the *direccion departamental* has *de facto* attributions to convene the urban congresses. Whereas Samuel Guarayos refers to these events as "*congresos distritales*," urban militants refer to these processes as "*congresos urbanos*."

specific voting mechanisms—through which local authorities ought to be elected.[142] As

a result, career paths for urban militants do not follow clear rules and procedures. For

example, when the *dirección departamental* organizes a congress to select the authorities

of a district, competing candidates can lobby for the voting mechanism of their

preference to the organizing body.[143] The inexistence of fixed rules and procedures often

leaves room for a sort of Darwinian 'rule of the strongest', as some aspiring authorities

manage to choose their preferred voting mechanism in detriment of competing

authorities. The selection of voting mechanisms is open to interpretation of the

ambiguous language that characterizes the party charter. And for some leaders this

process "ultimately depends on how many people you can mobilize and pressure on the

departamental."[144] But for other authorities, this "depends on how much people leaders

manage to intimidate."[145]

The lack of fixed rules and procedures to climb the hierarchical ladder within the MAS

organization also leaves room for extensive use of *dedazo*. And the use of this practice

causes organizational problems as well as frustrations at the level of the bases.

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[142] Movimiento al Socialismo, *Estatuto Orgánico o Carta Fundamental*, article 53. This article specifies that the "election [of authorities] will require an absolute majority of the attendants to that event, under the modality that the congress elects."

[143] Based on interviews with presidents of districts (number 6 and number 20 of La Paz; number 5 of El Alto) and with authorities in the *dirección departamental*, two of most common voting mechanisms seem to be the secret vote and the public acclaim vote. The latter mechanism favors the candidates who can mobilize the largest number of militants and it usually benefits the candidates who are more likely to promise more political spaces and job opportunities to their followers.   This is to say that in the absence of fixed rules and procedures, there is considerable room for improvisation.

[144] Author's interview with Freddy Ticona, president of district 20 in La Paz (La Paz), 5 August, 2008.

[145] Author's interview with Ramiro Llanos (La Paz), 6 August, 2008.

These organizational problems are related to the lack of opportunities in terms of public sector jobs. It also relates to the configuration of the state apparatus and the Morales' government. If we take a look at the composition of ministries, for example, there is little representation of 'organic' grassroots militants. Urban militants perceive that their mobilizational strength has been critical for the MAS' rise to power, but that their access to jobs in the public administration has been quite limited. For the most part, they also perceive that their activism and unconditional support to the party is not adequately compensated. As an authority in district number six put it,

> Almost two years and a half of his [Morales'] government and we [urban militants] are still living under the chains of the traditional system. We feel we are anti-systemic in a party that claims to have new 'open door' channels of participation. And when we don't find spaces for participation, who do we complain to? We are like soldiers without weapons and shields, and we are fighting an unequal war. The people who are our bases, our support, do not have an answer from us. This reflects what is going on at the state apparatus and in the president's governability: almost 90% of his surroundings are *invitados*.[146]

On the other hand, Evo Morales and the social MAS often look at the territorial structures and its militants as opportunists and as "pressure groups."[147] And simultaneously, the government promises to institutionalize the procedures through which militants can get jobs. According to Do Alto, there is a five percent yearly renewal of jobs in the public administration, which represents a scarcity of job opportunities for the *masista* social bases in the cities (Do Alto 2006, 63-86).

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[146] Author's interview with René Quispe, active militant in district six, Villa Copacabana (La Paz), 18 July, 2008. This name has been modified to protect the interviewee's identity.
[147] Author's interview with Román Loayza (La Paz), 22 August, 2008.

Districts are entirely self-financed and contributions are unregulated. This is also a source of imbalances between districts and among party militants. As one militant put it, "all the districts are self-financed, and the contributions are voluntary. But we all look at each other's eyes to see who has contributed the most."[148] Militants perceive that the higher the contributions are to the district, the stronger the district looks into the eyes of the *dirección departamental*. As another militant put it,

> I have seen ministries and high authorities in the state administration who also worry about maintaining strong ties with the territorial structure. This means that there are inequalities. Say that I am a ministry, for example…my district will not lack anything. But there still will be districts that won't even have the bread to get through the day. Imagine the conditions in which they hold their meetings.[149]

Urban militants also expect that "if one of our militants finally gets a job in the public administration, then she should make contributions to help us cover the expenses of her district."[150] Financial imbalances stem as a source of great tension among urban militants, who perceive the MAS' funding mechanisms as unfair and regard the tensions as inimical to the operation of the party in urban areas.

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[148] Author's interview with a local authority of district six, Villa Copacabana, La Paz (La Paz), 18 July, 2008.

[149] Author's interview with René Quispe, active militant in district 6, Villa Copacabana (La Paz), 18 July, 2008. This name has been modified to protect the interviewee's identity.

[150] Author's interview with Tito Guzmán (La Paz), 26 August, 2008.

To conclude this section, it is worth pointing out that Evo Morales and other 'historical members'[151] of the MAS do not regard highly the 'territorial MAS'. As an authority put it,

> The president believes very much in the work carried out by social organizations, such as COR and FEJUVE. He has absolute trust in what they do. But on the other hand, he does not have a lot of confidence in the political/territorial structure. Why? Because the territorial structure has—with legitimate rights—dedicated to demand *pegas*, *pegas*, and *pegas*. Let me insist that this is legitimate, because if you work for a campaign, you also do it to get a benefit out of it, don't you? You also need to eat…[152]

As has been shown elsewhere, this urban territorial structure coexists with a social structure—the structure of the social organizations—and this is the topic that will be covered in the following section.

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[151] In alluding to 'historical members', I refer to those individuals who claim to be founding members of the MAS.

[152] '*Pegas*' are employment opportunities in the state's public administration. Author's interview with Gustavo Adolfo Morales, vice-minister of Basic Services (El Alto), 9 August, 2008. Prior to his appointment as vice-minister, Mr. Morales served as *concejal* in the city of El Alto, where he was elected under the MAS ticket in the municipal elections of 2004. In these elections, the MAS won only two *concejalías*: Wilson Gonzalo Soria Paz and Gustavo Adolfo Morales.

3.4 The 'Social MAS': Linkage Mechanisms between the MAS and Urban Social Organizations

When the MAS was inserting itself in the cities of La Paz and El Alto during the early 2000s, party operators sought to work in two distinctive but connected directions: towards articulating the MAS across the territory of the cities with the construction of districts, and towards establishing linkages with social organizations. As has been shown in the previous section, the first pillar of this structuring, the 'territorial MAS', is not well regarded by party authorities and remains to be institutionalized. However, as will be shown, this territorial structure performs a critical role in the articulation of the social structure.

The second pillar of the MAS' organization is comprised by the linkages between the party and social organizations. I refer to this structure as the 'social MAS'. While this structure is highly institutionalized, to the point that the founding organizations are "married" to the MAS, the rapid expansion of this party to the cities gave rise to the emergence of new linkage patterns between the party and urban organizations. These links are loosely structured and not institutionalized.

In La Paz the MAS has structured a network of alliances with urban social organizations. Although urban organizations and the MAS have been growing closer since 2002 and amidst a scenario of national crisis, their strategic alliance truly materialized with the

advent of the 2005 general elections. Organizations representing artisans, micro-enterprises, cooperative miners, and other urban sectors perceived the alliance with the MAS as a unique opportunity to achieve parliamentary representation. In Jorge Silva's words, "one of the ways to guarantee the advancement of the social organizations of small producers that I represent was to have representatives in the congress; and now I am here [in the congress] as a result of the accord we reached with the MAS."[153] From the MAS' perspective, this strategy has provided the party with an immense voting mass that guaranteed its landslide victory in 2005. According to Zuazo, "due to the organic weakness of urban social structures, these alliances end up being more an alliance with specific leaders than a stable alliance with organizations" (2008, 33). Because urban social organizations have not become 'organic' members of the MAS (and probably never will) and their participation in the MAS is constrained by existing political accords, their ties with the party are usually permeated by corporatism.

This linkage strategy is even clearer in El Alto, which is home to—arguably—Bolivia's most combative organizations. The main social organizations in this city are El Alto Federation of Neighborhood Boards (FEJUVE-El Alto) and El Alto Regional Labor

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[153] Author's interview with Jorge Silva, national deputy for La Paz (La Paz), 30 July, 2008.

Federation (COR-El Alto). [154] Although the statutes of these organizations prohibit their

members and leaders from participating as authorities or operators of political parties,

that has not historically stopped party operators from attempting to infiltrate these

entities. In fact, the highest bodies of leadership in these organizations have usually been

the target of political parties of every kind. This is because, as a rule, the control over

these organizations serves to seduce the electorate and guarantees a degree of political

stability in the city (García Linera, Chávez León, and Costa Monje 2004; see also Alenda

2003, 119-135). The MAS is not an exception to the rule and has not innovated in these

matters. Because these organizations channel most of the political life in the city,

infiltrating into the leadership levels allows political parties to extend their influence

throughout the territory and to recruit leaders that mobilize people, whose support

eventually translates into considerable votes for the party.

Today, social organizations of La Paz and El Alto do not have any formal ties to the

MAS and the government. But the party has configured an umbrella of alliances with

leaders and authorities of these urban organizations in an effort to insert the party into the

cities and thus expand its social base. It is important to clarify that party operators have

worked with a 'top-down' approach, as their strategy has consisted of seducing leaders

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[154] FEJUVE brings together residents and neighborhood associations of El Alto. The Regional Labor
Federation is an organization of workers, which includes factory workers, teachers, journalists and artisans
but is dominated by the *gremialistas* (street traders). Together with a third organization, the Federation of
Gremialistas, FEJUVE and COR possess an impressive mobilizational strength in the city.   I should note
that despite the importance of the Federation of Gremialistas to the political life of El Alto, this section only
focuses FEJUVE and COR and does not make direct claims with regards to the links between the MAS and
the Federation of Gremialistas. This is because during my fieldwork I have not been able to coordinate an
interview with the authorities of the Federation of Gremialistas. However, I should also note that all my
interviewees in El Alto concurred in pointing out the similarities between the examined organizations and
the Federation of Gremialistas in regards to their linkages to the MAS.

and authorities of organizations in exchange for jobs in the public administration (or the promise of a job). This approach has not consisted of building organic ties with the organizations as entities. As Bertha Blanco put it, "when we were constructing the MAS, we needed to find candidates. We didn't have candidates in the city, and nobody wanted to be associated with the MAS. And what did we do? We went to find persons within the organizations, for example in the COR. And there we talked directly with the authorities."[155] However, what initially began as an effort to find candidates in these cities later evolved into a penetrating strategy aimed at controlling social organizations. As a deputy for El Alto openly put it, "we can't deny we do that. We aim for our people become leaders in these organizations. It is an effort to control the social organizations."[156]

It is at that point where the territorial MAS meets the social MAS, as it has been through the work carried out in the territorial front that the MAS has been able to infiltrate into the social organizations. As an authority put it,

> thanks to having built a territorial party structure in El Alto, for example, we have been able to achieve that members and leaders of social organizations and neighbors associations quickly became active militants of the MAS. It is in this way that, through this militancy, new members influence on the organization and exercise pressure so that the organization supports and backs up the process…[157]

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[155] Author's interview with Bertha Blanco (La Paz), 14 August, 2008.
[156] Author's interview with Miguel Machaca, MAS national deputy for El Alto (El Alto), 18 August, 2008.
[157] Author's interview with Dionicio Núñez, former MAS deputy for La Paz (La Paz), 19 August, 2008.

Moreover, as a former constituent and current activist of the National Federation of

Campesina Women of Bolivia-Bartolina Sisa organization put it,

> the project we have had as MAS is to be able to take control over the social
> organizations. In order to do that, you need to start from working at the districts level
> and, from there, you can start climbing. For FEJUVE's next congress, which is going to
> take place two years from now, for example, we have the wish that we're going to take
> on FEJUVE's leadership. […] At least, that's what I can tell you that we'd like to
> happen.[158]

These testimonies, which come from *masista* authorities of different hierarchical levels

within the party structure, reveal an ongoing plan to penetrate the structure of social

organizations and their networks, and through this strategy, to expand the MAS'

influence in the city. Simultaneously, because the party rewards loyal leaders (or, at

least, it is expected that the party rewards them), this strategy creates a situation in which

authorities within social organizations perceive these entities as "a trampoline for

launching oneself into a public administration position."[159] This can be exemplified with

the case of FEJUVE. The highest authority of this organization since 2004, Abel

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[158] Author's interview with Elvira Parra (La Paz), 14 August, 2008. The MAS' attempts to controlling
social organizations are often restrained by the internal rules and dynamics of those organizations. For
example, in the case of FEJUVE, there are elections to renew its leadership body every two years. But
these elections stipulate a rotation system that impedes authorities to perpetuate in power. The rotation
system, which is rooted on Aymara principles of rotation, is basically a system of shifts: a representative of
the southern part of the city is elected for a period of two years and cannot be elected for a consecutive
term. She cannot be replaced by another resident of the south, and a representative of the northern part of
the city needs to replace that authority. Because this rotation mechanism acts as a barrier that restrains
party ambitions, many *masistas* leaders openly recognized that one of their goals is to modify the statutes
of social organizations like FEJUVE.

[159] Author's interview with Gustavo Adolfo Morales (El Alto), 9 August, 2008.

Mamani, was appointed as the water minister for the Morales' government in 2006.[160]

His appointment translated into the direct presence of FEJUVE in the government

structure; it also signaled the emergence of a strong corporativist linkage between the

two. FEJUVE's presence in the government entailed growing capacities for the

organization to negotiate corporativist demands, as it provided it the opportunity—and

responsibility—to manage the res publica. On the other hand, FEJUVE's presence in the

government structure hindered the possibilities of open confrontation between the social

organization and the government. In other words, the organization was neutralized. As

an authority put it,

> we, as FEJUVE, have lost considerable capacities for mobilization. Why? Because many
> leaders have occupied ministries and other public offices. And you see that when one
> [leader] seeks his own personal interests, there is no more strength and no more morale.
> If this happens, we can not take care of the necessities of the people. […] And this is
> what leaders of the two previous administrations had done; they had received quotas of
> power. But the people can see what their real interests are and thus it is difficult to
> articulate the organization.[161]

In the case of the COR-El Alto, the linkage with the MAS is more subtle and less direct.

Like FEJUVE, this organization supports the government and the process of social

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[160] Abel Mamani was FEJUVE's highest authority since 2004. He played a leading role during the revolts of June 2005 in El Alto. These mobilizations led to the resignation of Carlos Mesa Gisbert on June 6, 2005. Mamani's appointment as a minister was resisted publicly by FEJUVE, whose authorities claimed that "Mamani utilized FEJUVE to satisfy his personal purposes." FEJUVE's response to his appointment also shows a rejection to Morales' practice of inviting authorities without consulting the bases of the organizations. Author's interview with Luis Huanca (El Alto), 13 August, 2008.

[161] Author's interview with Luis Huanca, executive of FEJUVE (El Alto), 13 August, 2008. When alluding to "authorities of two previous terms," Huanca was referring to Abel Mamani and Nazario Ramírez, former presidents of FEJUVE. According to Huanca, FEJUVE lost its credibility with these past presidents as, in his view, they were only concerned about occupying spaces of power in the government.

transformation sponsored by the MAS. However, unlike FEJUVE, the COR is not (and

has never been) represented directly in the government structure. As in the case of

FEJUVE, party operators have sought to infiltrate into this organization by establishing

negotiations directly with the leadership. In Edgar Patana's words,

> former executives of the Regional Labor Federation have always had rapprochements
> with political parties. Since 2002 they have been courting the MAS so that they could get
> or negotiate spaces of power, such as a candidacy for deputyship or something else; but
> we have never been 'organic' members. In this moment, however, we have participated
> effectively into what it is a structure that supports in a direct manner. At first, they have
> invited us to become a part of the *Estado Mayor del Pueblo*, but this entity plummeted; it
> didn't work because leftists and left leaning persons wanted to become its undisputed
> leaders and thus the EMP plummeted. More recently, the president has configured the
> CONALCAM. It is there that we participate as COR, and it is from there where we
> believe we have contributed and we'll continue to contribute to the process of change.[162]

In addition, Patana lamented the lack of presence of workers and *Alteños* in the

government structure. In his words "as Alteños, as workers, and as members of COR, we

are represented by absolutely nobody in the government."[163] This sector laments the

presence of 'neoliberal' ministers within the Morales' cabinet whose very presence in the

government structure has been detrimental to workers' interests.

Although the Regional Labor Federation does not have representation in the government

structure, the organization is a member of the National Coalition for Change

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[162] Author's interview with Edgar Patana, president of El Alto Regional Labor Federation (El Alto), 21 August, 2008.
[163] Author's interview with Edgar Patana (El Alto), 21 August, 2008.

(*Coordinadora Nacional para el Cambio*, or CONALCAM), and it is the participation in this entity that gave the COR a timid say in government matters. I should note that I use the adjective 'timid' because the COR has not had a decisive role in CONALCAM and has not influenced substantive government policies. I also use the past tense because with the new constitution approved in January 2009, it is expected that the CONALCAM will cease to exist.

The absence of COR members in the government structure allows this organization to maintain a degree of autonomy vis-à-vis the government that FEJUVE, for example, did not enjoy with Mamani's appointment. This leaves the organization in a position where it can support the process of social transformation sponsored by the MAS but, simultaneously, "criticize and censor what we [the COR] consider is not right or beneficial to the workers." On the one hand, the COR has shown its unconditional support to Morales when his government was going through hard times ("*en los peores momentos*"): during the negotiation of the "two-thirds" voting formula for the constituent assembly; during the negotiation of the "*Renta Dignidad*"; and during the negotiations over the *capitalidad*, to name a few examples.[164] In Patana's words,

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[164] Firstly, in alluding to the "two-thirds" voting formula, I refer to the voting mechanism for the approval of each article of the new constitution during the workings of the constituent assembly. In this procedural battle between the *oficialismo* (the MAS and its allies) and the opposition, the government had hoped to approve articles by simple majority, while the right wanted to maintain a rule requiring a two-thirds majority. Secondly, introduced in November 2007, the *Renta Dignidad* is a pension plan financed by the hydrocarbon tax and which was forcefully resisted by the regional opposition, especially from those Eastern departments that generate more revenues. Thirdly, the negotiations over the *capitalidad* refer to Sucre's demands of full capital status that occurred during the constituent assembly as a pre-condition for participating in the constituent assembly. COR-El Alto unconditionally defended the government during these three critical moments ("*en los peores momentos, a muerte*" to use Patana's terminology).

our bonds simply consist of providing unconditional support to the process of social transformation carried out by Evo Morales. Honestly, we would like to participate in the administrative structure. But today, as COR, we are not participating in this structure. We have always yielded political spaces to FEJUVE, and as COR we do not have a single street cleaner in the government structure…not even a street cleaner, not to mention a minister; we have absolutely nothing, no representation in this government. But in recent times, it has entered into the conscience of the organization that we, as workers, do need to be a part of the government so that we can contribute with what we know and with what we have to offer. It is true that we have maintained a syndical independence and this has not allowed us to openly confront the government. But I also think that now is the moment in which workers are taken into consideration, and that they have the option to demonstrate that they are capable of administering the country.[165]

On the other hand, Patana has been a critic of government policies, especially those regarding worker's wages, inflation, and the like. He has also been a critic of the Morales' cabinet, especially to those ministries who have had a connection to Bolivia's neoliberal governments. And he has been a public critic of what he refers to as the 'right-wing' of the MAS. In his view, this wing is composed by public officials who had been a part of the 'neoliberal apparatus', such as Juán Ramón Quintana (current Minister of the Presidency), Walker San Miguel (current Minister of Defense), Luis Alberto Arce (current Finance Minister), and others. Patana's public declarations against Morales and his policies are perceived by masistas leaders as 'grotesque mistakes' and even 'signs of betrayal', all of which seems to indicate that there is little room for dissent within the organization. And, in fact, declarations of disagreement have caused many *alteños* to go

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[165] Author's interview with Edgar Patana (El Alto), 21 August, 2008.

against those declarations. During the act of *fin de campaña*,[166] for example, Edgar

Patana received disapproving whistles from *alteños*, who were not in favor of

declarations he had made against the government.[167]

Because social organizations such as FEJUVE and COR have not become 'organic'

members of the MAS, they have no say in defining programmatic lines of the party.

Instead, their links to the party are predominantly driven by the negotiation of spaces of

power within the government. According to a study conducted by Moira Zuazo, for

example, "analyzing the composition of Morales' first cabinet of ministers […] we can

see that, out of 16 ministries, 25 percent of it is constituted by urban, corporative, and

miner sectors" (2008, 34). This situation has brought forth at least two distinctive but

interwoven problems. First, from the MAS' perspective, the party has not yet been able

to fully incorporate the demands and interests of these organizations into its discourse

and development plan. Second, from the perspective of social organizations, although

they have not lost their capacities for contestation, they have lost degrees of autonomy

and their capacities for mobilization have decreased.[168]

The relationship between the MAS and social organizations is, in Gustavo Adolfo

Morales' words,

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[166] Political act held in the city of El Alto on August 6, 2008 to close campaign for the recall referendum that took place on August 10, 2008. I participated into this act and positioned myself close so *alteño* militants who were positioned by their affiliation to districts. Their disapproving attitude towards Edgar Patana was uniform.

[167] Before the recall referendum, Edgar Patana had said that Morales should have called for anticipated elections instead of having proposed a recall referendum.

[168] Both Edgar Patana and Luis Huanca recognized the mobilizational losses that their organizations have undergone since the MAS' rise to state power.

a bit schizophrenic. They [social organizations] support the process of change, but have their demands of naming a minister, or asking for other spaces. There is a weird relationship. What happens, what is clear, is that the bases are decisively supporting the process of change. And the organizations *have* to support the process. So the leaders find themselves in a disjunctive: if they don't support the process, the bases do not support the leaders and they are ousted. But if leaders support the process, they try to get something out of it. That's how the schizophrenic relationship works."[169]

It is here where the social MAS clashes with the territorial structure, as militants in districts perceive that "social organizations can negotiate with the party to *hacer entrar* their candidates into the public administration; they can even name their own candidates."[170] This is perceived by militants in districts as unfair, as their access to jobs in the public administration is less likely than the possibilities for a leader in a social organization.

Since social organizations do not have any formal commitment to the MAS and have not become organic members, what keeps them linked to the party and loyal to the *proceso de cambios*? As a national deputy for El Alto put it,

in this moment, you cannot row against the currents of history. *Alteños*, without having *masista* militancy, have voted with a high percentage of the vote in favor of Evo. This is not because social organizations told them how to vote, and it does not have to do with the MAS' structure in this city. This can only be explained as an act of spontaneity, which reflects a spontaneous voting behavior.[171]

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[169] Author's interview with Gustavo Adolfo Morales (El Alto), 9 August, 2008.
[170] Author's interview with Tito Guzmán (La Paz), 26 August, 2008.
[171] Author's interview with Miguel Machaca (El Alto), 18 August, 2008.

Along these lines Edgar Patana said, "we [workers in the COR] can still be non-conformists, revolutionaries, and even in opposition to government policies. But our bases, the people, oblige us and tell us that we need to accompany the process. And this is because we cannot go against history. There is a bigger enemy, which is the *media luna*…"[172]

Leaders of these social organizations do not identify themselves with the MAS (according to statutes, they cannot have a party affiliation or identification), and in their offices there are no flags or symbols that connect the organizations to the MAS' system of symbols.[173] But these leaders uniformly say that they support the ongoing process of social transformation, and they effectively support government policies. However, as a local authority of El Alto laments,

> we are not well tied with the social organizations. Because social organizations do not want to identify themselves as *masistas*, *masista* members feel hurt when their leaders openly say that they are not [a member] of the MAS and that they only are [members] of the organization. For example, Edgar Patana says 'I am not [a member] of the MAS, I am [a member] of COR'. But in a way, he does not say he is [a member] of the MAS only because his statutes prohibit him to say that. He cannot say that. So, leaders do not say they are *masistas*, and that is a problem because we [*masistas*] are failing to incorporate them and keep them close to us. I think that the solution is to create a regional CONALCAM for El Alto, and that way we'll be more united.[174]

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[172] Author's interview with Edgar Patana (El Alto), 21 August, 2008. *Media luna* (half moon) refers to four eastern wealthy and largely *mestizo* departments in Bolivia (Santa Cruz, Beni, Tarija, and Pando). The *media luna* (half moon) constitutes a highly influential bloc in Bolivian politics and economy. It currently represents the strongest locus of opposition to the Morales' government.

[173] For an excellent study on the MAS' system of symbols, and how this system relates with the MAS' discourse, see Komadina and Geffroy 2007, 113-141.

[174] Author's interview with a MAS' *concejal* for El Alto, Antonia Rodriguez (El Alto), 27 August, 2008.

An important aspect that relates to my general argument is how the relationship between the MAS and social organizations (such as FEJUVE and COR) connects with matters of leadership. These organizations have "produced" important leaders in El Alto who had projected themselves to the regional level. However, their association with the MAS seems to have been detrimental to those leaders. The cases of Abel Mamani and Edgar Patana exemplify this scenario.

For activists and leaders of social organizations for youth, such as the *Jóvenes de Octubre*,[175] the MAS' strategies to build ties with urban social organizations have created a leadership vacuum in El Alto.[176] Activists concur in affirming that the links between the MAS and social organizations, especially the 'big ones' like COR and FEJUVE, are based on pure manipulation strategies from *masista* party operators. According to Abraham Delgado,

> its [the MAS'] linkage strategies [with social organizations] is very subtle and camouflaged. The majority of social organizations' leaders in El Alto are masistas. Because the MAS is in fashion, they [leaders] prefer to be masistas than to be independent. They say 'well, I can get more things out of the MAS, and so I'd rather be a *masista*'. These leaders get close to the MAS in El Alto by working in the districts and all that, and thus the MAS manipulates the social organizations. Party operators of the MAS work, above all, with the biggest organizations in the city. And here we're talking about FEJUVE and COR. Sometimes, they even show up together [with these organizations] at press conferences to make joint declarations; they say that they support

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[175] Activists in this organization are also known as the Talibans of El Alto, as they stand in solidarity with the Talibans of Afghanistan.

[176] I have collected testimonies and included a consideration of the youth in this section because members of these organizations, for the most part, have not had militancy in any of the 'traditional' political parties. I have found that their political views are usually more critical towards the MAS and the government.

this and other things. But it is everything a manipulation by the MAS. The MAS co-opts

leaders, but it is very sneaky in this regard: it co-opts leaders, then it destroys them, and it

is all done: bye. I see that this can be explained because the MAS does not accept

competition over political leadership. It [the MAS] sees that some of these leaders can

turn out to be a relevant political figure and then it co-opts him, it uses him, and it later

destroys him. They [*masistas*] get rid of aspiring leaders.[177]

This was the case of Abel Mamani, who used to be a charismatic leader in El Alto and

whose leadership could have had regional projection. According to many accounts, "he

could easily have been the prefect for the Department of La Paz." After an ephemeral

presence in the water ministry, however, he was expelled from the government. Mamani

was the target of very intense campaigns of discredit. And as a consequence, he is no

longer a leader with regional projection. Edgar Patana, on the other hand, was also a

leader *de peso* in the city. And he has also been the target of campaigns of discredit by

masistas, even though he usually mobilized his constituents to defend the government

and the process of change. Patana used to be a strongman in El Alto, but after suffering

personal discredit "he is no longer a heavyweight in the city."[178]

3.5   Preliminary Conclusions: Political Practices in La Paz and El Alto

This chapter has provided an account of how the MAS is organized and how it operates

in urban settings. Studying the MAS in urban areas of La Paz and El Alto has revealed

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[177] Author's interview with Abraham Delgado, a journalist and activist in the organization *Jóvenes de Octubre* (El Alto), 1 August, 2008.

[178] Author's interview with Gustavo Adolfo Morales (El Alto), 9 August, 2008.

that although the party is an innovative political formation in the Bolivian polity, it is not

very innovative in matters of organization and of political practices. As has been shown,

the MAS was born in rural areas of the Chapare region and its creation was premised on

the notion that it should serve as a 'political instrument' for the peasant and rural social

organizations. In other words, the MAS was conceptualized as a tool peasants could use

to participate in institutional politics without allying with a conventional traditional party.

Its rapid growth, however, has posed a set of challenges to the 'political instrument

thesis' that had provided the theoretical framework for its emergence and organizational

ideal. The expansion to national levels has forced the party to structure itself in the cities,

and this structuring has inevitably altered the organizational ideals outlined in the

political instrument thesis. Although the MAS has been indelibly shaped by its rural

origins, it cannot be reduced to and treated solely as a peasant party.

In the cities of La Paz and El Alto, the MAS has articulated itself in two directions: (a) by

spreading across the territory, and (b) by building ties with urban social organizations.

The sum of these two organizational strategies, which in this thesis I have called the

'territorial' and the 'social' MAS, has resulted in a fruitful synergy which turned these

cities into *masista* bastions; it has also turned the MAS into a powerful political machine

in these areas. This double-tiered infrastructure has yielded immediate political benefits

to the MAS, as expressed through consistent electoral support in these important cities.

But it also should be pointed out that the MAS' lack of institutionalization of this

infrastructure may play against the party.

In the first place, the 'territorial MAS' has been articulated *from* the districts, whose

functions and behavior party leaders sought to coordinate with the creation of formal

leadership bodies (regional, departmental, and national directions), as it is stipulated on

the party charter. This structure, which highlights the importance of the occupation of the

territory for party operators, has been constructed over existing structures of older

political parties. These include Conscience of the Fatherland (CONDEPA), the

Revolutionary Left Movement (MIR), and the Movement Without Fear (MSM), and

more. At the time of this writing, in March 2009, the *masista* territorial structure is not

institutionalized, is not fully operational, and remains under construction. Moreover, it

should be noted that the founding organizations of the MAS, as well as Evo Morales

himself, "do not believe in this structure. They consider us [militants in districts] solely

as *busca pegas* even though we do all the work for them in the cities."[179] Because urban

militants perceive their aspirations as legitimate, it remains to be seen how the MAS will

institutionalize them.

In the second place, the 'social MAS' consists of a network of alliances between the

MAS and urban social organizations. The linkage patterns between the two are loosely

structured and not institutionalized, all of which relates to how politics are played in the

cities. The articulation of alliances was conducted through two interconnected

mechanisms: penetrating the leadership bodies of social organizations, and negotiating

directly with leaders of social organizations. Because these organizations have not

become 'organic' members of the MAS, the links between the two have put on display

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[179] Author's interview with Freddy Ticona and Angélica Apaza, president and vice-president of district 20 in La Paz (La Paz), 1 August, 2008.

the strong corporative features of Bolivian society. From the MAS' perspective, it remains to be seen how the party can fully incorporate the demands and interests of urban social organizations into its discourse and development strategy. From the perspective of social organizations, it remains to be seen how the MAS generates spaces for participation as well as clear mechanisms of internal democracy within the organization. This is particularly important because the alliance with the MAS has hindered their mobilizational capabilities as well as their possibilities for open contestation. Because the ties between the two are informal and loosely structured, if urban social organizations do not find effective spaces for participation within the MAS, their ties may rapidly erode.

As has been shown throughout this thesis, the events that led to the MAS' development and rise to power have been tumultuous but rich in terms of collective action and political practices. This has been portrayed by some authors as a process of 're-politicization', a re-birth of politics in the aftermath of a soporific neoliberalism (see Roberts 2007b; also Espósito and Arteaga 2006, 74-85). During the time I carried out my fieldwork the political effervescence was palpable and the political arena was agitated by an unprecedented recall referendum; however, I was struck by how little was being debated in terms of the depths of the *proceso de cambios* during the activities of the party in the urban districts. I was also surprised how much preponderance was given to the struggle over spaces of power by urban militants, party operators, and leaders of social organizations. The sum of these elements led me to perceive, in agreement with Do Alto, a process of "de-politicization" (see Do Alto 2006). Such de-politicization may be

characterized by the permanent discussion over the occupation of spaces of power; the

virtual absence of political/ideological debate around the process of social

transformation; and the utilization of the MAS as an employment agency while

perceiving the state as a trophy. As one militant put it, "in my district, district six of La

Paz, our discussions consist of topics like how many *pegas* are in this or that ministry,

who can get a job and who can't, etc. And these are never-ending fights. They are

struggles to get jobs in the public administration and they lack any political or ideological

backing. Ask them [urban militants in district six] if they know what socialism is…they

will not know what to tell you."[180]

Finally, a comparative study of how other political parties had articulated themselves and

practiced politics in these cities will possibly reveal a series of breaks between their

operation and that of the MAS. However, it will also highlight the existence of a set of

continuities. As one *masista* vice-minister put it, "what we are seeing in these cities [in

La Paz and El Alto] is an ongoing process of '*condepización*' of the MAS. Whether we

like it or not, the MAS has a logic of action that reflects the remnants of the CONDEPA

logic."[181] In the process of structuring itself in the cities of La Paz and El Alto, the MAS

absorbed existing (and decaying) structures of older political parties. Militants and

operators of political parties like the MIR, CONDEPA, ADN, and other parties managed

to incorporate themselves into the MAS. And along with this incorporation, the MAS has

adopted these parties' logics of action as well as political practices. It remains to be seen

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[180] Author's interview with René Quispe, active militant in district six, Villa Copacabana (La Paz), 18 July, 2008. This name has been modified to protect the interviewee's identity.
[181] Author's interview with Gustavo Adolfo Morales (El Alto), 9 August, 2008.

how the MAS can distance itself from such logics and how it can establish new ways of

making politics that reflect the ideals under which the party was conceived.[182]

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[182] It should be noted, however, that the ideals under which the MAS was conceived in rural areas do not necessarily reflect how politics play in those rural areas. Those areas are not exempt of clientelar practices and aspirations, and are not exempt of struggles over the occupation of spaces of power. For accounts of these practices in rural areas, see Zuazo 2008; see also Komadina and Geffroy 2007.

CHAPTER 4: Conclusions: Political Representation in Bolivia's Post-Neoliberal Era

The main purpose of this thesis has been to provide a detailed account of and analytical reflections on the inner workings of the Bolivian MAS. As has been demonstrated, the MAS is a political formation that emerged from autonomous peasant and indigenous movements in rural areas of the Chapare Valleys and that, in recent years, has successfully contested state power by combining electoral (institutional) and street (non-institutional) mechanisms of political action. In this conclusion, I will succinctly review the main findings of this thesis and suggest that these two arenas—institutional and non-institutional—need not be treated as independent spaces. The purpose of this concluding chapter is twofold: to reflect on the theoretical implications of these findings, and to derive implications for future research.

The MAS is an innovative political formation (or 'creature' as I have occasionally referred to it in this thesis). It has been spawned by social movements anchored in rural areas of the Chapare region, and has expanded itself to the national level by successfully articulating the demands, interests, and discourse of a broad conglomerate of movements that toppled two right-of-center governments. This occurred amidst a cycle of great protests in response to the social and political deficits of neoliberalism, which at the same time shed light on a profound crisis of representational and state institutions in the

country. In that context, political parties from every part of the ideological spectrum proved unable to respond to the demands of the masses and to mediate their interests. And, due to parties' incapacity to represent, they lost the monopoly of political representation they once enjoyed. Partisan representation was quickly replaced by civil society organizations, and the MAS was *the* force able to provide representation for the majority of Bolivians. Its singular emergence, as well as its rapid ascent to state power, has posed serious challenges to social scientists, who remain perplexed and unable to categorize the MAS experience in clear-cut and conventional typologies. Moreover, its peculiar experience, which combines two interconnected forms of political action— electoral representation and direct social pressure—has forced the community of scholars to move beyond the liberal discourse, for which these spaces are separate and distinctive 'worlds'. In this sense, the MAS' trajectory has forced scholars to "reconceptualize the role of parties and representational institutions" (Beasley-Murray, Cameron, and Hershberg 2009, 327). By providing an account of how the MAS works on the ground, this thesis has been an attempt towards such conceptualizing and theory-refining efforts.

The MAS' ascension to state power coincided with a regional trend toward the election of left-of-center authorities to occupy the presidency. But this trend has not been uniform across the region. The 'leftist' governments currently in office in Latin America are far from homogeneous and have come to power under diverse social, historical, political and institutional arrangements. Whereas some 'leftist' leaders have come to power backed by an institutionalized party ('Lula' Da Silva in Brazil, Tabaré Vázquez in Uruguay, Michelle Bachelet in Chile), others have emerged without being backed by established

parties but instead by *sui generis* networks of social movements that replace the

traditional political parties in their intermediation/representational functions. Among the

latter, the Bolivian case is "perhaps the clearest illustration of an instance of mass

mobilization from below catalyzing the leftist surge in the country" (Luna and Filgueira

2009, 372). But the story is far more complex than this.

Following Levitsky and Roberts, for example, the government of Evo Morales and the

MAS may exemplify a sub-type of Latin American leftist politics that can be called

movement left. According to these authors, this kind of left "represents the emergence of

a new political force that displaces traditional party organizations" (2008, 17). Parties, in

this case, are "newly created (either in preparation for elections or out of presidency) and

lack even a minimum of institutionalization" (2008, 13). On the other hand, the political

leadership of this type of left "is directly spawned by, and largely accountable to, popular

movements organized from below" (2008, 17). This thesis has provided some empirical

evidence that justifies the validity of this framework and the classification of the MAS

therein; it has suggested that it may be better to label the MAS as a type of movement left

as opposed to a 'populist left', a 'radical left', or simply a 'bad left'. But there is more to

be said about the MAS. It may be inferred from the results of this thesis that Morales and

the MAS do indeed share some elements that can be linked to the early 'populist' leaders

and movements of 1930s and 1940s. For instance, the experience of Morales and the

MAS seems to have a few parallels with the experience of Juan Domingo Perón and the

movimiento justicialista in Argentina. In particular, these parallelisms relate to the ways

in which the MAS is being institutionalized, the characteristics of its organization and its

power-building strategies, and its attempts to construct hegemony in the country. Although this thesis has not focused on exploring this comparison, it acknowledges that future comparative studies on these areas might offer fruitful insights into the MAS as a movement organization and its prospects for institutionalization.

In order to assess the MAS' possibilities for institutionalization, I now introduce a framework developed by Juan Pablo Luna and Fernando Filgueira (2009). In a recent article, these authors put forth the hypothesis that the 'Left Turns' in Latin American countries represent a "second incorporation crisis" in which the principal challenge for regional governments consists of bringing traditionally disenfranchised groups and individuals *into* the political systems. These groups include, but are not limited to: the informal labor sector, indigenous peoples, women, and Afro-descendant peoples, among others—segments of the population that were not part of the earlier development model (Import Substitution Industrialization, or ISI) nor were enfranchised by neoliberalism. According to this hypothesis, the agenda for 'leftist' governments consists of the incorporation of these groups into the political systems. This process may be, unlike "first incorporation" processes in the 1930s and 1940s (which was characterized by the presence of fewer organized groups), characterized by different patterns of state-society relations. But is Bolivia undergoing a second incorporation crisis? And if so, which social actors are being incorporated and how?

In terms of its patterns of political incorporation, the Bolivian case poses a set of peculiarities to the regional landscape. This case could be portrayed as an instance of

autonomous bottom-up social mobilization combined with top-down attempts of co-optation by a charismatic leader—Evo Morales—and his base of support—the MAS-IPSP. As this thesis has shown, however, an irony of the Bolivian case is that Morales is himself a product of bottom-up mobilization, but through his (now ruling) 'party' he now attempts to control the social organizations that brought him to power in a top-down fashion. Recent studies have shown that due to its peasant and indigenous origins, the MAS operates with decentralized and bottom-up schemes of participation; however, this occurs predominantly in rural areas, where the MAS adopts "collective decision-making processes which are characteristic of the syndical peasant union organizational traditions" (Zuazo 2008, 26). In those settings, for instance, the MAS utilizes mechanisms of horizontal democracy for electing candidates to public office and for holding them accountable, which highlights the originality of some of its horizontal and bottom-up features (see Zuazo 2008; also Komadina and Geffroy 2007). Notwithstanding these innovative features, in the urban settings examined in this thesis, the MAS seems to operate under a different logic. This relates to how politics have played out historically in these urban settings, which are relatively new environments for the party, and where the MAS replicates top-down schemes of incorporation and participation. Ultimately, the ironies of the case demonstrate that—as suggested in Chapter 1—a complex organization like the MAS resists being classified into clear-cut categories. The MAS is neither exclusively 'bottom-up' nor solely 'top-down'; it is instead a complex combination of both schemes.

Moreover, since the ascent to power of Morales and the MAS, some of the organizations that generated the party have been incorporated into the state apparatus and this—unlike what conventional wisdom would dictate—has not necessarily involved a co-optation. For instance, what occurred in Huanuni during October 5 and 6, 2006, demonstrated that social organizations have not been neutralized under the Morales' administration. In this particular case, the presence of cooperativist miners in the government structure did not impede this sector from expressing an autonomous position against the government and from spurring on social conflict. Another example relates to the crisis of Cochabamba in January 11, 2007. On that occasion, peasant social organizations—and other sectors related to the MAS such as the *campesinos regantes*—came together to ask for the resignation of Manfres Reyes Villa, who was the prefect of Cochabamba. According to Do Alto (2007a), these organizations ignored Morales' desires to deactivate the protest, and they moved with relative autonomy vis-à-vis the government. This last example illustrates how the MAS operates simultaneously with one foot in institutional politics and the other in street (non-institutional) politics, and reveals that these two spheres are not separate entities as liberal discourse has long proclaimed.

But as has also been shown in this thesis, in other cases the incorporation of urban popular organizations into the state structure through top-down schemes of participation has often meant the virtual deactivation of these organizations. In some cases, major social organizations experienced an unprecedented loss of mobilizational power and capacities for contestation. Among these, the case of FEJUVE-El Alto examined in chapter 3 is perhaps the best example for this scenario.

It is also possible to look at patterns of incorporation through another prism. After a period of 'crisis of democratic representation' in Bolivia that reached a peak in October 2003 with the 'gas war', for example, the MAS was able to structure political incorporation by providing legitimate representation to disillusioned masses. It did so by quickly delivering policies that large constituencies were demanding. Once in power, for instance, the MAS sought to fulfill the demands of the October Agenda and accomplished this at least partially, or rhetorically. In particular, it is worth highlighting that once in government the MAS declared the nationalization of hydrocarbons, implemented an extensive agrarian reform, and called for a constituent assembly to re-write the political constitution of the country. While the MAS quickly provided responses to some of the expectations and needs of the popular sectors that brought Morales to state power, it may be argued that the policies and outcomes also reflect the hegemonic impulses of the MAS and its intentions of consolidating its governing plans. In addition, it is worth pointing out that the MAS fulfilled those popular demands by rapidly centralizing power at the executive level and, to an extent, by isolating itself from the social movements that had brought the party into being.

More than a conventional political party, the MAS is a young movement organization of the left. The MAS is an *informally organized* structure; it is largely decentralized— which allows for the proliferation of autonomous and *ad hoc* structures—and is barely institutionalized. Since its foundation in the 1990s, it has been closely intertwined with rural and peasant unions in the Chapare region. In fact, before the 2002 elections the union structure and the MAS were indistinguishable. After 2002, when the MAS became

a national force—but particularly after the 2005 elections, when the MAS rose to become the government—it suffered a major organizational transformation. This was a consequence of the vote-maximizing strategies to attract middle classes and its expansion to the cities. Moreover, since 2005, the ruling party has inevitably altered internal dynamics, as the MAS cannot govern the entire country as a 'political instrument' or as a 'social movement'. A challenge for the MAS is how to resolve this conundrum: how to overcome the 'social movement imperative' (see Bruhn 1997) and become an institutionalized force that helps the MAS achieve its democratic goals and endure in time.

In terms of institutionalization, the MAS case offers new perspectives to the study of political parties and social movements, which merit further exploration. In part, this is because the MAS is a political formation that straddles the line between street and institutional politics (Do Alto 2007a; see also Hochstetler and Friedman 2008). During the first years of its emergence, the MAS established a set of internal rules and procedures that applied to its immediate sphere of interaction in rural areas of the Chapare; it also consolidated strong linkages to social and indigenous movements—in fact, it was born of those movements—to the point that the boundaries between the two were initially indistinguishable. But as the MAS expanded itself to the national level, entered into the cities, and came into power in 2006, those internal rules and linkages to social movements have undergone major transformations. Therefore, how is the MAS currently being institutionalized?

This thesis has shown that leaders of the MAS have sought to consolidate the 'party' in two intertwined directions. In the first place, they have attempted to build linkages to (rural and urban) social movements. I have called this the 'social MAS'. This structure, which was originally entrenched in the founding organizations and now includes a broader coalition of social forces, is highly institutionalized. The links between these organizations are very strong; however, the linkages between the MAS and many urban organizations are loosely structured and not institutionalized. In the second place, particularly in urban areas, party operators have sought to build a relatively conventional party structure. This incipient structure is built around the administrative divisions of the cities and is used as a basis for party growth and popular mobilization in urban settings. I have called this structure the 'territorial MAS' which is activated with greater emphasis during electoral processes. Although there have been attempts to institutionalize this territorial structure in the party charter, it remains highly informal and barely institutionalized. At the moment of this writing, in March 2009, this structure remains under construction. The sum of these two MAS groups has resulted in a fruitful synergy and has turned the party into a powerful political and electoral machine. But being a barely institutionalized force poses serious concerns regarding the endurance of the movement over time.

This thesis has also shown that although the MAS is an innovative political formation, it has not innovated much in terms of political practices and organization *in urban areas*. Studying how the MAS operates in the cities of La Paz and El Alto has revealed a set of continuities with older political parties, in terms of its strategies for the occupation of the

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territory and, also, in terms of its linkages with urban social organizations. In this sense, this thesis has suggested that in the process of structuring itself in the cities of La Paz and El Alto, the MAS absorbed existing (and decaying) structures of older political parties, and that along with this absorption, the MAS has adopted these parties' logics of action as well as their political practices. In-depth comparative between the MAS and older political parties will reveal much about breaks and continuities among them. This thesis has also shown that the two party-building strategies (territorial and social) often clash with each other, and these clashes are usually related to the occupation of political spaces within the government structure. In these regards, it seems the MAS has not been able to find a point of equilibrium and, as urban militants lament, Evo and the MAS have prioritized building bonds with social organizations (the social MAS) and neglected the territorial structure. At the risk of sounding repetitive, it should also be noted that, as was mentioned elsewhere in this chapter, other studies on the MAS (Zuazo 2008; see also Komadina 2007; also Do Alto 2007a) have highlighted the innovative (democratic, 'horizontal', 'bottom-up') practices the MAS has established and consolidated *in rural areas*, where it works more according to its organizational ideals and following indigenous costumes and traditions. These innovative practices relate to decision-making processes, the selection and monitoring of candidates for public office, and more. As an effort to democratize its internal structure, it is a challenge for the MAS to incorporate (or adapt) some of those innovations into urban environments.

Finally, it is worth assessing in these concluding remarks the main limitations of this thesis. In the first place, some limitations are related to methodological issues. For

instance, this thesis is based on a relatively short period of primary fieldwork in La Paz and El Alto. This has not allowed me to fully immerse myself into the life of the party in these urban settings. To better assess how the MAS operates in these cities, a longer and more profound ethnographic work would be desirable. In addition, to evaluate the similarities and differences between the MAS in urban and rural settings, the ethnographic work could also be complemented with extensive fieldwork in peasant unions of the Chapare region. As a rural party in its origins, conducting fieldwork in the places of its emergence would allow gaining a better understanding of the key differences between how the MAS operates in those areas and how it has been inserted into the cities. This is particularly important because, as this thesis has suggested, the MAS has innovated in terms of practices in rural areas but has not innovated much in urban areas. Comparative studies in rural and urban settings can help find an answer to the following questions: How can the MAS build a bridge between the 'new' practices (in rural areas) and the 'old' practices (in the cities)? How can a 'peasant party' be successfully incorporated into the urban landscape?

In the second place, the limitations of this thesis are related to matters of content and scope. For example, this thesis has not substantially addressed the patterns of social incorporation of the MAS government. In the past, social incorporation in Latin America involved the inclusion of organized groups (predominantly labor) via the state or political parties under corporatist and/or authoritarian regimes; but this occurred within an existing constitutional structure. Like other regional leaders (Chávez in Venezuela, Correa in Ecuador), Morales and the MAS, however, have sought to re-found the republic and to

adopt a new legal and constitutional order. Therefore, unlike in the past, contemporary

attempts at social incorporation in the Bolivian case do not consist of incorporation into a

given order, but on the contrary, attempts to radically change the political system into

which new groups are inserted. During the time of this writing Bolivia has approved a

new political constitution of the state, and its implementation is currently at the heart of

debate. In such a context, the questions that arise are: which social actors are being

incorporated and how? And, ultimately, how is it possible to measure different degrees

of incorporation? Although these questions have remained unanswered in the present

thesis, future studies on these areas will reveal how innovative (or not) the MAS

government is in terms of social incorporation.

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APPENDIX: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The methodological strategy I employed combined semi-structured interviews, participatory observations, institutional ethnography in party offices and textual and document gathering. Although I had identified some of my interviewees prior to my field work in Bolivia, the vast majority were selected through snowball sampling. As I noted in Chapter 1, my first interview was with the *superintenta agraria*, *Lic*. Esther Ballerstaedt. Ms. Ballerstaedt introduced me with Orlando 'Tito' Guzmán, who became my first key informant. Tito is also a senior advisor to Fidel Surco (highest authority in CONALCAM), an active militant in district six, Villa Copacabana, La Paz, and is acquainted with various people involved with the MAS at different hierarchical levels. Through him, I was able to participate in the daily life of district six as well as in private meetings amongst members of the district. Tito was also able to connect me with the authorities at the MAS-La Paz *dirección departamental*, as well as with leaders of social organizations in La Paz and El Alto such as the CSUTCB and COR-El Alto.

A second key informant was Marcelo Quezada, who introduced me to Nelson Carvajal. Mr. Carvajal works as an administrative assistant at the national Congress and is acquainted with all the members of the *masista* 'parliamentary brigade'. Through him I was able to obtain interviews with national legislators who represent the urban areas

under study. My research benefited greatly from his unconditional assistance and support.

I conducted 46 in-person interviews between July 1 and August 28 of 2008 in the cities of La Paz and El Alto, Bolivia. What follows is the complete list of interviewees:

Authorities and militants in urban districts
- Rosemary [?] (District 6, La Paz)
- Herminia [?] (District 6, La Paz)
- Angélica Apaza (District 20, La Paz)
- Orlando 'Tito' Guzmán (District 6, La Paz)
- René Quispe [fictional name] (District 6, La Paz)
- Pablo Quispe (District 6, La Paz)
- Eusebio Salazar Cellez (District 15, El Alto)
- Fredy Ticona (District 20, La Paz)

Authors and Intellectuals
- Juán Manuel Arbona (Author)
- Marxa Chávez León (Author)
- Javier Medina (Author and Public Intellectual)
- Fernando Molina (Author and Journalist)
- José Antonio Quiroga (Author)
- Pablo Mamani Ramírez (Aymara Sociologist and Author)
- Simón Yampara (Aymara Sociologist and Author)
- Moira Zuazo (Author)

Current and Former Legislators of the MAS
- Oscar Chirinos (Deputy, El Alto)
- Román Loayza (Former deputy, Cochabamba)
- Miguel Machaca (Deputy, El Alto)
- César Navarro (Deputy, Potosí)
- Dionicio Núñez (Former deputy, La Paz)

- Antonio Peredo (Senator, La Paz)
- Jorge Silva (Deputy, La Paz)
- Gustavo Torrico (Deputy, La Paz)

Current and Former Authorities of Social Organizations
- Bertha Blanco (Ex-FNMCB-BC)
- Félix Chambi (Ex-CSUTCB)
- Sixto Condori (Executive M-17)
- Abraham Delgado (*Jóvenes de Octubre*)
- Luis Huanca (Executive FEJUVE-El Alto)
- Mario Mamani (M-17)
- Édgar Patana (Executive COR-El Alto)
- Elvira Parra (Representative in the Constituent Assembly for the MAS; executive of FNMCB-BC)
- Irimeo Zumis R. (CSUTCB)

Other
- Esther Ballerstaedt (*Superintendenta Agraria*)
- Nelson Carvajal (Administrative Assistant, MAS' 'parliamentary brigade')
- Samuel Guarayos (President of MAS-La Paz *dirección departamental*)
- Ramiro Llanos (Former national president of the Bolivian Penitentiary Regime)
- Critina Márquez (Concejal for the MAS in El Alto)
- Román Hensi Martin (Samuel Guarayos' personal secretary
- Ángel Mendoza (Gustavo Torrico's personal secretary)
- Sebastián Michel (MSM party leader)
- Gustavo Adolfo Morales (Former Concejal for the MAS in El Alto; current vice-minister of basic services)
- Juán Carlos Pinto (National Coordinator of REPAC)
- Marcelo Quezada (Bolivia's ambassador to Paraguay)
- Antonia Rodríguez (Concejal for the MAS in El Alto)
- Macario Tola (El Alto Representative in the Constituent Assembly for the MAS)

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