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Revalorization of Culture and Identity

A case study of revalorization among urban Aymara through
the work and experiences of local organizations

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Abstract

When the rural Aymara migrate to El Alto they experience a cultural alienation as their culture and identity is contested by the global influences and western values of the city. The migrants have to reconstruct their identity in a process of identity-formation, which can be located on a range between the opposing tendencies of assimilation and revalorization. Revalorization or to revalue, is to assign a new value to something, in this case Aymara culture and identity. Revalorization works as a resistance to assimilation and the globalization of culture. This is a case study of revalorization among urban Aymara through the work and experiences of local organizations. Through activities of revalorization the urban Aymara are empowered and strengthened through their culture and indigenous identity. With revalorization these organizations provide a culturally sensitive and people-centred form of development that is important for the maintenance of the Aymara culture as well as the lives and well being of the Aymara people.

Keywords: indigenous, assimilation, empowerment, culture, identity.

Preface

After spending a limited time in the urban chaos of El Alto-La Paz one can only begin to comprehend the every-day life of the people there. The interviews for this study often involved meeting the people taking part in the revalorizing activities and visiting places where the activities took place in the different *zonas* of El Alto. Daily experiences as protests in the streets, wandering through local markets and visits to Tiwanaku¹ and Lake Titicaca also contributed to my understanding of the Aymara culture and people.

I would like to thank Erika Flores for all her help, assisting me with her local knowledge of Aymara language and culture. Thanks to Marisol Maydana for excellent guiding. I would like to thank Svalorna Bolivia for making me feel welcome and assisting with information and contacts. Thanks to all of my informants who welcomed me to their organizations. Thanks to Anders Burman for contacts and help. Thanks also to my supervisor Ylva Stubbergaard for valuable comments. And thanks to Henrik Andersson, my family and friends for moral support during my fieldwork in Bolivia.

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¹ Tiwanaku was a highly developed cultural empire around the area of lake Titicaca from 500 BC to 1200 AD, followed by the Aymara culture (from which the Aymara people descend), which was taken over by the Incas (from which the Quechua people descend) (Widmark 2003:89).

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Figure 1: Map of Bolivia (United Nations 2004).

1 Introduction

The fieldwork for this study was made possible through a Minor Field Study scholarship from the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida). The material was collected during a period of eight weeks from January to March 2006 in Bolivia. The study concerns the indigenous² Aymara population migrated from rural areas to the city of El Alto. The Aymara experience a cultural alienation as their culture and identity is contested by the global influences and western values of the city. The maintenance of the Aymara culture is threatened as the migrants assimilate into the new urban context. To resist this local organizations revalorize, assign a new value, to Aymara culture and identity through empowering activities. Below the aim and purpose of the study is described, followed by a definition of revalorization. Then the method, material and theoretical approach of the study is presented.

1.1 Aim and Purpose

For more than 500 years the indigenous people of the Andes have been under the control of Spanish colonizers and the hispanicized national dominant class whom have tried to impose their culture on the rural native population. In spite of these pressures indigenous people have maintained an Andean way of life, which distinguish them from the hispanicized world of the mestizo³ and white population inhabiting the cities. The Andean community organization of the *ayllu*⁴ has contributed to the maintenance of indigenous culture and identity (Rasnake 1988:4, 261).

What happens with the Aymara culture and identity when the rural indigenous migrate to the cities where western values are the norm and the community organizing does not prevail? In Bolivia urban life is often seen in opposition to an authentic culture rooted in rural areas. For the indigenous the city is a place of entry of global culture and mass communication where they are confronted with global influences and western values. In the urban context the role of culture and identity are on its edge in the clash of the Andean and western way of life. The Aymara migrants experience a cultural alienation as their culture and identity is contested by the values and influences of the city.

² Indigenous people are descendants of the native populations present when colonialists arrived.

³ Mestizos are people of mixed European and indigenous ancestry.

⁴ The *ayllu* protects the territorial boundaries of the Aymara community, decide on methods of production and govern the community (Johnsson 1986:26).

As the migrants leave their rural settlement and move to the city their identity is reconstructed in a process of identity-formation. Prevailing structures of discrimination and racism have led to deeply rooted feelings of inferiority among the indigenous population, which makes it harder for them to maintain their culture and identity. According to Albó (1988) there are two opposing tendencies for the Aymara in the urban context. The strongest one of them leads to the dissolution of the Aymara culture and the other seeks to strengthen the Aymara culture (in Widmark 2003:3). These opposing tendencies can be seen as a *range between assimilation and revalorization* on which the identity-formation of the urban Aymara can be located. Assimilation is defined as the absorption of the local by the dominant culture or as the gradual elimination of cultural differences. To revalorize is to assign a new value to the Aymara culture and identity, to strengthen the culture and identity of the urban Aymara and to resist the threat of cultural homogenization. This is a case study of revalorization among urban Aymara through the work and experiences of local organizations.

The Aymara are confronted with contradictory ways of dealing with their identity and culture in the new urban context. Some try to distance themselves from the “backward” Aymara identity by dropping cultural traits and instead adopting traits perceived as modern or western to assimilate. Others stress their Aymara identity by participating in cultural activities. As a cultural resistance to the processes of assimilation and deterioration, local organizations try to revalorize the knowledge and customs of the Aymara. The local organizations working with revalorization have to find a place for themselves in the development sector to enable activities of revalorization. For this they need funding, which can be provided by foreign organizations but relations with them can be problematic. The local organizations interviewed organize a wide range of activities of revalorization to empower and strengthen the urban Aymara through their culture and indigenous identity. In the study I intend to answer the questions below:

1. *How do the Aymara deal with the opposing tendencies of assimilation and revalorization as their culture and identity is contested in the city?*
2. *What is the role of organizations in revalorization? How do local organizations experience their relations with foreign organizations?*
3. *How are the Aymara culture and identity revalorized? What are the outcomes of these activities?*

1.1.1 Revalorization Defined

Revalorization, or to revalue, means to assign a new value to something, in this case the Aymara culture and identity, which is seen as inferior to modern culture in the urban context. I use the word revalorization because it is the term used by the organizations of the study themselves (*revalorización*) to describe their work. They are involved in a project of ethnic revalorization, in which also the social indigenous movements take part.

Healy used *cultural revitalization approach to development* to describe development activities that builds on indigenous knowledge systems. He wrote that by evoking emotional attachments, indigenous cultural resources rally and focus the mobilization of community energies toward development gains and indigenous rights. According to Healy the idea behind cultural revitalization is to give a material boost to indigenous resources to compensate for discrimination by neo-colonial practices and western-minded development agencies (2001:95f, 398f).

The activities of revalorization can be placed within the frame of alternative development, which is focused on people and their environment. It is called alternative as it contains a critique of the formally dominant growth-maximizing approach to development. The revalorization of indigenous culture has important impacts on development as these organizations involve people in activities that lead to their own empowerment (Friedmann 1992:31,164). Revalorization is also a way to protect and strengthen culture to resist the threat of cultural homogenization. This is in line with the Stockholm Plan of Action on Cultural Policies for Development, which stresses the need to safeguard and enhance cultural heritage (UNESCO 1998).

The objective of the organizations interviewed can be summarized as an attempt to revalue, recover and revitalize the culture and identity of the Aymara, maintaining this in the urban context of El Alto where much has been lost.

1.2 Method and Material

This is a case study of the revalorization of culture and identity among urban Aymara in El Alto through the work and experiences of local organizations. A case study is an in-depth, multidimensional investigation of a social phenomenon using qualitative research methods (Feagin *et al.* 1991:2). Case studies focus on the experiences, situations and circumstances of real people within the context of a more general social problem (Peck *et al.* 2000:3). An advantage of the case study is that it enables studies of human actions and events in their natural surroundings and thereby gets closer to how the actors themselves understand the social phenomenon studied (Feagin *et al.* 1991:7f).

The focus is on how local organizations understand revalorization because they have both own experiences of cultural alienation as urban Aymara and experience from working with revalorization. The case study allowed me to assess their understandings and experiences through qualitative interviews in El Alto where revalorization is exercised.

1.2.1 Interviews

The interviews conducted have been in the form of a semi-structured conversation with open-end questions. As interviewer I directed the conversation to areas of

interest for the study. The intention behind this form of informal interview was to make the interviewees talk freely about the subjects discussed and enable follow-up questions to unexpected answers (Esaiasson *et al.* 2003:279).

The nine organizations interviewed were local and worked with the objective of revalorizing Aymara culture and identity in urban areas inhabited by migrated Aymara. Eight of the interviews took place in El Alto and one in Pampahasi⁵. Two of the interviews were group interviews, one with three respondents and one with five respondents. At group interviews there is a risk of negative group behaviour where someone dominates or that norms develop of what can be said (ibid:349). I experienced that the respondents at the group interviews made space for each other to speak and did not interrupt. Instead they made complementary comments to the others answers. The questions were directed to the whole group enabling them to feel free to talk.

The organizations were chosen through *snowball sampling* (ibid:212). I got into contact with the first organization CAUP through the help of Svalorna Bolivia and from there I asked the interviewees for contacts. Even though a huge number of organizations were active in the area, the focus of the study (local organizations working with revalorization among urban Aymara) narrowed down the possible interviewees.

The time of the interviews varied between 40-120 minutes for each interview. The interviews were conducted in Spanish and recorded on tape. The tapes have been transcribed in Spanish and then the material was translated from Spanish to English. Present at all of the interviews were linguistic student Erika Flores, who explained Aymara culture and assisted with the transcriptions. To limit the possible misunderstandings I discussed the transcriptions with Erika to check I had understood the interviewees.

A majority of the respondents identified themselves as Aymara and were bilingual in Spanish and Aymara. That the interviews were conducted in Spanish did not seem to limit their way of expressing themselves. When talking about culture they used Aymara words, which they themselves or Erika were able to explain to me. A majority of the respondents were not only educated but also used to debate these issues and did not have difficulties understanding the questions. Some of the respondents were suspicious at first until they made sure I was not affiliated with any of the foreign development organizations active in the area; when that was made clear they welcomed me into their organizations.

1.3 Theoretical Approach

1.3.1 Identity-formation, Homogenization and Hybridization

Identity-formation is dealt with in the question concerning how the Aymara deal with assimilation and revalorization. Homogenization and hybridization are

⁵ Pampahasi is an area in the vicinity of La Paz, an urban context inhabited by migrated Aymara.

possible outcomes of assimilation as the identity of the migrants is contested by the influences and values of the city. According to Hall discussions of identity should be situated within developments as globalization, modernity and migration that have disturbed the settled character of many populations and cultures (1996:4). As the Aymara leave their rural settlements to migrate to urban areas their identity is contested by the western and modern influences of the city, whereby their identity is reconstructed. *Identity-formation* is the process where identity is constructed and reconstructed in the life-course of people as an ongoing practice for identification (Melucci 1996:158f). *Cultural identity* is "a social identity that is based on a specific cultural configuration of a conscious nature. History, language, race are all possible bases for cultural identity and they are all constructed realities" (Friedman 1993:212).

The process of globalization entails two images of culture. The first image is when heterogeneous cultures becomes incorporated and integrated into a dominant culture where everyone becomes assimilated into a common culture, *homogenization*. The second image points to the compression of cultures where things formally held apart are brought into contact and juxtaposition (Featherstone 1995:6). According to Rowe and Schelling the major move to the disappearance of cultural divisions, homogenization, in Latin America has been through the culture industry and electronic media from the 1970's until present time (1991:3,196). The acceleration of modernization with its intensification of exchanges, migration and the circulation of peoples, a diffusion of messages and lifestyles threaten to extinct specific cultures (Melucci 1996:157f).

Featherstone has argued that globalization rather than producing cultural uniformity makes us aware of new levels of cultural diversity where *hybridizations* are more rule than exception (1995:14). The concept of hybridization means "the ways in which forms become separated from existing practices and recombine with new forms in new practices" (Rowe-Schelling 1991:231). According to Melucci hybridization realizes "a kind of storehouse of knowledges, foods, clothing, art forms, which are a source of our enrichment" (1997:73).

1.3.2 Empowerment

Revalorization is meant to empower people from their marginalized disempowered position therefore the concept of empowerment is important to be able to analyze the activities of revalorization. Empowerment can be said to be part of an alternative approach to development, which argues for the involvement of people in actions or activities that will lead to their own empowerment (Friedmann 1992:164).

Power can be thought of as the ability to make choices, to be disempowered is to be denied choice. Kabeer have explained empowerment as "the processes by which those that have been denied the ability to make choices acquire such ability" (2001:18f). Thus empowerment entails a process of change; only the disempowered can be empowered.

According to Rowlands, people that systematically are denied power and influence internalize this oppression. A person that is badly treated when expressing his/her opinion may start to hold back opinions as a strategy for survival and eventually might not have an opinion at all (1997:11).

Power is usually defined as *power over* in a zero-sum game (the more power one has the less is left for the other). In Bolivia the white minority have power over the indigenous. If the indigenous gain power it is thought to be at the expense of minority and empowerment is therefore perceived as a threat. Rowlands has argued for a wider definition of power as *power to* and *power with*. In this definition of power, empowerment includes the processes where people become aware of their own interests and how these interests relate to others without conflicts of interest (ibid:9-13f). Rowlands have divided empowerment into three dimensions that are interdependent and enforce each other:

- *Personal empowerment* is the development of a sense of self, individual capacity and confidence. It is about undoing the effects of internalized oppression through the development of a sense of self in the wider context, self-confidence, self-esteem and a sense of agency (ibid:15,112).
- *Relational empowerment* is the influence on relationships and the decisions within it. It is about developing abilities of negotiation, communication and defending ones rights, the ability to get support, improvements of relations between man/woman, in the family or community and developing a sense of self in relationship (ibid:15,120).
- *Collective empowerment* is when individuals work together to achieve a greater impact than they are able to themselves. It is about developing a sense of collective agency, a sense of dignity and identity as a group, the ability to self-organization and management (ibid:15, 115).

Empowerment can undo negative social constructions, as the indigenous people's feelings of inferiority, and enable people to see themselves with capacity and the right to act on and influence decisions. The process of empowerment includes both a feeling of personal change and a changed behaviour. The breaking of an isolated position through participation in activities is important in empowerment as it improves social skills and builds confidence. Confidence can also be built through practical skills as computer knowledge or literacy. Hinders to empowerment can be machismo, obligations with children or in the house, internalized oppression, individual isolation, fragmented communities or economic hindes (ibid:112-120).

2 Background

In this section a background of Bolivia and its indigenous population is presented. The discrimination of indigenous people in Bolivia, the civil society of NGOs (non-governmental organizations), GROs (grassroots organizations) and social indigenous movements, as well as the internal migration and a description of the study site: El Alto. This background contributes to the understanding of the lives of the urban Aymara and the context in which revalorization takes place.

2.1 Indigenous Population in Bolivia

There are about 40 million ethnically indigenous people in Latin America. Since the arrival of the Spanish, indigenous people have suffered through war, slavery, epidemics and terrible discrimination. The indigenous are the poorest and most abused members of their societies. There has been an indigenous awakening following the 500th anniversary of the Spanish arrival and the United Nations decade for indigenous peoples 1994-2004⁶ (Brysk 2000:6ff; Mato 1999:194).

Bolivia has the largest population of indigenous in Latin America, with 62 percent of the population the indigenous are in majority. The number is believed to be higher given that many are reluctant to identify themselves as indigenous⁷. The indigenous population in Bolivia consists of 36 different groups, whereof the main groups are Quechua, Aymara and Guaraní. The Aymara constitute 2-3 million people, living in the high plateau of the Andes stretching over Peru, Bolivia and Chile. About 1.3 million of the Aymara live in Bolivian Andes around the area of Lake Titicaca (Crabtree 2005:8; Johnsson 1986:19f; Widmark 2003:2).

As a result of the indigenous awakening, the Bolivian constitution was changed in 1994 to proclaim a multiethnic and multicultural state and a law of popular participation and an educational reform⁸ was adopted. The proclamation of a multicultural society can be seen as an important aspect of Bolivia's democratization process (Widmark 2003:1f). The election of Morales as the first

⁶ Most Latin American countries have ratified the ILO (International Labour Organization) convention 169 on indigenous and tribal people. Foreign organizations have channelled large amounts of developmental financial support to indigenous groups (Brysk 2000:6ff).

⁷ The World Bank, ILO and the United Nations all underline the importance of self-identification in their definitions of being indigenous. If being indigenous is not dependent of a rural life-style or speaking an indigenous language, the next census might show an even greater proportion of indigenous in Bolivia (Canessa 2006:242,257).

⁸ The law of popular participation is a decentralising law that gave municipal governments increased power of their districts. The educational reform proclaimed bilingual education but has only been introduced in a few schools. Aymara and Quechua languages have been recognized as state languages together with Spanish (Widmark 2003:82).

indigenous president in 2005 is considered to be an important change for the indigenous population. Even though the outcomes are yet to be seen it signals that a poor indigenous coca-grower can now become president (Lerager 2006:141ff). Through a transnational network of local and international organizations and movements, the indigenous can exercise global influence to pressure their government. These networks make international resources available for domestic political or social struggles (Keck-Sikkink 1998:1ff).

2.1.1 Indigenous Discrimination

According to the former indigenous vice-president Cárdenas the indigenous population is made into second-class citizens through an internal colonialism of economic, social and cultural discrimination. Discrimination from whites and mestizos appear daily in the schools, courts, public offices, the army and other places of power dominated by the non-indigenous minority (in Healy 2001:7). Rivera (1993) called the internal colonialism in Bolivia “pigmentocracy of power”, meaning the uneven distribution of resources, opportunities, legitimacy and status among people of different ethnic background and skin colour (in Healy 2001:429). The upper class in Bolivia is white of Spanish ancestry, the middle-class mestizos and the lower class indigenous. In the Bolivian context, class and ethnicity reinforce each other, both as ascribed and experienced identity. Even if there is a minority of economically well-off indigenous, poor usually equals indigenous (Widmark 2003:10).

Bolivia has been independent from Spain since 1825. After the independence a period of nation building followed, which led to a continued oppression for the indigenous population. As a result of 19th century liberal reform laws in the name of civilization and integration, indigenous landholdings were transformed into private estates or haciendas and the indigenous inhabitants were made into unpaid workers (Healy 2001:8f).

The national revolution 1952 led by the MNR (the Nationalist Revolutionary Movement) brought a redistribution of land as well as political, labour and educational rights for the indigenous population. At the time of the national revolution, aggressive policies of assimilation were carried out by the state. The “Indians” were renamed peasants and the organizational system ayllus were remade into *sindicatos*, peasant unions. The MNR tried to assimilate the indigenous population into mestizo citizens, thinking this would help the country develop and modernize (Crabtree 2005:3-7; Healy 2001:12f).

2.2 Civil Society in Bolivia

Civil society can be said to have its origin in the need for stability in the neo-liberal system and in grassroots organization for the sake of survival after structural adjustments. NGOs and GROs can be considered a direct expression of

civil society (Yúdice 1998:363) and social movements have become an important channel for political protest in Bolivia.

2.2.1 NGOs and GROs

Bolivia experienced a serious economic decline in the 1980's as a result of a steady fall in the prices of tin exported, a terrible drought and the inability to pay back accumulated debts to international banks. The economic fall led to an impoverishment where the real average family income in Bolivia decreased 28.5 percent 1980-85 and health care expenditures were cut by 77.7 percent 1980-84 (Arellano-López – Petras 1994:557f). Bolivia is one of the poorest countries in Latin America where 58.6 percent of the population are considered poor and around half of them extremely poor with incomes below 1 USD per day (INE 2001; Widmark 2003:10). In 1985 a neo-liberal economic policy was launched as a response of the unstable economic situation and pressures from international banks. These policies opened up Bolivia to globalization and international trade and funding (Arellano-Lopez – Petras 1994:555ff).

In the 1980's and 1990's NGOs proliferated in Bolivia. As the state redraw financing for social services, the funding of NGOs increased to provide for at least basic services. NGOs are operative in creating development opportunities for local people but at the same time it reduces the state accountability and governmental responsibilities. Resources are channelled to NGOs because they are thought to be closer to local problems and more sensitive to indigenous issues than governments. GROs and the NGOs that support them are seen as the most innovative actors for setting agendas for political and social policies. These actors have focused on culture and established a foundation for resistance against the economic system (Goldstein 2004:30; Healy 2001:39ff,62f; Yúdice 1998:353f). A World Bank study of local development in four Bolivian municipalities found that 80 percent of the households interviewed participated in GROs and 70 percent believed that GROs benefit the community and the family (World Bank 1998).

2.2.2 Social Indigenous Movements

Bolivia has a tradition of civil resistance through continuous protests against the minority rule. The early indigenous movements struggled for the right to national citizenship, land and education. A cultural, ethnic ideology for the indigenous movement was elaborated in the Manifesto of Tiwanaku in 1973 (Van Cott 1994:9-15).

Bolivia has been a democracy for more than twenty years but the participation of indigenous people in formal democracy has been low. Many indigenous rejected the authority of the Bolivian state instead they supported indigenous movements based on the vision of a return to indigenous rule in the Andes. Indigenous political mobilization can be seen in the context of persisting structures of marginalization and discrimination. The resurgence of social protests is partly explained by the lack of trust in formal democracy and political parties.

The widespread corruption among government officials makes people think that parties' work for their own benefit and not for social change. As the government has failed to stand up for the interests of the marginalized indigenous, they have challenged the shortcomings of formal democracy and exercised their voice through public protest. The state response to the protests has been military repression (Crabtree 2005:2ff; Widmark 2002:71ff).

The indigenous social movements in Bolivia are divided between different indigenous groups, class-oriented and ethnically oriented organizations, those collaborating with political parties and those in opposition to formal democracy. Social protests have been reoccurring through the 1990's and escalated in the years from 2000. Massive popular protests have been mobilized through a wide variety of actors⁹ in cooperation with GROs and local NGOs. The "Water Wars" 2000 in Cochabamba mobilized over ten thousand people and successfully prevented the privatization of water resources. Neo-liberal policies insensitive to popular needs and demands radicalized the indigenous movements. In the "Gas War" 2003 the people of El Alto mobilized against the plan to export natural gas to the U.S. through Chile. With El Alto's strategic location, the road connections from La Paz to the airport and to the rest of the country were effectively closed off. The demonstrations led to the resignation of the unpopular president Sánchez de Lozada and to the loss of 70 lives and over 200 wounded (Arbona – Kohl 2004:255; Crabtree 2005:2ff,11,93ff; Healy 2001:118f; Löfving-Widmark 2002:10f).

2.3 Internal Migration in Bolivia

The majority of the indigenous are still living in rural areas but due to rapid migration this is changing. The urban population in Bolivia has increased from 42 percent in 1976, to 50 percent in 1992 and 62 percent in 2001 (INE 2001). The increased urbanization can be explained by the collapse of tin mining¹⁰, an increased population, the development of rural education and the problems of land division and agricultural decline. Displaced miners and unemployed workers and ex-peasants have migrated to the cities in search of economic opportunities, inserting themselves in the growing informal economy. Some migrants move to the Chapare region of the Amazon and others to Buenos Aires, Argentina. The majority of the Aymara migrants move to El Alto-La Paz (Crabtree 2005:4, 7f, 78; Healy 2001:6f; Widmark 2003:2).

⁹ Important actors of the social movements have been the Katarista movement, the single union confederation of Bolivian peasant workers CSUTCB, the Bolivian workers' confederation COB, the regional workers union COR, the federation of coca-growers, the federation of miners FSTMB, the confederation of ayllus and markas CONAMAQ and neighbourhood councils (Crabtree 2005:3).

¹⁰ The collapse of world tin prices coincided with the hyperinflation of the early 1980's. In 1985 most of Bolivia's state-owned tin mining operations were closed, which resulted in the loss of 25 000 jobs (Crabtree 2005:4).

2.3.1 El Alto

El Alto is situated on the edge of the high plateau of the Andes overlooking La Paz and surrounded by the high peaks of the Andes. It was built to host factories and factory workers in an area close to the international airport. Due to heavy migration the city grew rapidly and became an autonomous municipality in 1985. Today El Alto is one of the fastest growing cities in Latin America with an estimated growth rate of five percent per year. In a few years the city will have exceeded the population of La Paz¹¹. El Alto can be said to have an ethnically marked poverty as the majority of the population consists of poor Aymara migrants. El Alto is a bilingual city where the majority of the migrants that arrive have Aymara or Quechua as their maternal language and learn Spanish as a second language (Guaygua *et al.* 2000:103f; Johnsson 1986:71).

Known as the highest city of the world at a height of 4000 meters, the climate in El Alto is rough and the air is thin. The cities of La Paz-El Alto are segregated according to altitude, the poorer you are the higher up you live. Below the indigenous in El Alto, the middle class mestizos live in La Paz and below them the white upper class live in the mild climate of southern La Paz. There is a rivalry between the cities where a stigmatized image of El Alto sees it as the backyard of La Paz (Crabtree 2005:94f; Arbona – Kohl 2004:255).

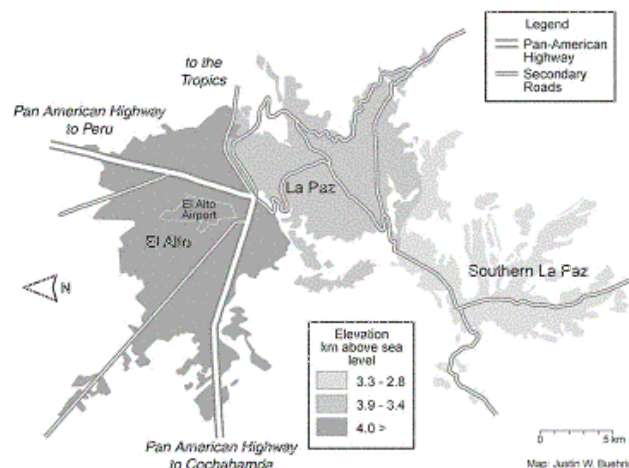


Figure 2: Map of El Alto-La Paz-Southern La Paz (Arbona – Kohl 2004:256).

El Alto is a place where traditions and modernity meet. The city is seen as a place of progress while rural areas are seen as places of backwardness, where the indigenous are connected to the rural areas and the white upper class located in the cities. Through the increased migration indigenous rural migrants challenge the social order of the city with their chaotic settlements (Goldstein 2004:12f). In the urban context the role of identity and culture are on its edge in a clash between the urban and the rural and between an Andean and a western way of life (Widmark 2003:4f, 27f).

¹¹ According to the national census in 2001 the population of El Alto was 649 958, with an annual growth of 4, 8 %, compared to La Paz with a population of 723 293 and an annual growth rate of 0, 2 % (INE).

3 Revalorization among Urban Aymara

This section presents material from the interviews and earlier research to answer the questions asked in the aim and purpose of the study. The opposing tendencies of assimilation and revalorization for the urban Aymara are looked at through the experience of migration, generational differences and gender relations. The role of organizations in revalorization and the relations with foreign organizations are dealt with next and finally how the local organizations revalorize through activities and their outcomes. Names and organizations from the interviews can be found in the list of respondents and organizations in appendix 1.

3.1 Assimilation and Revalorization

3.1.1 The Experience of Internal Migration

The rural to urban migration was described as a tough experience that some of my respondents have been through themselves. The identity of the migrants is reconstructed in a process of identity-formation taken from an inferior position, as they do not feel accepted with their rural, indigenous identity. Montoya's (1992) metaphor of a mirror of power can explain the process where the indigenous migrant is confronted with values and norms of the dominant society. The mirror of power is the dominant model of society, which applied on Bolivia is western and Spanish speaking. Looking at themselves in the mirror the Aymara migrants see that they are not accepted and feel inferior with a low self-esteem. They experience a need for change and put on a mask to adjust to the dominant model. They could also choose to reject the dominant model and emphasize a different identity (in Cronehed 1996:48ff).

Migrants usually try to integrate or adapt to their new urban environment. Some try to assimilate into the new context by dropping traits and customs of the Aymara culture associated with a backward, rural identity in favour for a western, modern culture. Others stress their Aymara identity by participating in cultural activities or political mobilization (Abercrombie 1988:33; Widmark 2003:4).

When I came from the countryside all I had was my *abarcas*¹² and my *pollera*¹³. I suffered from a terrible discrimination so I changed and wore pants. It cost to leave your animals to come to the city where you are discriminated against. It is difficult when you don't know where to live, some families take you in but they treat you bad and let you stay in terrible conditions (Rosalía).

¹² *Abarcas* are sandals made of rubber tires worn by rural Aymara.

¹³ *Pollera* is a wide skirt, worn with several skirts under to make it even wider.

By dropping a cultural trait as the rural way of dressing and adopting urban dress habits, migrants try to assimilate into the new urban context to avoid discrimination. The rural way of dressing for Aymara women is recognized by rubber sandals and a wide skirt in fabrics made of wool. Albó (1988) wrote that the Aymara could choose to either assimilate to the western world of the mestizos or to an urban variant of the Aymara culture (in Widmark 2003:25). The urban Aymara way of dressing is in a wide skirt decorated in acrylic materials, a bowler hat and ballerina shoes. It is influenced by European fashion in the 16th century and can be seen as part of a hybrid urban Aymara culture in accordance with Featherstone's (1995) idea of hybridizations. The western way of dressing is in pants or a western dress. The choice to wear pants or a dress could be a matter of income given that the urban Aymara skirt is expensive with its imported materials, why some wear it only at festivities. Urban men and youth have adopted a western style and do not express their Aymara identity through dress habits anymore (Johnsson 1986:71f).

The migrants are usually in a vulnerable economic situation when they arrive to the city, leaving a rural area without possibilities for making a living due to a lack of land and basic services. The value of an indigenous person, *jaqi*, is based in her belonging in the community, while a person in a western society is valued by her individual actions. *Ayni* is a system of community help based in the ayllu. *Ayni* works as a social security net from the idea of reciprocity where labour, goods or services are provided to someone in need, as the provider expects the same from someone in the community when they are in need. These principles function in the rural area where you are born into a community but when migrating to the city the Aymara are suddenly without a community (Johnsson 1986:33; Widmark 2003:71). According to Albó (1980) the place of origin and community is the most obvious group of reference for Aymara born in rural areas (in Widmark 2003:95).

The Aymara migrants experience a cultural alienation in the city as they lose their community as a source of identification and their rural culture is not accepted. Canessa's field study in Pocobaya¹⁴ shows that the rural Aymara do not feel like they share identity with urban people. For them being indigenous is a way of life, therefore migration to the city leads to a loss of that identity. They become *q'ara*, which means naked or without culture (2006:259).

To preserve the part of their identity connected to community, the urban Aymara prefer to live in the same part of the city as people of their home community, relatives or kin. This reinforces *ayni* through the creation of a new community. The boundaries of the *zona* are maintained through group activities, sports clubs, and local fiestas through which group association, loyalty and collective identity are accentuated (Johnsson 1986:76). Moving to a house in a *zona* of kin is something that is achieved as a step up in the social career of the migrants when they are consolidated. When they arrive they work hard in the informal sector as salespersons in the streets, living as tenants. The period of

¹⁴ Pocobaya is a rural Aymara village in Bolivia.

achieving consolidation is filled with discrimination and sacrifices to gain enough economic capital to increase the quality of life (Guaygua *et al.* 2000:57).

The neo-liberal system and western ideas present in the city all build on the notion of individuality, which is very different from the communitarian Aymara culture. By revalorizing communitarian practices local organizations present an alternative for the urban Aymara where community support is mobilized also in the individualized context of the urban area.

When we revalorize we return to our communitarian practices to endure in a country as poor as this. We maintain the communitarian practices as the *ayni* and the *mink'a*¹⁵, which makes us able to survive. If we live together collectively, we support each other. I think that without this the indigenous wouldn't still be alive. This has maintained many lives and if we revalorize this, I think that we will have even more resistance. It might not reduce poverty but it makes you feel poverty less, living together makes you survive better (Beatriz).

3.1.2 Generational Differences

The first generation of urban Aymara is now old, *awichas*. The second generation is adults born in El Alto that are parents to the third generation, the young. Many of the migrated parents want to avoid the discrimination they have experienced for their children. They tell their children: "I don't want you to be like me, I want you to be different, I want you to progress, to have a job, to study" (Gonzalo). This could be seen as an encouragement from the parents for the children to assimilate for the possibility of a better chance in life. Many parents choose not to teach their children Aymara because they think they will be better assimilated with Spanish as their first language. Part of the older generation can only communicate in Aymara, resulting in that some of the elderly cannot communicate with their grandchildren (Mercedes).

In Fanon's studies (1952) of the consciousness of the colonized he argued that material inferiority results in a sense of racial or cultural inferiority. He exemplified with language where colonized people were forced to speak the language of the colonizers and thereby suppressed their own language and identity (in Löfving-Widmark 2002:20). Through the forced use of Spanish, the Aymara people have suppressed their own language and identity. Before the educational reform Aymara language was not allowed in schools and teachers have been known to put chilli in the mouths of children speaking Aymara so they would not do it again (Rosalía). Widmark's research shows that many Aymara parents resisted the educational reform, wanting their children to speak Spanish in order to express themselves properly in contacts with authorities. The parents considered the reform as an attempt to reinforce colonial divides and keep the rural population marginalized (2002:74). According to Layme the Aymara have difficulties understanding the Spanish education in Bolivia (2002:26f). Many respondents say that the Aymara have a different form of thinking, which is why it is difficult for them to understand and be understood in the schools. The essay's

¹⁵ *Mink'a* is a type of reciprocal labour exchange.

of children with Aymara as their first language does not make sense to the teachers. As the students think in Aymara but write in Spanish they form a typical linguistic style in line with the Aymara cosmology, which in no way is recognized by the educational system or the state (Gonzalo; Mercedes; Salvador).

The young do not define themselves as indigenous or Aymara, but as *alteños*¹⁶. As they have no own experiences of the rural community-life the young are more attached to the city than to the rural community of their families. They wear western clothes as short skirts, jeans and high heels and colour their hair red to distance themselves from their indigenous heritage and assimilate into the modern mestizo culture. The young urban Aymara do not know about their heritage. In the city they are faced with global influences and the norms of the dominant society on a daily basis. The respondents say that the globalization of culture is strong in the city making the young see the rural and the urban in opposition where the rural is seen as backwards and inferior (Gonzalo; Beatriz).

I always ask them, if you don't want to be indigenous, what do you want to be? Because you're not white, you can colour your hair but you are still indigenous because you have indigenous roots. You have to identify with what you are. Being indigenous isn't a question of colours, it is a question of how you think, how you feel, your self-esteem (Beatriz).

Many of the youths don't want to take part in the communitarian meal. They say it is something for the peasants; it is something for the indigenous. For us this has to change and it also hurts to see that our youth doesn't want to be more indigenous, not wanting to be Aymara anymore but they don't have another option to be (Beatriz).

The respondents said that Bolivia has not been able to develop because it has not recognized the indigenous people. That the only way the country can go forward and develop is to value its indigenous cultural identity and make justice to the wisdom of the indigenous population. Without a recognition and respect of the indigenous cultures, the respondents said there is a risk that their culture will be dissolved. As the Aymara culture is transferred orally, the situation becomes urgent as the old dies with the knowledge and the young are not interested. Respondents perceived the maintenance of Aymara culture and identity as threatened in the city (Norah; Mercedes). "Nobody wants to be indigenous in a world where being indigenous is like a crime" (Beatriz). Through revalorization the threat of homogenization can be resisted and the Aymara culture maintained in the city. As the urban Aymara revalorize their culture and cosmology, their indigenous identity is strengthened and their identity-formation no longer has to be taken from an inferior position.

If the dominant minority in Bolivia doesn't respect the cultures of the people, 20-30 years from now the cultural values and the language will disappear. We are fighting for that our life won't be destroyed but instead maintained (Ricardo).

¹⁶ *Alteños* are the people of El Alto.

For us culture is important, through culture you understand the world and you have to understand this to make modifications, we cannot adopt other things if we cannot understand our cosmology (Jeaneth).

I think that identity is a fundamental pillar, with identity you can advance; persons that know where they come from have a better future of developing (Samuel).

3.1.3 Gender Relations

The migrants adopt different behaviours and attitudes as machismo to assimilate to their new urban context (Johnsson 1986:75). The respondents said that the relation between the genders is deteriorating among the urban Aymara. In Aymara culture man and woman is not individualized instead there is a complementarity called *chacha-warmi*¹⁷. In Aymara language there are no words for boy or girl both are called *wawa*. Both men and women can perform rituals and the main god, *pachamama*, is a woman. The positions of authority in the Aymara communities bring responsibilities for both the man and his wife (Franz; Javier; Ricardo). It should be noted that only as married you become a full worthy jaqi and only a pair could be elected as leaders of the community. The complementarity between man and woman is divided in different responsibilities and virtues. The woman is compared to mother earth that generates life, not only of reproduction but also of creativity (Beatriz).

In the rural Aymara community there is a social control. The members of the community live closely together, making it difficult for domestic violence to occur without the community's knowledge and response. In the urban context, migrants loose the community control and enter an individualized world where machismo and levels of domestic violence rapidly increases (Beatriz; Mercedes; Rosalía).

The respondents talked of a triple oppression for the Aymara women that come from being indigenous, women and poor (Beatriz; Norah). They all agreed that there is a need to strengthen and empower Aymara women. As the Aymara idea of gender build on difference and complementarity, it contradicts both machismo (based on male supremacy and female dependency) and western notions of gender equality (based on sameness where equal rights and opportunities are open to individuals of both sexes) (Widmark 2003:229).

There are values of authority in the Aymara culture as well but these values have increased through the machismo influences in the city. Chacha-warmi promotes equality as long as the male and female spheres are equally valued. Development projects promoting western notions of gender equality does not attract the attention of the Aymara. Respondents claimed they could still not understand the western concept of gender themselves and were not prepared to teach it (Beatriz; Norah; Ricardo). The female respondents said that they want to be respected as women according to the Aymara idea of difference rather than the western idea of sameness. Aymara women have maintained the control of seeds in

¹⁷ *Chacha-warmi*, chacha=man, warmi=woman, the complementarity of man and woman.

the female sphere, which is valued as important as the base for fertility and harvest. The control of seeds is not seen as an advance from the western idea of gender, rather as an inequality. Western feminists have for example advocated female military service as a conquest, which was rejected as a retrocession by the Aymara as a parameter of the macho aggressor (Beatriz). The local organizations try to revalue the customs of chacha-warmi, to counteract domestic violence and empower women in El Alto from their own cultural principles.

3.2 The Role of Organizations in Revalorization

The activities of revalorization are part of the development aid sector, in which numerous organizations are active. Local organizations have to find a place for themselves in this sector and a way to enable activities of revalorization. They need funding, which can be provided by foreign organizations. The foreign aid organizations represent a heterogeneous group. The text below shows how the interviewed organizations see their own role and their experiences of relations with foreign organizations.

All of the organizations interviewed made a clear distinction between themselves and NGOs. Most of them were registered as NGOs but made it very clear that this was only a formality to be recognized by the state. The term NGO has bad connotations due to the massive influx of foreign NGOs. They are thought of as overly bureaucratic and dependent on financial support from foreign organizations. Many of the foreign NGOs have made well intended but misdirected projects ending in failure and the loss of confidence of the participants (Salvador; Beatriz). Among the organizations interviewed there were accusations of other organizations being NGOs in the bad sense. One respondent made a distinction between *ONG:istas* (people working in NGOs) and *activistas* (political activists). The organizations that considered themselves *activistas* took pride in their independent situation and often referred to their participation in the social movements. They were more radical in their ideas while the *ONG:istas* were more moderate and wanted to make changes within the system rather than changing the system. The *ONG:istas* were substantially better funded while the *activistas* relied on private contributions. Most of the organizations had tried to be *ONG:istas* but their involvement in social movements made it difficult for them to receive funding.

We do not work together with international organizations. We visited some places that could support projects but they didn't want to support us because they said: this type of aspect is very political and for us to support you it has to be neutral. Regrettably we cannot be neutral, we have tried but it is impossible for us because we are a political organization. We don't believe in development as it is approached. If a financing agency meets us marching or demonstrating, they won't want this. We are activists in the streets as well. Now we have autonomy, complete freedom and this is very important for us (Beatriz).

One of the central ideas behind alternative development is that it should be centred on people and their environment. Local organizations have the great advantage of locality, not only knowledge of Aymara culture but actually being part of it themselves and having shared many of the experiences of discrimination and migration with the locals. “In some of the places where we work the women are very suspicious to outsiders, but we live here in the area and we come from the same places as them” (Franz). They also talked of the necessity of speaking Aymara to be fully understood and to get confidence from the people participating. The organizations said that development has to be seen from a cultural point of view, from the way of life in this region, the experiences of the people here, as the social, political and economic thinking and language is a fundamental part of culture. “We know how to think of development from the cultural identity of our communities” (Norah). “We act from the native dialogue” (Javier).

Many of the foreign organizations financing local organizations have restrictions to what type of projects they can finance, which have led to disputes. Respondents talked of problems with financing when their activities were considered too political or radical, involved coca-leaves or concerned issues outside the local area. Demobilizing efforts by foreign aid organizations have taken place among politically active youth in El Alto (Beatriz; Gonzalo). The constant need of intermediaries, not being able to obtain financing directly, was criticized (Javier). Arellano-López and Petras research shows that the placement of foreign NGOs as intermediators between international donors and local organizations increases the isolation of the local organizations, allowing states and international donors to avoid dealing directly with them. As intermediators NGOs often pressure local organizations to forsake political struggle to ingratiate themselves with institutions controlling access to development resources (1994:557).

Edward and Hulmes have argued that the dependence of any NGO on external funding is a weakness. Their accountability could be redirected upwards to donors, away from the grassroots, supporters and staff. Important areas of the organizations activity that do not fit into the donor agenda may lose out. A context where organizations compete against each other for support is unlikely to foster collaborative relationships between the organizations. There is also a risk that large NGOs might crowd out smaller organizations, which can be a barrier to pluralism and diversity (1998:8ff).

The respondents talked about problems with foreign organizations devaluing Aymara values and of a misuse of Aymara hospitality and the principle of reciprocity, central to the Aymara culture.

There is a seminar where representatives from the international organizations come and ask: Can we give you food? Can we give you certificates? And all is for free, which is terrible to the Aymara because they have always worked to eat. Our population has confused many international organizations. They have made mistakes and spoiled things. In some communities a lot is expected from foreigners and they don't have anything. When the international organizations are more ethical we will respect them (Salvador).

We have a philosophy and logic that is very different from the western. Development projects often go wrong. They say they are going to construct roads from the Amazon, which is not a bad idea, but the roads don't serve to unite indigenous populations with the city. It only serves to facilitate for the companies to take the wood out of there. So for development what has this road done? It has destroyed our territory, the surroundings of a determined indigenous population or culture that exists there (Beatriz).

There is a widespread idea that many NGOs work for the beneficiary of themselves as an organization and that a large part of funding goes to salaries and the bureaucracy of the office for young professionals that have seized a working possibility in the development sector that reproduce the need of their position to keep their job (Javier). Many foreign organizations aim to decrease their own role and give an increased responsibility to the local organizations but doing this implies that they rationalize away themselves. In spite of problems of cooperating, former and ongoing projects funded by foreign organizations have enabled many of the revalorizing activities of local organizations. Many of the organizations interviewed receive continuous financial support from foreign organizations and have good relations with them (CASSA; CAUP; CDIMA; CEADL).

3.3 Activities and Outcomes of Revalorization

The revalorizing activities of the local organizations can be placed in the three dimensions of empowerment (personal, relational and collective) described by Rowlands (1997). These activities are all based in the knowledge and understanding of the Aymara culture, attempting to strengthen and revalorize areas of their culture and identity lost in the city. Below some examples are presented of the wide range of revalorizing activities arranged by the local organizations interviewed and the outcomes of these activities.

The local organizations work to strengthen the organization of ayllus thereby revalorizing the authorities, governing and communitarian practices of the Aymara (CASSA; CAUP). It is an example of collective empowerment as the Aymara work together in the community to achieve a greater impact than they could do themselves. It develops a sense of collective agency, group-identity and dignity for having an indigenous decision-making based in Aymara cosmology, where they earlier could only affect decisions through the structures of the dominant minority. It gives personal empowerment of self-esteem, self-confidence and a sense of agency for being part of the ayllu. The reinforcement of communitarian practices and *ayni* brings relational empowerment as it improves the ability to get support and improves the relations in the community through communication and negotiation.

All of the organizations interviewed try to revalorize indigenous knowledge through different activities, as it is a human resource not recognized in the Bolivian society. Many of the organizations provide alternative education where they are able to revalorize, reaffirm and strengthen the Aymara identity. Some

organizations cooperate with local schools to insert Aymara culture in the education. Seminars have been arranged on topics like cultural identity, ayllu organizing and the history, wisdom and cosmology of the Aymara. Revalorizing knowledge gives personal empowerment as the Aymara self-esteem and self-confidence are strengthened. As the youth learn about their heritage it strengthens their indigenous identity and dignity through collective empowerment and the knowledge can be maintained in the young generation.

The oral transmittance of Aymara culture is maintained by inviting the elderly to tell stories for children and youth. Traditional Aymara music has been recorded so that it will not be lost for future generations (Jakkir Qhana). Residents from rural areas have been invited to share what they are doing in their community, what they think in and how they live in an attempt to reinforce and revalorize principles lost in the city (CEADL). Fiestas with indigenous music and dances have been organized so that the youth and urban population could experience and revalorize their heritage through native dances and music (CDIMA; Wayna Tambo). As the richness of the Aymara culture is recognized, their group identity is strengthened and the support of the community becomes visualized and mobilized in the preparations and celebration of the fiesta in a collective and relational empowerment. This type of activities work as a cultural resistance to the threat of cultural homogenization.

For the youth there are activities of revalorization in accordance with modern influences. Records have been produced with one hard rock group and one hip hop group in Aymara. Through modern musical influences they protest through music in their own language (Wayna Tambo). In this way the young reproduce culture with their own contributions. This can be said to be an example of cultural hybridization, where the traditional Aymara language and western music form a mix of Aymara social protest. Melucci (1997) sees hybridizations as a storehouse for cultural heritage and the hip hop and hard rock in Aymara work as storage for the Aymara language.

Your culture is in your blood and it goes where it wants, goes out through your pores, because of this it doesn't matter what kind of music you make, your culture is present anyway. The young won't forget about their culture they only reproduce it with other elements taken from other cultures (Jeaneth).

Alternative radio resists the influences and western values transmitted by mass communication. The organizations have transmitted programs that discuss and revalorize Aymara culture and identity, which reached many listeners at once. It can be seen as a popular re-appropriation of the hegemonic sphere of communication (CDIMA; Pacha Ayni; Wayna Tambo). Local organizations also work to counteract the stigmatized image of El Alto by giving examples of what young *alteños* do and produce, that they construct their own culture (CEADL; Wayna Tambo). These activities provide a personal empowerment as the youth get a sense of agency for doing for example a radio show or a record and thereby improve their self-esteem. When the *alteños* work together, it is a form of collective empowerment as they develop a sense of collective agency, which strengthens their group-identity. The radio transmissions, concerts and workshops,

in which also youth from La Paz participate, create spaces of negotiation, resulting in a decreased distance between the two cities (Jeaneth).

Three-day empowerment courses for women are continuously organized. At these courses the Aymara gender relations and indigenous rights are revalorized and discussed. Educations in leadership are held where women are encouraged to take part in public, social and cultural spaces (CDIMA). The empowerment courses are placed on weekends to make it possible for the women to participate since the children do not go to school then (Sonia), thereby avoiding hinders for empowerment as obligations in the house. These courses bring personal empowerment as it develops self-confidence among the women participating and undoes effects of internalized oppression. It also gives relational empowerment as it aim to improve the relations between man and woman, the roles in the family and community by improving communication and negotiation. And finally collective empowerment as the women participating meet other women, share their experiences and feel a sense of collective agency within the group thereby breaking the isolation experienced by many in the city.

When asked if there was something further they would like to do or that was needed the organizations all answered: more seminars, educations, fiestas, radio transmissions, records and everything else. There seems to be a vast interest for taking part in these activities. The Aymara give up their time, obligations and financial opportunities to participate (Alicia; Sonia; Rosalía), which indicate how important they must be for the urban Aymara.

4 Summarizing Conclusions

1. How do the Aymara deal with the opposing tendencies of assimilation and revalorization as their culture and identity is contested in the city?

The migrants experience a cultural alienation in the city as they lose the part of their identity based in the community and their rural, indigenous identity is not accepted. When the migrants come to the city their identity is reconstructed in a process of identity-formation, which can be located on a range between assimilation and revalorization. By dropping cultural traits as the way of dressing migrants try to assimilate into the new urban context and avoid discrimination. The revalorization of communitarian practices present an alternative for the urban Aymara, where the community help is reinforced and their culture can be maintained in the individualized urban context.

The urban youth have no own experiences of rural communitarian life and are strongly influenced by global and western influences. They define themselves as *alteños* and consider Aymara culture and identity to be backwards or “something for the peasants” and try to distance themselves from it. They are even encouraged by their parents to assimilate for a better chance in life with less discrimination. An example of this is the Aymara language, which many parents choose not to teach their children because they believe they will be better assimilated with Spanish as their first language. Some urban youth cannot communicate with their grandparents and do not know about nor value their Aymara heritage. The respondents said that the only way Bolivia can go forward and develop is if it values its indigenous cultural identity and recognizes the wisdom of the indigenous population.

The Aymara notion of gender relations based on complementarity is deteriorating in the city as the migrants are influenced by machismo. This combined with the loss of community control this leads to increased levels of domestic violence in the city. The Aymara women experience a triple oppression from being indigenous, women and poor. Western ideas of gender equality are neither understood nor effective for Aymara women. Through a revalorization of the *chacha-warmi* idea of gender relations, Aymara women can be empowered from their own cultural principles.

The maintenance of the Aymara culture and identity in the urban context is threatened as many assimilate to avoid discrimination. The young *alteños* attitude toward their indigenous heritage gives an idea of the future development. As the Aymara culture is transferred orally, the situation becomes urgent as the old generation dies with this knowledge. The urban Aymara consider themselves inferior to the dominant culture and experience a cultural alienation. Through activities of revalorization local organizations try to resist the strong assimilative tendency and empower the urban Aymara. The young *alteños* cannot be expected

to live a traditional life but if they know about their culture and that their indigenous identity is something worth valuing they will have a better chance in life. Neither of the extremes of total assimilation or full revalorization seems likely for the urban Aymara; through activities of revalorization their culture can be maintained in urban hybridizations of the Aymara culture.

2. What is the role of organizations in revalorization? How do local organizations experience their relations with foreign organizations?

The local organizations have to find a place for themselves in the development sector and a way to enable activities of revalorization. They need funding, which can be provided by foreign organizations but relations with them can be problematic. Most of the organizations interviewed were formally registered as NGOs but tried to distance themselves from the negative connotations of being an NGO. Some organizations were more radical and active in social protests (activistas) while others tried to achieve change within the formal system with continuous support from foreign organizations (ONG:istas). All of the organizations talked about the necessity of locality for revalorization. The local organizations received the confidence of the Aymara because they share the same cultural heritage, language and experiences.

Many of the organizations interviewed experienced cooperative problems with foreign organizations. The restrictions in funding made it difficult for organizations considered too political to receive funding. Foreign NGOs are often placed as intermediators between international donors and local organizations. This increases the isolation of local organizations and they are pressured to forsake projects that do not fit into the agenda of the donors. To protect their independence some organizations had given up on foreign funding. The respondents said that the Aymara population confused foreign organizations, as their cosmology is so different, resulting in many failed projects. In spite of the problems presented, former and ongoing projects funded by foreign organizations have enabled revalorizing activities of local organizations. Many of the local organizations receive continuous funding from foreign organizations and have good relations with them.

The way local organizations wanted to distance themselves from being NGOs indicate how much failed development they have experienced. Revalorization of culture and identity is something that can only be successfully exercised locally by locals. The different outlook among the organizations of how to change the situation of the indigenous is just different ways of achieving the same goal: a revalorized Aymara culture and identity.

As so many resources are channelled to foreign organizations it is sad to see so much of it is wasted on development projects that do not improve the situation of indigenous population. There seems to be a problem when agendas produced in a different part of the world do not correlate to the local needs. As most of the local organizations are educated and experienced in the development sector the need of foreign organizations as intermediaries have become obsolete.

3. How are the Aymara culture and identity revalorized? What are the outcomes of these activities?

Some of the wide range of revalorizing activities organized by the local organizations interviewed has been presented. The outcome of the activities can be categorized through Rowlands (1997) three dimensions of empowerment (personal, relational and collective). The work to strengthen ayllus revalorizes the authorities, governing and communitarian practices of the Aymara. It brings collective empowerment as a sense of collective agency, group-identity and dignity is developed. It gives personal empowerment of self-esteem and a sense of agency for being part in the ayllu. It also brings relational empowerment as the ability to get support is improved as well as negotiations and communications in the community. Alternative education and seminars revalorizes the Aymara knowledge, which is not recognized by the Bolivian state. The youth learn about the Aymara cosmology, language and heritage and their self-esteem whereby their indigenous identity is strengthened and thereby the knowledge can be maintained in the young generation. For the urban fiestas people from the community work together to celebrate the richness of the Aymara culture, which mobilizes the community support in relational empowerment. The youth activities as producing records, organizing concerts and radio transmissions improve the self-esteem and the collective agency of the young *alteños*. Times are changing and the young *alteños* cannot be expected to live a traditional, rural Aymara life. Through the activities of revalorization they learn about their heritage and recreate their culture in new forms and hybridizations. The courses and seminars for women revalue the *chacha-warmi* idea of gender relations, break the isolation, undoes the internalized oppression and empower women at all three dimensions of empowerment.

I believe that the activities of revalorization carried out by local organizations fill an important gap in the massive industry of development aid in Bolivia. Based in the Aymara cosmology their activities empower and strengthen the Aymara migrants on their own level, in their own language in a way they understand through their own cultural values. This is something that foreign actors can never achieve, no matter how good intentions they have. The vast interest for taking part in the revalorizing activities indicates how important they must be for the urban Aymara. To empower, to undo the negative social constructions of indigenous people as inferior and to make them aware of their interests and rights to influence decisions, is vital for the urban Aymara to have the possibility of improving their lives.

During the last years a strengthened Aymara identity and self-esteem have been observed. More Aymara are seen in the universities, in the parliament and now even as president. The indigenous population is demanding their voice to be heard throughout the Bolivian society. I believe that the work of revalorization among local organizations have played a significant part to achieve this together with the social movements and changes in the formal democracy. Changing deeply rooted feelings of inferiority in a racist society as Bolivia takes time. Only continued work through daily practice can change the idea that being indigenous is something bad written in the skin. Through revalorizing activities more and more Aymara become aware of that their culture and identity is something worth

valuing. Revalorization of culture and identity provides a culturally sensitive form of development that maintains Aymara culture and improves the well being of the Aymara people.

The interviews with local organizations provided an insight to the work of revalorization. The experiences of revalorization among the local organizations might differ from the participants of the activities, the foreign organizations funding them or actors in the social movements. With more time for interviews and for gaining the confidence of participants, it would be interesting to talk to other actors to get their views and experiences on revalorization. It would also be appealing to study revalorization in a different context to see how the experiences vary. Activities of revalorization are only part of the changes for indigenous people. The election of Morales as the first indigenous president and the results of this would be interesting to study as well as the building of Bolivia as a multicultural state. So much hope and aspirations rely on Morales being able to achieve a substantial change that a failure of delivering would be a failure not only for Morales but also for the first indigenous governance.

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Appendix 1 List of Respondents and Organizations

CASSA, *Comunidad Andina Suma Satawi*. CASSA was founded in El Alto 1992. CASSA works in three indigenous communities in the district of La Paz. Their work is oriented in the Andean line of thinking, to strengthen the cultural identity of the people from the organizational structure of the ayllus.

Interview 2006-03-02 with Samuel Apaza

Alicia Canavari

Marco Terrazas

CAUP, *Comunidad Aymara Urbana Pampahasi*. CAUP was established in Pampahasi in 1983. It works as a traditional Aymara organization with the objective to recover the Aymara customs, culture and the cosmology. They have a program for traditional medicine and alternative education where they teach Aymara culture, knowledge and medicine. CAUP has three divisions:

- *Awichas*: housing for the elderly (in Pampahasi and El Alto).

- *Machaq uta*: house for children and youth, help with school, music.

- *Qulla uta*: medicinal house with traditional Aymara medicine where native healers/curers and psychologists work in line with the Andean cosmology.

Interview 2006-02-03 Mercedes Zerda, general coordinator.

CDIMA, *Centro de Desarrollo Integral de la Mujer Aymara Amuyt'a*. CDIMA have worked since 1995 to capacitate women through Aymara notions of gender relations. They organize courses of empowerment and leadership for women, radio transmissions on women's and indigenous rights and organize fiestas in El Alto.

Interview 2006-02-22 with Norah Quispe, director

Ricardo Mendoza, capacitation and formation

Franz Laime, communications

Cristina Mamani, consultations

Sonia Zenteno, advisor

CEADL, *Centro de Estudios y Apoyo al Desarrollo Local*. CEADL was established in El Alto in 1998. They work in the Aymara organizational forms with consensus in decisions. A large part of their activities are directed at Aymara youth in El Alto where they have a cultural centre, support political youths, teach computer knowledge and have seminars to which they invite representatives of the rural communities.

Interview 2006-02-15 with Gonzalo Huaranca, pedagogical director.

JAKKIR QHANA or Luz Viva, have been working in El Alto since 1993. They see themselves as part of a socio-cultural, indigenous movement. They work with the issues of human rights and indigenous rights by arranging seminars, alternative education based in the Aymara cultural identity. They also produce records with traditional music.

Interview 2006-02-22 Beatriz Bautista.

PACHA AYNI, started its work in El Alto in 1999. Pacha Ayni has an alternative education where they revalorize, reaffirm and strengthen the experience and coexistence of *jaqi*, an indigenous person as well as providing a place where youths can come. They also participate in radio programs dealing with Aymara identity.

Interview 2006-03-03 with Salvador Quispe, Aymara socio-political analyst.

TAYPI, was established in 1990. It has created an alternative space where the youths of El Alto can come. They arrange seminars on indigenous rights and identity, alternative education on Aymara history and customs, communitarian meals, karaoke, video-educations.

Interview 2006-02-17 Rosalia Choque.

TINKU ORIGINARIO, have worked since 1998 to recover the indigenous organizational forms by turning sindicatos back to ayllus. Tinku Originario work to re-establish the *amaut'aña ch'auta*, a kind of a native university where the indigenous knowledge and wisdom are recognized.

Interview 2006-03-03, Javier Sandoval, amauta (the one that knows, the highest Aymara authority).

WAYNA TAMBO, was established in 1996. Wayna Tambo works with youth in El Alto. They have their own radio station, a café, a cultural centre and a library. They produce records with local groups (hip hop and hard rock) and organize seminars and workshops, political interventions, festivals, fiestas and concerts.

Interview 21-02/2006 Jeaneth Calatayud, coordinator and responsible for the activities of the radio.

Appendix 2 General Interview Guide

The interviews have been conducted in the form of semi-structured conversations. The interview guide below is general as the questions differed between the interviews. The interviews were conducted in Spanish and the questions below have been translated to English.

- How do you work to strengthen Aymara culture and identity in the urban context?
- Is it important to revalorize and why?
- Can you describe the situation for the Aymara in El Alto?
- Can you tell me about the experience of rural to urban migration? Do the newly arrived migrants try to assimilate? How?
- Can you describe ruptures between generations? Are there ruptures concerning the Aymara language and customs?
- Is the maintenance of the Aymara culture threatened in the city?
- Can you tell me about chacha-warmi and the Aymara idea of gender relations? Is the chacha-warmi complementarity affected by the rural to urban migration?
- How do you see your role as local organizations in revalorization?
- What is the role of revalorization in development?
- Do the foreign organizations attend to the needs of the Aymara?
- Do you cooperate in some way with foreign organizations? How are your relations with foreign development organizations?
- What kind of revalorizing activities does your organization arrange?
- What do you think are the outcomes of these activities?
- Is there something further you would like to do or that is needed for the urban Aymara?
- Have you noticed any changes in the self-esteem of the Aymara?