

Opposition or Cooperation?

- A Minor Field Study of the Ecuadorian Indigenous Movement's Relation to the State

Abstract

Ecuador is one of the countries in Latin America where an indigenous movement has a significant influence on politics. This qualitative study examines the indigenous movement in Ecuador and how it relates to the state, in an analysis departing from theories on social movements. This thesis, emphasizing the indigenous perspective, is based on empirical material collected in a minor field study in Ecuador. The focus is on the regional indigenous organization ECUARUNARI's agenda, strategies and position towards the actual government. The aim is to contribute to a deeper understanding of how the Ecuadorian indigenous peoples mobilize and relate to the state. The conditions of struggle for the indigenous movement changed as a leftist president, Rafael Correa, assumed office in 2007. Opposite to expectations of co-operation, tensions rapidly arose. The outlined main reasons are differing political projects and visions of the state and political participation. We argue that another aspect of the disagreement is the indigenous movement's difficulty in adapting to the actual political context. With a collective identity partly based on an anti-system discourse, protest actions and independency, the leadership of the movement continues in the same direction, despite tendencies among the grass roots to support the new government.

Keywords: indigenous, state, social movement, Ecuador

Words: 9988

Acknowledgements

This study would not have been possible without the help of many people. First of all we would like to extend our gratitude to Swedish Agency for International Development Cooperation (SIDA), and the Department of Political Science at Lund University, for granting us a Minor Field Study scholarship.

We would also like to thank Rickard Lalander, at the Department of Latin American Studies at Stockholm University, for providing us with invaluable inspiration and contacts.

Further we would like to thank our supervisor in Sweden, Anders Sannerstedt, and also our supervisor in Quito, Ecuador, Pablo Andrade at the Universidad Andina Simón Bolívar, and other members of the staff at the university contributing to our enjoyable and interesting stay. Of course we are very grateful to all our interview respondents, indispensable for this study, especially Miguel Angel Carlosama, giving us many insights and further contacts.

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1 Introduction

Latin America is a region of great political changes. Several countries have elected left-wing governments, redefining the political agenda, and the indigenous peoples have, after 500 years of exclusion, emerged as a new central political actor. Ecuador is one of the countries where a strong indigenous movement has a significant influence upon the national political development.

The conditions of struggles for the indigenous movement changed as a leftist president, Rafael Correa, with a partly similar political agenda, assumed office in 2007. Opposite to the expectations of co-operation between the new president and the indigenous movement, tensions rapidly arose. This minor field study is about the indigenous movement and its relation to the contemporary government.

1.1 Purpose and Question of Study

The purpose with this study is to examine the indigenous movement of Ecuador and its position towards the state. The focus is on the regional indigenous organization ECUARUNARI, organizing the indigenous people of the Andean highlands. We will give an account of the organization's agenda and strategies and their official position towards the actual government. In an analysis departing from theories of social movements we aim to put the findings into a broader context of Ecuadorian indigenous mobilization. Our intention is not to generalize our results to other regions but to contribute to a deeper understanding of how the Ecuadorian indigenous peoples mobilize and relate to the state.

Our central question to be answered in this study is:

- **How does the indigenous movement relate to the state in contemporary Ecuador?**

In responding the problem we have chosen to focus on the aspects of the following more concrete questions:

- **What are the central aims, strategies and internal issues of the indigenous organization ECUARUNARI?**
- **Which are the main reasons stated about ECUARUNARI's position towards the government?**
- **What does the position towards the government imply for the actual situation of ECUARUNARI?**

This study stresses the *indigenous* perspective of the relation to the government. According to this we will inquire indigenous representative's attitudes and points of view regarding their organization and its disagreement with the government. The study will concentrate on the official image of

ECUARUNARI told by the leadership, but being aware of the variety of opinions within the organization we will to some extent mediate the multiplicity examining the opinions of activists at a local level.

The issue of a social movement's relation to the state is very complex and is affected by a whole set of factors. We do not aim to settle proved explanations or exhaust all the indigenous movement's possible ways of acting. Instead we have chosen to outline the main features in ECUARUNARI's strategies, agenda and position against the government in order to learn more about the Ecuadorian indigenous movement.

1.2 Demarcations

Our main demarcation in studying the indigenous movement consists in making the regional Kichwa organization ECUARUNARI our central object of study. Most studies on social movements focus either on individuals, organizations or events, or the links between them (Della Porta 2006: 2). Without minimizing the importance of other indigenous organizations we consider ECUARUNARI to be a convenient choice to reflect the general tendencies of the indigenous movement as it is the largest and most influential part in the national indigenous organization CONAIE, totally dominating the indigenous movement (Lucero 2008: 11).

The indigenous party Pachakutik will be mentioned but will not be in focus of our study. As the purpose is to address the indigenous perspective, the standpoint and actions of the government are mainly examined through the indigenous people's eyes, but will to some extent also be observed through secondary material and one interview with a representative from the governing party.

1.3 Method and Material

This minor field study is based on two months research in Ecuador in December 2009 and January 2010. We have chosen to carry out a qualitative case study with the objective to deepen the comprehension of how the indigenous movement in Ecuador works and relates to the government. A qualitative study implies a hermeneutic approach, with proximity to the object of observation and a focus on what is unique in the context (Lundquist 1993: 42).

The study is conducted as a theory consuming case study, meaning that the purpose is to deeply understand a single case with help of already existing theories (Esaiasson et al 2007: 42).

The empirical material will be analyzed through theories of social movements and their relation to the state. The choice of the theoretical framework is suitable as the indigenous movement in Ecuador is clearly defined as a social movement in previous research (Escobar 1992; Van Cott 1994; Yashar 2005) and as the main

focus of the study is the outlining of ECUARUNARI's position towards the government, to better understand the indigenous-state relation in Ecuador.

The indigenous-state relation could be studied in many ways with different focuses. We will operationalize the study of the indigenous movement's position towards the state through an examination of the attitudes and strategies towards the president, the government and the state mediated by the interview respondents.

We want to remind that the term "indigenous people" includes many extremely diverse groups and that our study concerns the indigenous persons engaged in a social movement referred to as the indigenous movement. The opinions reflected could not be generalized to the indigenous population in general.

1.3.1 Interviews

The minor field study provided us with the opportunity to collect primary material in form of interviews with people well-informed of or engaged in the indigenous movement. The aim was to obtain information concerning the work and agenda of ECUARUNARI and trying to capture the attitude and circumstances deciding the position towards the government. Our material will also consist of locally collected secondary material not available in Sweden.

We have carried through 20 interviews in Spanish with actual and historical leaders of ECUARUNARI, activists at the local level, indigenous officials at public institutions and Ecuadorian experts on the indigenous movement. The interviews have been semi-structured in the sense of partly following pre decided questions and partly allowing a more open and undetermined interview, thereby minimizing the impact of the researchers (Teorell 2007: 89).

As the study is stressing the indigenous perspectives on their mobilization and position towards the state, the interviews has mainly been directed to people engaged in the movement. Searching for the official image we have interviewed many persons of the leadership of ECUARUNARI, but to broaden the perspective we have also interviewed more neutral researchers and activists from the grass root level.

The interview respondents have been selected mainly through "snowball sampling", where one person put us in contact with others who in turn gave us further contacts (Esaiasson et al 2007: 216). But in order to speak with people from different group representing varying opinions we had to found some respondents by other means too.

This study is about the actions of a group belonging to a collective (Indian) identity. A collective identity gives answer to the question "who are we?". In the research we relate to the common features and visible phenomenon of the collective identity, through which the individual respondents are put in relation to the larger community they belong, that is the organization or the indigenous movement. The respondents cannot be seen as representatives for the population or give objective truths, but as they are people engaged in the question we can

learn more about the collective identity and through that about how the organization works (Petersson 2003: 35ff).

Even if our results ought to be considered as reflections of the organization ECUARUNARI we think they could contribute to the understanding of the direction of the whole Ecuadorian indigenous movement.

We are well aware of that our own pre knowledge and backgrounds have an impact on the study. We have tried to reduce our influence on the interviews for example by avoiding leading questions. We are also aware of that leaders and activists often want to show the best side of their organization, having prepared answers to the questions. Planned answers intended to agree with the collective identity could however be valuable as we want to reach the common conceptions of the group (Petersson 2003: 41ff). Still we think it was important to have a critical approach in mind.

A problem in our selection of interview respondents is the lack of women representatives. The scarcity is not due to ignorance but rather reflects the conditions of society where women have an inferior position and not gladly take part of interviews but refer to masculine companions.

1.3.2 Participant Observation

Being present at ECUARUNARI's third congress 17-19 December 2009, and the inauguration of a new leadership, January 7th 2010, we also applied the method of participant observation. This method aims to observe the objects of study with our own eyes and to interact with it in order to reach a better understanding of their activity. It is a direct method offering possibilities of gathering information hard to find only in literature, and to get facts that interview respondents unwillingly tell about (Teorell 2007: 87f).

2 Theoretical Framework

Starting in the late 1960's, with the explosion of social movements engaged in protest politics, the study of social movements is today a dense, well established area in political science. Among the many theories emerged on social movements we have chosen to focus upon parts concerning the relation between social movements and the state. As the theories of social movements have been criticized for having a very Eurocentric perspective we think it necessary to consider theories on social movements in the Latin American context.

2.1 The Concept of Social Movements

A social movement can be defined as a “distinct social and/or political process of mechanisms through which actors engage in collective action”. Characteristics of a social movement are that the actors are involved in conflictive interactions with a clearly identified opponent, that they are linked by dense social networks and share a distinct collective identity (Della Porta 2006: 20). Common for all movements, theorists have claimed, is the challenging of the state's economic and political models and traditional political practices (Escobar 1992: 2f).

The collective identity consists of a common world view, purpose and commitment movement participants share (Wettergren 2006: 10). As deep-rooted feelings of identity are crucial, nationalism, ethnicity or religion are reliable bases of movement organizations (Tarrow 1998: 6).

In a favorable political context, with the right resources and ability to produce appropriate ideological and organizational frames, structural tensions can transform into mobilization. Collective action occurs when ordinary people lacking access to institutions challenge the elite or opponents, and can take many forms. Most characteristic for social movements is the often public, disruptive direct action of protests. But movement leaders today often combine contentious action with negotiations and participation in institutions. The role of social movements is to mount, coordinate and sustain the collective action against powerful opponents (Tarrow 1998: 3f, 63).

In most social movement exist a tension between the movement dimension and the organizational dimension. The movement cultivates the collective identity and image of being new historical subjects, outside and opponents to the existing system. But the real activities follow a different logic, being more limited and close, with processes distinct from the movement's promising discourse (Ahrne 2006: 124f).

2.2 Social Movement Organizations

Social movements always include one or many organizations, varying from having a formal hierarchy to an informal structure. However heterogeneous and complex a movement, it is often the organized groups that are associated with it. The function of social movement organizations is to represent the movement, secure continuity to collective action, create and reproduce collective identities and provide resources for action. Other important tasks are recruiting participants, defining organizational and ideological aims, coordinating protest actions, training leaders and encounter opponents (Della Porta 2006: 137f, 154).

Basic organizational models are the professional social movement organization, well-structured and relying on a strong leadership and technical expertise, and the participatory movement organization, focusing more on participatory democracy and mass protests. Many organizations emphasize direct democracy and consensual decision-making. But oligarchic tendencies exist. Often there is a rejection of authorities on principle, but in reality the movements follow charismatic, powerful leaders (Della Porta 2006: 143ff).

2.3 Social Movements and the State

The perspective called “political process”, first formulated by Charles Tilly (1978) and Doug McAdam (1982), pays attention to the political context in which social movements exist. The most known concept is the “political opportunity structure” (POS), developed by Sidney Tarrow. It proceeds from the “resource mobilization theory” in which social movements are regarded as rational and organized actors, which capacity of mobilization depends on available resources as work, money, authority, engagement and allies (Della Porta 2006: 14ff).

The theory of POS explains the activity of social movements through their relation to the state. Tarrow argues that changes in political opportunities and authority’s constraints create the most important incentives for contentious politics. Political opportunities are external dimensions of the political struggle pushing people to engage in contentious action, for example an increased access to participation, political instability, elite divisions, influential allies and repression or facilitation by authorities. The outcomes of social movement’s “repertoire of collective action”, creating widening “cycles of contention” throughout society, depend on their strength, ability to transform the political opportunities to resources and on the reactions of elites. Ultimately the success or failure of a movement depends on external forces outside their control. Political opportunities to contention may also not be visible to all potential challengers, risking to lose (or chose to reject) a widening opportunity structure (Tarrow 1998: 7, 19ff,77ff). Critics claim that political opportunities can’t be analyzed without the subject’s perception of available opportunities (Della Porta 2006: 18).

The political opportunities intersect with three dimensions of the state: (1) the power of the central executive, higher in presidential systems, diminishing the chances to movement's participation (2) prevailing strategies, either inclusive or excluding, and (3) repressiveness or facilitation (Tarrow 1998: 81ff).

Authors like McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly have found that the use of disruptive tactics by social movements improves their chances of reaching minor short-sighted goals, instead of the use of moderation in politics (Giugni 1999: 17,28). Disruptive action as marches, strikes and blockades of roads and buildings, is the most powerful weapon of social movements, pressuring authorities, but it is also unstable, depending on a large commitment and authority response (Tarrow 1998: 96f).

In cycles of contention the elites tend to respond not to the specific movement but to the degree of turbulence and demands, looking for lowest cost solutions. Even if movements usually conceive themselves challenging institutions, their collective action is aiming to reach of the state. Action that begins in the streets might be resolved by negotiating with the government. The interaction between movement and state consists mainly of strategies and counterstrategies between movement activists and power holders (Tarrow 1998: 2f, 25,101).

Critics questioning the possible influence of the movements claimed they hardly move from confrontational tactics to the politics of negotiation and compromise characterizing democracy (Escobar 1992: 2f). It has been especially hard for movements with a strong anti-state identity to adapt to the normalization of politics after the changed opportunities for engagement at a transition to democracy, with divisions between those who are satisfied with the progress and those who prefer to continue with a confrontational strategy (Grugel, 2002: 113).

The constant dilemma for social movements is the choice of "reform or revolution"; autonomy, with a struggle for power through mass mobilizations or political participation within the formal institutions (Petras 2005: 172). In principle the movements that integrate in the political game has better opportunities to obtain mayor changes, but they risk co-optation and to lose their collective identity, radical agenda and methods and connection to the bases (Massal 2000: 20f). Another alternative is to try to create alternatives to the state by working alongside the existing institutions, constructing new forms of social organization (Kaltmeier 2007: 211).

2.4 Social movements in Latin America

Collective action by social movements in Latin America has increased dramatically since the 1980's. In research on Latin American social movements the identity-centered theory of "new social movements", focusing on how social actors construct collective identities as a basis for collective action, has long been the dominant theory. The sociologist Alain Touraine claims that social movements engage in a conflict with existing cultural norms and values, wanting

to change society through social, not political, collective action (Wettergren 2006: 22f).

Contrary to these theories, in Latin America all social movements aim at an approaching to and involvement in the state. Whether the social movements search to approach, oppose or keep the distance, the state is a fundamental referent. Social movements in Latin America must be seen as economic, political *and* cultural struggles. Almost all social movements criticize the traditional political parties and excluding state institutions. (Calderón 1992: 10ff)

An overall analysis of Latin American civil society has shown that the predominant feature is high levels of politicization but limited political impact, as social mobilization mainly implies opposition to the state without any institutional incorporation (Serbin 2008: 121f).

2.4.1 Indigenous Movements in Latin America

As indigenous movements often were formed in the context of excluding nation-building state they often claim to see themselves outside society. Latin American indigenous organizations are not demanding their own state but are claiming their right to various degrees of political, economic and cultural autonomy, including respect for traditional justice systems and a guarantee of territorial bases (Selverston-Scher 2001: 23f).

The indigenous movements in all Latin America have a common vision of a “multinational” society, rejecting processes of assimilation. The four major issues are self-determination and autonomy in the name of cultural distinctiveness, territorial rights and the related access to natural resources, political reforms, and issues of brutal military/police relations. Conflicts over natural resources between financially pressured states and indigenous people are frequent. Mobilized indigenous groups also present the symbolic challenge of a redefinition of the state. The symbolic achievement of social movements often exceeds their policy impact (Van Cott 1994: 12ff).

Drawing on the theory of political opportunity structures Deborah Yashar theorizes about the emergence of ethnic movements in Latin America, arguing that the emergence occurred when states with permissive corporatist citizenship regimes changed to neoliberal citizenship regimes threatening indigenous local autonomy. Movements’ varying capacity can be explained by the existence of political associational space and transcommunity networks. (Yashar 2005: 8ff)

Much research on Latin American social movements is stressing the effects of the neoliberal economical model, adapted since the 1970’s, causing deep economic crises. The individual citizenship, the extensive resource extraction and increased poverty are often considered as catalysts for mobilization of the poor (mainly indigenous) people. (Postero and Zamosc 2004, Yashar 2005, Van Cott 1994).

3 Background

The agenda, strategies and position towards the government have to be analyzed in the light of the Ecuadorian political context, previous indigenous-state relations and the development of the indigenous movement.

3.1 The Political Context of Ecuador

Ecuador was the first country in Latin America to democratize in 1979, but the political system, dominated by Spanish descendent rich elites, continued to be highly exclusionary, ignoring the poor and indigenous population (Conaghan 1990: 554ff).

Ecuador is an electoral democracy with generally free and fair elections but suffering from social problems and an unstable political system. During the last fifteen years three elected presidents have been ousted from power by popular upheavals. Ecuador has a presidential system where the president's power is much extended, the corruption severe and the institutions and party system are weak, elite-dominated, and incapable to provide genuine popular participation or address popular demands (www.freedomhouse.org).

Ecuador is a small rural country with 13 million people, but is very heterogeneous, divided in three geographic areas; the Amazon (lowlands), the Andes (the Sierra or highlands) and the Coast, all with different types of economies and political dynamics (León 2003: 38).

Ecuador has been spared from extreme military dictatorships, U.S interventions or the kind of civil wars of the neighboring countries Peru and Colombia. But Ecuador is an extreme case of crises partly due to the neoliberal economic policies since the 1980's. After the dollarization in 2000 poverty had raised from 31 % to 68,8 % of the population (Petras 2005: 145). Diverse studies show that the indigenous people are systematically poorer than the no-indigenous people (Chiriboga 2004: 59).

3.2 Ethnicity and Identity

The indigenous peoples are around 30-40 % of the population. The largest group is the Kichwa people in the Andean highlands. The indigenous movement is based on an agenda of ethnicity claiming a common Indian identity in combination with

a class perspective on the political and social exclusion of the indigenous people (Selverston-Scher 2001: 5).

It is essential to recognize that the “indigenous people” actually consist of many culturally and politically diverse peoples. The ability to organize together in the indigenous movement is exclusively based on a shared social identity as “Indians”, emerged after the colonization. In Latin America, with an extensive racial mixing, ethnicity is usually defined in social and cultural terms. Ethnic identity is a fluid concept but has in the construction of a new collective identity emerged as a salient reason and resource for political mobilization (Selverston-Scher 2001: 22,55f,69ff).

The terms of identification used by the indigenous movement are “nationalities”, of which the bigger ones are divided into “peoples”, in order to highlight the cultural differences, the relationship between identity, territoriality and collective rights (Walsh 2001: 176).

The majority of the Kichwa people live in the rural areas of the Andes working with small scale agriculture but has been integrated in the “white” world for centuries. In the rural areas indigenous communities (comunidades), often a result of recent recreations, have their own legal political units (Selverston-Scher 2001: 7f).

3.3 The Indigenous-State Relation

Since the colonization the indigenous people has been seriously repressed and excluded by the state. In the 20th century a politics of incorporation, hiding all ethnic aspects, was introduced according the vision of the united and homogenous Nation (Yashar 2005: 88).

Even though a still existing crisis of representation and vision of a strong national identity, the recent governments have done attempts of inclusion, including specific legislation. The Ecuadorian state has showed a unique, flexible adapting to indigenous demands. Some researchers regard the “ethnization of politics” as a state strategy of hiding its weakness behind a permissive system, characterizing the Ecuadorian state as weak, lacking authority and institutional capacity. In order to avoid confrontations and a change of the political structures the state accepts minor proposals and encourages auto-responsibility at local level (Kaltmeier 2007: 203f; Ospina 2000: 130).

The relations of the state with the social movements in Ecuador have over the years been based on several mechanisms for social control. Traced back to the 1930’s is the strategy of assimilation of the indigenous population with corporatism and social programs limiting the space of potential conflict. Other state strategies to prevent radical actions were to encourage a reformist culture of dialogue and institutional participation, introduce international projects at local level within the existing political structures, and promote incorporation into public institutions, at times co-opting leaders of the movements. Occasionally repression has been used. (Petras 2005: 160ff)

3.4 The Indigenous Movement of Ecuador

Changed political opportunity structures at the transition to democracy in 1978 opened up the political area to former excluded groups of society. The indigenous people of the highlands had been struggling for agrarian reforms in peasant organizations during the 1960s and 1970s. The previous social activism provided a necessary foundation for an ethnically based social movement. In 1986 ECUARUNARI, organizing the Andean Indians, and CONFENAIE, organizing the Amazonian Indians, together formed the national indigenous umbrella organization “The National Confederation of Indian Nationalities”, CONAIE. Today CONAIE also includes a third regional organization; CONAICE, organizing the Coastal Indians. CONAIE came to organize and dominate the whole indigenous movement (Becker 2008: 150ff).

Drawing on her theory Yashar outline how there in Ecuador occurred a shift from a corporative citizenship regime introducing agrarian reforms in 1964 and 1974 and social programs, to a neoliberal citizenship regime challenging the local autonomy gained by the previous politics. The favorable conditions of political associational space and dense transcommunity networks provided by the church can explain the notable strength of the Ecuadorian indigenous movement (Yashar 2005: 85ff).

In 1990 CONAIE organized their first “levantamiento” (uprising). A massive mobilization paralyzed the country and 16 proposals concerning the land conflict, bilingual education, political inclusion and plurinationality were presented. President Borja had no choice but to negotiate with CONAIE. The mayor success was the advance of the indigenous movement as a new political actor, uniting the different indigenous peoples around the two dimensions of struggle for land and for the ethnic cultural identity (Dávila 2003: 130f).

During the 1990’s CONAIE succeeded to achieve many minor gains through protest actions. In 1994 and 1995 CONAIE organized coalitions and uprisings with other social movements, stopping economic neoliberal reforms and laws threatening natural resources. Combining the indigenous demands for political and cultural rights with an anti neoliberal program linked the movement to a general struggle for social justice, winning a broad support. There occurred a movement from “politics of influence to politics of power” (Zamosc 2004: 134f).

Throughout the years the indigenous movement demanded for example political participation, recognition of their identities, protection of their lands, support for the agriculture, programs for health and bilingual education, no to neoliberal reforms, making the native languages official and territorial autonomy. The major reasons for CONAIE’s success was the ability to unite and mobilize all indigenous peoples, the combination of indigenous and general demands, and the combination of strategies of mobilization and negotiation (Zamosc 2007: 15ff).

In 1996 the political movement-based party “Pachakutik Movement for Plurinational Unity - MUPP” made its debut, obtaining 10% of the seats in the national congress and a significant representation at provincial and local level. Pachakutik is considered as the political wing of CONAIE. The delegation of

Pachakutik has pushed through some reforms in indigenous questions (Zamosc 2007: 12f). Today the party is weaker, with four seats in congress, but still with a high local representation.

In 1997 a indigenous-led mobilization against corruption led to the removal of president Abdala Bucaram by a majority of the congress. In 1998 four indigenous representatives had a decisive role in the creation of the new constitution, including collective rights of the indigenous people and the definition of Ecuador as a multicultural state. The indigenous movement also established an autonomous institution within the state, the Council of Development of the Nationalities and Peoples of Ecuador, (CODENPE) (Tibán 2008: 279f).

1999 was marked by two national “levantamientos” together with other societal groups, for the first time leading to negotiations directly with the president. During 2000-2006 CONAIE has led several nationwide mobilizations, pressing the regime with resistance against the privatization of state companies, increasing prices and the dollarization in 2002 (Mattiace 2005: 238). From an initial focus on indigenous rights, the movement took a more radical turn seeking for a fundamental transformation of the state. The strategy has varied between an aiming for general issues in alliances with other sectors, and a more exclusionary, ethnocentric position.

It is not common to see the military and social movements on the same side of political struggle in Latin America, but in 2000 CONAIE and the military worked together to oust the neo-liberal president Jamil Mahuad in a coup. But after only three hours the high military demand intervened and replaced the president with the vice president. The action signaled CONAIE’s strength as a central political actor but caused severe internal and external criticism for being undemocratic, ignoring alliances and lacking support of the grassroots (Walsh 2001: 173ff).

In 2002 Lucio Gutierrez, who led the coup 2000, won the presidential election. The indigenous movement entered government for the first time, obtaining four ministry-posts. The coalition broke after just six months, as Gutierrez continued with neoliberal policies. The alliance is considered a political mistake and seriously weakened the movement (Lucero 2001: 65ff). In 2006 CONAIE gained new strength, stopping a free trade treaty with the U.S. (Zamosc 2007: 22ff).

3.5 President Correa and the Citizen’s Revolution

In 2006 the leftist president Rafael Correa and his alliance Alianza País won the presidential elections. He has nationalized over 250 private businesses, decreased the free trade with the US, renegotiated the external debt and made a new constitution pass in a referendum in 2008, including a strengthening of the presidential power but also extended indigenous rights and services for all citizens (www.freedomhouse.org). Alianza País claims to be “a new left that will change the country by including the people in a national project”.

4 ECUARUNARI - a Indigenous Regional Organization

The regional indigenous organization ECUARUNARI (Confederación de Pueblos de la Nacionalidad Kiwcha del Ecuador” or “Ecuador Runacunapac Riccharimui”, a Kichwa phrase that means “to awaken the Ecuadorian Indians”) emerged in the Ecuadorian Andes in 1972 out of the progressive sectors of the Catholic Church. ECUARUNARI emerged in the context of land struggles, as a ethnic organization emphasizing the Indian identity as a force for social justice, never abandoning the class-based discourse of the leftist parties and peasant organizations in the area (Becker 2008: 159f).

CONAIE’s president Marlon Santi, self from the Amazon, stated that ECUARUNARI, representing the majority of the indigenous population and having many leaders in CONAIE, is a leading force of the indigenous movement. The new president of ECUARUNARI, Delfín Tenesaca, elected in December 2009, said that the main functions of the organization are to “struggle for and defend the rights of the indigenous people of the Ecuadorian Andes and preventing them from losing their cultural identity”.

4.1 The Organizational Structure

ECUARUNARI is organizing the highland Kiwcha peoples and is one of the three regional organizations in CONAIE. The indigenous communities (rural villages) are forming the base of the organization. The function of ECUARUNARI is to catch, formulate and mediate the base’s decisions and proposals to the national level, and to coordinate larger activities and meetings. ECUARUNARI is led by a committee of ten representatives from all provinces, chosen by provincial “third grade” organizations, emerging from the “second grade” organizations consisting of people from the communities (Yumbay). Of around 5000 indigenous communities in Ecuador over 4600 are connected to CONAIE, especially ECUARUNARI (Simbaña 2009: 7).

Luis Macas, historical and ideological leader of the indigenous movement, and former minister and president candidate, describes the decentralized structure of ECUARUNARI as an “organization from below”, emphasizing participatory democracy, dialogue and a consensus decision making. In an attempt to build a “new form of institutionalism” the organization is constructed of a network between the communities. ECUARUNARI used the concept of “community”,

recreating the traditional organizational bases, as a powerful instrument in an alternative political project of “unity within diversity” (Lucero 2008: 72).

The “communitarian network” in combination with the uniting ethnic factor has permitted continuity, strong national presence and high mobilization efficiency. Researcher Fernando García classify ECUARUNARI as an example of the logic of social movements, breaking with traditional organizational structures, having own forms of protests and a leadership identifying more with the bases than the state, conceived as the mayor enemy.

Nonetheless, there exist hierarchic communities as well and woman representation is low (Mendisaval). A leader of ECUARUNARI explains that the organizational structure is a bit hierarchic, but that the goal is to build a more collective leadership, recuperating the “communitarian ancestral practices” (Yumbay). Our impression visiting the third congress was however an existence of a high-status, powerful leadership.

With a dense base network built upon a collective identity and coordinated by a mayor formal organization with participatory ideals and a critical position towards the state, ECUARUNARI could according to the theories, be classified as a social movement organization.

4.2 The Indigenous Agenda

The agenda of ECUARUNARI includes the two dimensions of identity and class. The part of ECUARUNARI’s political agenda concerning indigenous identity mainly include (1) the recognition of the language kichwa through intercultural bilingual education, (2) the recognition and reintroduction of the indigenous juridical system, (3) the struggle for respect and cultural values appearing in traditional clothing, music, rituals and celebrations. The class perspective is significant in the struggle for new agrarian reforms with land distribution to the indigenous people, anti-capitalism and social justice. The organization is partly adopting the agenda of the international leftist anti-globalization movement (García, Cocha, Ospina).

The all-embracing objective is the creation of a “plurinational” Ecuador. In a call for a redefinition and fundamental restructuring of the state, ECUARUNARI want that all politics of the country has to consider the interests of the 31 peoples and nationalities (Churrochumbi). The agenda of ECUARUNARI make up the major part of the agenda of CONAIE.

Besides an organizational strengthening of ECUARUNARI, the issue of natural resources and the new “law of water” are the actual priorities. The indigenous movement is claiming that the water resources on indigenous areas are threatened by the state’s exploration of oil and minery (Simbaña 2009: 9).

ECUARUNARI has a very critical view upon the political system, claiming it is racist, excluding, and neocolonial, continuing to repress and lie to the indigenous people. The traditional politics and politicians are marked by feelings of distrust and suspicion (Churrochumbi, Tenesaca, Macas). ECUARUNARI

claims a will to protect the independency of actions, to maintain the capacity to criticize the government and the political system (García 2003: 202).

Luis Maldonado, former welfare minister and a controversial figure in the indigenous movement, today working for Pachakutik, thinks it is important to regard the indigenous problematic not only as “of, with and for the indigenous people” but as a national question. Recently there have been strong influences of ethnocentrism in the movement, diminishing the popular support.

The agenda and activities of ECUARUNARI form a part of the creation of a new indigenous ideology. A principal utopian, symbolic concept is “sumak kawsay”, the kichwa words for “good living”. The historical leader Miguel Angel Carlosama explained: “sumak kawsay is the recuperation of the alternative lifestyle of our ancestors, with respect for the “pachamama” (mother nature) and mutual solidarity”. The indigenous intellectuals claim that this life style has its roots among the indigenous people but needs to be reconstructed (Carlosama, García, Macas). Researchers critical to this argue that those ideas in great part are “imported” from the more traditional reality of some indigenous peoples of Peru and Bolivia. Recreating ancestral practices is used as an influential instrument to gain recognition and strengthen the collective identity under construction (Mendisaval, Andrade, Leon.).

4.3 Strategies of Opposition and Participation

According to the theorization of movements in Latin America, the indigenous movement in Ecuador has always been approaching the state to gain influence and political power. This makes the theory of the new social movements, concerned with cultural issues, less relevant.

The main strategy of ECUARUNARI is a combination of opposition and participation. Broad mobilizations and protest mass actions with blockings of the streets create a political power sufficiently strong to result in negotiations with the government. ECUARUNARI claims that the aim is to unite the people, show their force and to obtain a dialogue with the state (Macas, Chancosa).

The strategy has been effective as the political system permitted the indigenous people to organize. Whatever the strategies are, the Ecuadorian state puts the frames for what is possible, the expert on the indigenous movement Jorge Leon settled. Also according to the POS-theory, each case of successfully stopping governments’ neoliberal reforms, has shown that the notable capacity for mass mobilization rather than participation in electoral politics has been decisive. It is the most effective and only method the repressed and excluded people has, stated Blanca Chancosa, an activist since the start.

Until the formation of Pachakutik the indigenous movement only mobilized in form of a social movement, claiming that the social conflict best could be processed by non-electoral means, outside the institutional political sphere (Petras 2005: 163f). ECUARUNARI tries to maintain this character and is officially not taking part of the electoral politics, but in practice almost all its actions are

directed at the state and many of its representatives are engaged in party politics. For example the former leader Luis Macas became president candidate for Pachakutik in 2006. After Macas defeat, winning just over 2 % CONAIE and Pachakutik supported Rafael Correa who won the second-round election in November 2006. (Lucero 2008: 179f). According to what is stated in the theoretical framework, there is a contradiction of the discourse of the movement and the praxis. The discourse has not adapted to the changes in political practices, resulting in a risk for disillusion.

4.4 Achievements

If looking at the formal rights the success has been significant. The new constitution of 2008 is innovative, declaring Ecuador as a plurinational state and recognizing not only many rights of the indigenous people, for example equaling the indigenous and ordinary judiciary, but even rights of the nature, formulated with the kichwa expression “sumak kawsay” (the Ecuadorian Constitution). The majority of those writing the constitution were not indigenous but thanks to the president of the assembly who supported the Indians and led a big process of popular participation, the indigenous proposal since 1984, the plurinacionalidad, entered the constitution (Andrade, Ospina).

Reality is different, but still there has occurred changes unimaginable some decades ago. The agreements obtained through dialogue with the state have often been quite short-sighted (García 2003: 214), but all our interview respondents agreed on that the greatest successes are the gained political inclusion, more respect and visibility in society. “Before haciendados and burocrats spoke for us but now the indigenous people have an own voice, being political protagonists” (Carlosama). Despite some “undemocratic” measures, as the coup in 2000, many researchers stress the contribution to “democratize democracy”, increasing the participation of a former excluded group and creating a lively civil society (Van Cott 1994, Yashar 2005, Zamosc 2007 et al). Still the indigenous movement has not succeeded in improving the economical poor conditions of the indigenous people, or in their ultimate goal to transform the structures of the country (Moreno, Andrade, Pucha). Which often has been the case for Latin American social movements, the symbolic gains have exceeded a mayor structural impact.

4.5 Actual Internal Situation: the Movement in Crisis?

A common perception of both external experts and internal activists is that the indigenous movement finds itself in crisis (Petras 2005, Ospina 2009, Lalander 2009, Maldonado, Macas). Especially after the unfortunate alliance with former

president Gutierrez in 2003 the movement was debilitated from internal divisions and political weakness. Almost every respondent mentioned the bad relation between the leaders and the bases as one of the most serious problem of the organization. Carlosama compared with the time when he and other leaders wandered to the communities and were received with celebrations. “That connection does not exist anymore”.

Much attention is dedicated to the medias of communication, institutions and international relations. The confounding of the organization’s role with the political game has also caused internal division as the people disappointed in Pachakutik’s problem to fulfill electoral promises also lose confidence in ECUARUNARI. Many call for a redefinition of strategies and goals and new leaders. Inside the organization reclaims for personal interests and opportunism are common. Another problem claimed as very serious is the lack of specific proposals. At the beginning it sufficed to demand rights at a general level but today after having obtained a formal recognition it is not enough (Ospina, León, Mendisaval, Yumbay Maldonado, Tene, Cocha). Those are effects that according to social movement theories could happen when entering the political game, but is not necessarily due to the participation itself but the way it is managed.

But the fact of crisis is relative. There is a conscious process of uniting the organization, and being a force at local electoral politics and still having the capacity to mobilize extensive protests, the indigenous movement continue to be the best organized social force in the country (Ospina 2009: 124). Tania Mendisaval, working at the bases, claims that the bases still are strong and well-organized, but do not always obey the leaders’ calls for uprisings.

5 In Opposition to the Government of Rafael Correa

The relationship between the indigenous movement and Rafael Correa is marked by tensions and opposition. Why collaboration seems impossible even if they have many political aims in common? What does this imply for the strategies and the agenda of ECUARUNARI? In this chapter we examine the circumstances and reasons stated about the hostile position adopted by the indigenous organization ECUARUNARI, with the aim to give a deeper understanding for how the indigenous movement relate to the state.

5.1 ECUARUNARI's Position towards the Government

Despite the initial support to Rafael Correa as president candidate in the second round in 2006 and the participation in writing the new constitution, the position of the indigenous movement turned into an apparent opposition when Correa assumed power and started with his political project. In 2006 the indigenous movement had rejected the offer to enter the alliance and get the vice president office, launching an own candidate (Larrea 2008: 127f).

Until the uprising of the indigenous movement in September 2009, about the law of water, there were no efforts to dialogue. At the point the president was pressured to negotiate he was disturbed by the uprising and the indigenous leaders were upset over a diminished influence on indigenous issues. In the meetings, even directly with the president, leaders from CONAIE and ECUARUNARI had a protagonist role. The disagreement escalated and the dialogue ended up with accusations and insults. In December 2009 CONAIE decided to leave, soon confirmed by a decision at the third congress of ECUARUNARI (Simbaña 2009: 7f).

The leadership of ECUARUNARI has agreed on an official hostile position in relation to the government. The president of ECUARUNARI settles that “the dialog with the government is like talking to a wall, he do not respond nor understand, so we decided to unite our forces instead” (Tenesaca).

Interruption of an ongoing dialogue with the government is not a new strategy of the indigenous movement. For example the sixth congress of CONAIE in 2003 took the same decision. This mechanism of interruption and continuation is a common strategy of pressure. The indigenous movement and the state have always had an ambivalent relation of dialogue and opposition (García 2000: 151f).

5.2 Three Main Issues of Opposition against Correa

Analyzing our material we outlined three main issues which always returned as principal matters in the indigenous movement's conflict with the government: differing political projects and differing views on the state and on political participation.

5.2.1 Two Differing Political Projects

Both President Rafael Correa with his political movement Alianza País and the indigenous movement claim to have leftist political agendas, with common goals of reducing poverty and opposing the capitalist market. For this reason there initially were expectations on some kind of co-operation.

The government of Rafael Correa has introduced social programs and inversions in education, health and infrastructure, increased public salaries and grants for the poorest. Social expenses increased from 5,3% of GNP to 6,4%. Alianza País stopped the negotiations of free trade treaty with the US, increased the taxes, reduced the external debt payment and increased the oil profits of the state. To a certain degree the government has developed the central elements of the social movement's agendas of social justice by distribution and a less neoliberal economic policy. The politics of the government indicate a clear turn to the left (Ospina 2008: 5ff).

But ECUARUNARI do not regard the government of Correa as leftist. Even if some recognize certain government changes, the social projects are at least in the rhetoric seen as opportunist short-sighted measures by a political system going on as before. "The government of Correa is absolutely no different from previous governments, he is even more aggressive", Luis Macas claims (Macas, Moreno, Churruchumbi).

The government is criticized for not having any programs directed especially to the indigenous people, but try to co-opt and split the indigenous movement and control the people by giving them triplicated grants. The government is accused of having politicians of the right and for benefiting the big companies, forgetting the small scale agriculture (Cocha, Maldonado, Macas, Yamberla).

Of course there are opinions in the movement differing from the official position. For example the advisor Carmen Tene reminds that there are other indigenous organizations working with the government: "ECUARUNARI thinks the water will be privatized, it will not. For the first time there is a government doing something for the indigenous people, but the indigenous leaders have a political image of no compromising". The researcher León agrees, asserting that the indigenous movement has an "anti-discourse" of the poor, always complaining that "no one never does anything for the indigenous people" (León).

The most actual issue of disagreement between the government and the indigenous movement is the exploration of natural resources. President Correa needs resources to realize his revolution and wants to gain them through

extraction of oil and mining affecting the rural areas and communities. He claims that the resources have to be used for all the people of Ecuador and that a minority cannot stand in the way. President Correa was economy minister in the previous neoliberal government and the government is said to show its real interests when aiming to exploit the nature (Karakras, Ospina 2008: 8).

5.2.2 Differing Visions of the State: the Nation-State versus Plurinationality

A differing vision of the state makes agreements especially concerning natural resources difficult. According to ECUARUNARI there exist an opposition between plurinationality and the citizen's revolution of Correa.

Correa has a liberal, individualistic vision of a united nation-state, contradicting to the vision of plurinationality. He openly dislikes specific programs for indigenous peoples, put all the autonomous indigenous institutions under the state ministries and closed an indigenous radio station, wanting to involve them in the general politics of the state. Since the 1980's the indigenous movement chose the paradigm of collectivism against individualism and this view clashed with the political vision of the state (León).

A representative from the president's party Alianza País explained that diminishing poverty is the first priority, also benefitting the indigenous peoples. The cultural questions of different nationalities have to come in second place. Furthermore, the indigenous people are trading with their land themselves, and for that reason they do not want the state to distribute the gains to all Ecuadorians. The president has a vision of development and CONAIE struggle for cultural incorporation; it is two different projects (Ortega).

5.2.3 Differing Views on Political Participation

Departing from the differing ideological visions, the indigenous movement and the state also appear to have different views on political participation.

ECUARUNARI accuses the government for excluding the social movements. The former president of ECUARUNARI, Humberto Cholango, claims that "The government does not understand the organizations of civil society and instead of considering them as a political and social support he treats them as idiots. We want to be an active part of the political discussion" (Cholango 2009:12).

A common expression in ECUARUNARI was that "the president is taking our agenda". The state assumes their agenda but does not consider the social organizations as instruments to increase democracy. The president is considered to have authoritarian tendencies; if the organizations do not support the regime they are regarded as enemies (Yamberla, Pucha, Carlosama, Cocha, Churruchumbi). Alianza País is marked by strong populist tendencies with all the power concentrated to the leader (Lalander 2009).

These complaints could be interpreted as a will to participate, also a principal goal, instead of continue to watch from the margins of society. The rejection of the vice presidency seems contradictory, indicating that the relation with the state is much about shows of forces.

The president has been involved in many conflicts with both social movements, the political right and syndicates. In February 2009 the government removed the indigenous movement's political autonomy over the national institution of bilingual education and in April 2009 the "council of food sovereignty". The researches Leon and Ospina agree that the state excludes the social organizations. Correa canalized the discourses of the movement but do not care to involve the existing organizations. He offers distribution but not any mechanisms for participation besides from entering his own party (León, Ospina 2009: 3ff).

The indigenous movement claims that a difference in the view on democracy makes the dialogue impossible, interpreting democracy to include social participation through mobilizing and collective rights. It is a part of the nature of social movements to protest in the streets, striking and paralyzing public services. The president severely criticizes this, in accordance to the law regarding it as "anarchistic disorder", seeing the anti-system discourse as a danger to democracy (Ospina 2008: 9). Both sides use the concept of democracy as a tool in rhetoric to gain legitimacy. Their real intentions and principals are hard to find out.

5.3 Critical Bases want Cooperation

As everywhere there exist a whole range of different opinions in the indigenous movement. But the internal views have got more polarized as one group wants to support Correa and the others not. The more president Correa advances with his social programs, the more voices criticizing the rejection of a support to Correa are heard.

The indigenous movement has always demanded their agenda to be accepted by the government and in that sense the opposition is a contradiction. Maldonado thinks that ECUARUNARI is so used to reclaim at the politicians that when they finally assume the agenda, there are no concrete proposals or ways to adopt.

The government has rural projects making ECUARUNARI lose legitimacy because they never had such projects themselves. This new competition from the state has caused problems with a falling support from the bases and the public (León).

According to Carlosama and Mendisaval this perception is common among the bases of the communities. The division between the leadership of ECUARUNARI and the grass roots has deepened as the bases do not agree with the strong opposition to the government. The decision to break up the dialogue taken at the congress is claimed to be prepared at forehand by the leaders: "The official agenda of the elite of ECUARUNARI has nothing to do with the reality in the bases". Many bases are already dialoguing directly with the government and

ministries, opposing the orders from the leaders. The important thing for the leaders is that the improvements are led by indigenous people but the people want concrete social changes and to them Correa is doing what they always wanted. If the government is redistributing land and give credits there is no reason to fight against it, because at the local level the biggest enemy is the powerful land owners. The leaders do not know the reality of the bases. For example with their demand of a communitarian instead of state ownership of the water, it would only end up in the hands of the local landowner. Neither do all people in the communities oppose extraction of resources as long as the gains are distributed (Pucha, Carlosama, Mendisaval).

5.4 A Choice of Strategy: Independency or Alliance?

The new situation with president Correa put ECUARUNARI in a choice between cooperation or opposition. The organization claims that they chose to oppose the government and influenced CONAIE in the same direction. Some parts of the indigenous movement, as the organization FENOCIN and organizations of the Amazon, chose to cooperate. Besides from the official reasons claimed by the leadership of ECUARUNARI, we also got other aspects pointing at two important additional issues: personal interests of power and a difficulty for the organization to break with their traditional strategies and adopt to a new situation. The government's actions are still interpreted as political opportunities to encourage protest, not cooperation.

That personal interests of power among the indigenous elite as one reason for the conflict, is mainly claimed by people from the bases. They point at the fact that the disagreements started already when CONAIE decided not to support the candidacy of Correa but launched their own candidates, hungry for power. The president has not forgiven this and many persons in the movement are too proud to alter their position (Maldonado, Carlosama). Personal interest of power are however difficult to prove and have to be examined through a motive analysis.

Our observation, also supported by the reflections from people from the grass roots and researchers (Lalander 2009, León) is that the movement go on with the same political agenda and strategies as before, ignoring the fact that the government of today is at least a bit different from the previous ones. ECUARUNARI seems to care most about to survive as an independent organization, even if their bases are going in another direction. ECUARUNARI and CONAIE surely have an interest to dialogue but they want to show their strength first and during those conditions restart the dialogue. However, the position of the movement is also understandable given the president's accusations and conditions for cooperation. Give in for him would also have been considered as a sign of weakness.

The issue of independency is extra important to an organization which very reason to exist and principal issues have to do with liberation from discriminating land owners, cultural autonomy and a resistance to the state. "Governments come

and go so our organization has to be independent and not be subordinated this or any other government” (Yumbay). It is however difficult for ECUARUNARI to be independent in practice, with a lack of resources and dependence on national and international NGO:s for financing (Moreno, Carlosama).

A will to an alliance is reflected in the national electoral results, but the leadership opposed it, stuck in the identity of an anti-system movement. We can confirm what Lalander mentions as the “Correa-effect”: one part of the movement prefers to develop their political project in opposition to Correa while the other part has been integrated in the alliance of Correa (Lalander 2009). Pachakutik got only 1,4 % in the elections 2009, while Correa won with 52 % in the first round (www.comercio.com).

The organizational crisis has opened up for alliances with other social and political movements. Lalander stresses the importance of alliances between the indigenous movement and other left movements, historically and today with the one of Rafael Correa. Political alliances can be understood as cooption of the social movements from above but also as a uniting of forces. Political opportunities can be created by the actors themselves, for example through political alliances (Lalander 2009). The indigenous movement is pressed to reconsider the political priorities, role and identity but that takes time. The recent alliance with Gutierrez is also regarded as a lesson and experience, influencing the decision not to collaborate.

The leaders of ECUARUNARI tried not to seem worried about the many supporters lost to Alianza País. But as a reaction, internal unity and strengthening are now the first priorities (Tenesaca, Yumbay). As there are no longer neo-liberal reforms to resist, the protest are concentrated at the extraction of natural resources of the state. The emergence of new possible alliances is by some activists seen as a important new political opportunity for the indigenous movement. “Imagine if CONAIE had accepted the vice presidency, what an opportunity!” (Carlosama).

6 Summary and Conclusions

In this study we have outlined the main features of the indigenous organization ECUARUNARI's agenda, strategies and position towards the actual government of Rafael Correa, in order to contribute to the understanding of how the Ecuadorian indigenous movement relates to the state.

Answering our three more concrete questions, we can conclude with the following observations: The central aim of ECUARUNARI is the construction of a plurinational state, with the recognition of the political, juridical and cultural rights and the participation of the indigenous peoples. The main strategy consists of protest actions to reach negotiations. The most debated internal issue is the so called crisis of the indigenous movement, with a lack of concrete proposals and a worsened relation between the leadership and the bases.

The main reasons stated about the opposition towards the government are disagreements regarding the political projects and differing views of the state and political participation. The government's liberal, individualistic vision of the state contrasts to the indigenous project for plurinationality. The government does neither accept the confrontational tactics of the movement. According to our impression and supported by other research, the contrasting opinions towards Correa seem to coincide with the top-bottom division between leadership and base, implying worsening internal divisions.

Answering our main question, we have found that the indigenous movement in Ecuador, dominated by ECUARUNARI and their mother organization CONAIE, has an ambiguous relation to the state. The Ecuadorian indigenous movement moves between opposition and participation, depending on the political circumstances, choosing the strategy that best serves the reinforcement of the movement. The relationship between the indigenous movement and the state is marked by constant reactions and counter reactions, where the state is the one setting the frames, but not without considering the strength of the indigenous mobilizations. Thanks to the state's permissive character and the force of the strategy of protest, the movement has obtained many formal gains and entered the electoral politics. The indigenous movement has always had an anti-system discourse and a very critical position against the state. The actual situation, when the leadership of the movement chose to oppose the leftist government of Rafael Correa, even if there are signs of a will to cooperate among the bases, makes this even clearer. The whole movement is divided with some indigenous organizations cooperating with Alianza País while the dominating fraction of CONAIE and Pachakutik is opposing the government and losing support. According to the movement the strategy of protest towards the state has so far also appeared to be the most effective way to success. But this may change as there are parts of the indigenous movement heading for cooperation instead of confrontation.

We also got to the conclusion that another aspect of the conflictive relation to the state is a difficulty and an unwillingness of the indigenous movement to adapt to new political circumstances. Relating to the statements in our theoretical framework concerning social movements in changed circumstances, we regard the indigenous movement as an example of a social movement having hard to adapt to a new role of the state, having a more active role in society than before, now competing with the indigenous movement in several issues. The anti-system discourse and the protest actions are main parts of the collective identity of the organization and therefore hard to abandon. The movement feels threatened when Correa assumes their agenda and in an attempt not to lose political space they continue with a confrontational position and known strategies. We argue that the conflict is partly based on the movement's loss of support to Correa. More preferable is when civil society is independent but not alienated from the state. But the problems could also bring opportunities of a redefinition of strategies and the agenda. Relating to theories on the state-indigenous relation, also Correa is following the paths of previous governments with a liberal citizenship regime threatening local autonomy.

We think that our results could reinforce the theoretical insight that the relation between social movements and the state not totally depends on the state reactions, but that attention also has to be paid at the perceptions, interests and internal situation of the movement.

We are aware of that there could be other reasons for the conflict and other aspects of the indigenous relation to the state. But with this study we hope to have given a review of the actual tendencies and debated issues in the Ecuadorian indigenous movement, to a certain degree reflected through the study of the regional organization ECUARUNARI. Regarding further research on the Ecuadorian indigenous movement we would like to see more investigations on both the regional level's influence and the local level's importance, being the real force of the movement.

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