Culture and Identity as ‘Agents of Change’ in Social Transformation Processes – The case of Bolivian Social Movements.

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Abstract

Coming to office in 2005 the Bolivian President, Evo Morales said in his inauguration speech:

*“The indigenous people have been marginalised with the foundation of Bolivia in 1825, therefore the indigenous people will now claim the right to recreate Bolivia”[[1]](#footnote-1)*

This pinpoints the processes on shaping identity in indigenous peoples’ social movements in Bolivia. Indigenous people are now aiming at ‘taking back’ Bolivia on many levels. This paper will focus on the formation of social movements and how this has included a redefinition of being indigenous and a redefinition of being Bolivian. This implies a strategic use of indigenous culture forming an alliance with international actors at a point in history when focus on indigenous rights has been emphasized. An increased focus on indigenous people and their identity, culture and ‘belonging’ to territories can be seen in government reforms in the 1990’s and in recent policies after Evo Morales took office in 2005. The issue of citizenship has been crucial in these processes.

1. “Se marginó la participación de los pueblos indígenas originarios en la fundación de Bolivia en el año 1825, por eso los pueblos indígenas originarios reclamen refundar Bolivia.” (La Razon, 22/1 2006). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)