Demanding Change

The Collective Challenges of the Juntas Vecinales of El Alto

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"... You will only kill me, but I will return and I will be millions."

Tupac Katari. November 15, 1781

This paper is dedicated to the dignified, noble and heroic people of Bolivia.

Mateo Tarazona Machicao
ABSTRACT

The Juntas Vecinales of El Alto portray a telling picture of the current process of societal change in Bolivia. Formed to attend the collective needs of indigenous migrants striving to settle down on the outskirts of the capital, the Juntas Vecinales have grown as an intrinsic part of El Alto becoming significant socio-political actors and part of the indigenous social movements propelling the process of change in Bolivia. Their traditional function of supervising public policy by pressuring service providers to attend their demands is commonly known as the practice of social control. A function that was institutionalized in the nineties with neoliberal inspired citizenship reforms of decentralization. The dynamic relation between the informal and formal branches of social control is particularly evident in El Alto as the Federation of Juntas Vecinales and the legal supervising institution called the Vigilance Committee hold each branch. This paper presents a case study on the formal and informal actions and activities that define the current role of the Juntas Vecinales in relevance to their history and to the political and social context of Bolivia today. My main finding presents an unanimous rejection of the formal branch of social control and the predominance of traditional methods of pressure actions as the only means of attending grassroots demands.

Keywords: Bolivia, El Alto, Junta Vecinal, social movements, decentralization
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INTRODUCTION

This paper is about the emancipatory struggles of the Bolivian people.

To understand the historic developments taking place in Bolivia today one has to understand the history of Latin America, the colonial heritage and the struggles against imperialism that unify the nations of this continent.

The poverty, injustice and inequalities apparent in Bolivian society are consequences of an unequal and polarized society plagued by colonial power structures and oppressive governments. It was not until 1952 that Bolivia obtained universal suffrage and 2005 that the first indigenous president was elected. The white and mestizo elite’s have throughout the course of history excluded the indigenous majority from political power resulting in a failed process of nation-state building that has created a huge gap between the rich minority and the poor majority.

Bolivia has in resent decades undergone extensive neoliberal restructuring to create economic growth and development. But these macroeconomic reforms, designed to meet the conditions for loans from transnational financial institutions, have been devastating for the popular sectors and provoked large-scale discontent. To compensate for this a parallel strategy of ambitious decentralization reforms has been applied to reintroduce the poor as agents of public policy through the promotion of grass-roots’ participation. With help from international aid and non governmental organizations a big effort has been made to implement these reforms in order to modernize governance by combining traditional forms of self-government with the imperfect representative governing system of the Bolivian constitution.

Most scholars agree that these reforms have been inadequately implemented and are failing to fully promote social and political inclusiveness. They have nonetheless contributed to a transformation of the political landscape that has enabled urban and rural social movements to gain political power propelling an emancipatory process of societal change that is redefining Bolivia itself.

A telling example of this historical process is portrayed by the urbanized indigenous communities of the fastest growing and most impoverished city of Bolivia, El Alto. A self-made shantytown in the margins of the capital sprung out of the collective effort of migrants organized in neighbourhood
committees called Juntas Vecinales. Extending throughout the city and united under a federation these social exchange networks have enabled efficient methods of mobilization in order to pressure public and private service providers for better conditions. As the decentralization reforms incorporated them into the municipal system of governing their main function of supervising public policy was institutionalized transforming their role in civil society. With the rise of social movements defying the political status quo and the deterioration of the traditional political establishment, the Juntas Vecinales radicalised their demands culminating in the tragic massacres of the so called Gas War of 2003 that ended neoliberal government rule effectively changing the course of history.

MAIN OBJECTIVE
The main objective of this paper is to determine the current role of the Juntas Vecinales of El Alto regarding their main function of supervising public policy in the municipality. This practice is commonly known as social control and has been a part of their traditional role as pressure groups. Since the decentralization reforms of the nineties it has also become part of their legal obligations as planners and supervisors of public works in their jurisdiction. The dynamic relation between the informal and formal branches of social control is particularly evident in El Alto as the Federation of Juntas Vecinales and the legal supervising institution called the Vigilance Committee hold each branch. My intention is thus to determine the formal and informal actions and activities that constitute their current role in civil society considering the process of societal change in Bolivia and their historical role in El Alto.

From now on I will refer to my study subject the Junta Vecinal as just junta.

METHOD and LIMITATIONS
To reach my main objective I have conducted a Minor Field Study on the Juntas Vecinales of District 5 of El Alto. The time period of my fieldwork was from January to April of 2008.

In order to conduct my study effectively, keeping in mind my inexperience and the limited period of time, I worked through various channels to optimize my possibilities. My initial approach was to get to know the socio-economic situation in El Alto to decide upon the most relevant focus for my study. I started contacting academic institutions to find similar studies and to obtain contacts that
understood the fieldwork I wanted to conduct. I also had help from personal contacts, the staff of Svalorna Latinamerika and their partner organization in El Alto: Chasqui Youth Center. Around the same time I made my most valuable contact, and later gatekeeper in El Alto, a local freelance radio reporter with a vast network, credibility and comprehensive knowledge of current political and social issues in El Alto. She facilitated my contact with most of my interviewees and enabled me to get help from an academic who was also a municipal councillor familiar with investigative fieldwork and the municipal system of governance.

To establish a relevant historical background and the current socio-economic context of the city of El Alto I conducted an extensive study of all the literature I could find regarding the juntas and El Alto. Mainly in the Public University of El Alto and the Mayor University of San Andrés in La Paz. I also obtained information from the Catholic University of Bolivia (La Paz) and the following research institutions and non-governmental organizations: Programa de Investigación Estratégica en Bolivia, Gregoria Apaza Center, Centro Boliviano de Investigación y Acción Educativa; Centro de Investigación y Promoción del Campesinado; Centro de Estudios para el Desarrollo Laboral; Wayna Tambo Youth center.

It is important to note that I did not find much academic studies particularly regarding the juntas. The sources I have chosen are therefore first and foremost from municipal and national laws and regulations as well as the official Statute of the juntas. The decisions I made regarding relevant literature for my paper is based on my level of knowledge about the juntas, at that time, and my intentions to portray the process of societal change in Bolivia from the perspective of the indigenous communities. My inexperience with investigative fieldwork and with the idiosyncrasies of Bolivian society made it difficult for me to earn the trust needed to gain valid results in such a short period of time. My personal engagement with the situation in Bolivia worked to my advantage as I was able to gain trust from the interviewee's that did not have any reasons for being dishonest and I learned quite fast to distinguish dishonest and diplomatic answers. The most significant setback or compliment, (depending on how you see it), was a situation of distrust that developed towards me among some interviewee's with key roles regarding the findings of my study.\footnote{I was unable to obtain interviews with the head of the Federation of Juntas Vecinales of El Alto, the sub Mayor of District 5 and the Vigilance Committee delegate of District 5. I will describe the functions of all these actors in my study.} I was clearly asking the right questions, so I would probably have gotten washed down answers even if I managed to interview them. I never the less formulated my questions as unambiguous as possible and structured them around a specific topic to minimize biased results. My case study is based on
semi-structured qualitative interviews with presidents of juntas. Appendix 1 shows a list of my interviewees referred to as president of such and such junta. I chose not to refer to them by name to protect the one’s that wanted to remain anonymous. Appendix 2 shows the questionnaires I used. All my interviews were conducted in Spanish. I chose to write my paper in English for practical reasons regarding my supervisor and for future investigative purposes. The quotes I use in the text are therefore based on my own translations. I have all my interviews in audio and transcribed to Spanish to verify the reliability of my sources.

STRUCTURAL LAYOUT

After the brief introduction and a run-through of my objectives I will start off by presenting the theoretical framework for my study. This chapter focuses on discussing why I have chosen Social Movement Theory and how it applies to the Latin American context. I will also discuss the Decentralization Discourse and other theoretical approaches that relate to my objectives and to previous work. The following chapter is an extensive account of the socio-economic context of El Alto as well as the political and social history of the juntas defining their role in civil society according to previous work. This chapter starts off with an introduction of El Alto and the socio-economic factors that define the particular role of the juntas. This is followed by a historical account of the most significant events in the social and political history of the juntas. This section is divided by two decisive events that transformed the role of the juntas: the decentralization reforms of 1993-94 and the Gas War of 2003. I will first focus on the political and social consequences of decentralization and introduce the term Social Control, a central concept in my paper regarding the main function of the juntas as well as a crucial factor in the decentralized municipal system of participatory governance. The last section focuses on the rise of the social movements and the role of the juntas in the Gas War, the event that put an end to era of neoliberal governments. The chapter ends with a conclusive summary of the contextual framework to point out the relevance of my case study. The following chapter presents my case study and my main findings. This chapter starts with the definition of formal and informal social control to explain the main functions of the juntas and how the municipal system works. I have divided my findings into three areas of social control activity: The Zone, The District and The Municipality. I end the chapter with a summary of my findings. The last chapter is a conclusive discussion based on my theoretical framework, the contextual background and the main findings of my case study.
THEORECTICAL FRAMEWORK and DISCUSSION

To study the activities and actions that define the role of my study subjects in their particular context it is important to establish a theoretical framework that encompasses the core aspects of these social organizations. I have therefore chosen to center my study around Social Movement Theory (SMT). In this chapter I will argue why an approach emphasizing the interrelation between civil society and state enables SMT to define social movements based on the collective identity of my subjects and through the political process of demand making. I will furthermore complement SMT with a discussion on decentralization and specifically the concepts of social and downward accountability to be able to relate my study to previous work on Bolivia’s decentralized municipal system of governance.

Before I go deeper into the theoretical discussion it’s important to establish my interpretations of some fundamental concepts. By the role of my study subjects, I refer to “the actions and activities assigned to or required or expected of a person or group”. The term neoliberal restructuring refers to the wave of economic reforms that were primarily propagated by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) through Structural Adjustment Programs (SAP) that are heavily influenced by the neoliberal model of development. These reforms were conditions pressed on governments in the South for debt relief. According to the Inter American Development Bank, Bolivia was the country that most closely applied the structural adjustment reforms suggested by the IMF. I will use this term relating both to macroeconomic policies of stabilization and the following social liberal models of participation and empowerment.

SOCIAL MOVEMENT THEORY

SMT discusses how to define the ways in which different groups of people bring forth societal change through their collective influence on power structures in society. The definition of Social Movements I will use for this study is according to Tarrow: “[C]ollective challenges by people with common purposes and solidarity in sustained interaction with elites, opponents and authorities.” I will briefly explain the empirical components of his definition. Firstly, he argues that collective challenges (“interrupting, obstructing or rendering uncertain the activities of others”) are the most characteristic actions of social movements. Secondly, a common purpose is the reason needed to mount claims against opponents, authorities or elites. Thirdly, movements have to mobilize a deeply

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2 WordNet 2.0 (2003).
rooted consensus based on *solidarity* and *identity*, among its members. Finally, “it is only through sustaining collective action against an antagonist that a contentious episode becomes a social movement.”

**Social Movement Theory and Latin America**

To discuss the relevant theoretical approaches for this paper I will use Foweraker’s study of contemporary social movement theory. There are two major schools of social movement theory according to his study: the European *New Social Movement Theory* (NSM) and the North American *Resource mobilization theory* (RM), both products of their own specific historical and political contexts. While the NSM is influenced by the social movements emerging from the growth of the welfare state, the social democratic consensus of strong corporatist traditions and the highly institutionalized labour movement. The RM arises out of the contrasting political context of the United States, where social movements are explained by the continuing ability of outsider groups to mobilize resources and gain influence within the existing political system. Thus NSM has been defined through *identity* and the reasons why social movements emerge, while RM is defined through *strategy* and how social movements work.

While Foweraker points out that most Latin American studies use the NSM he suggests caution when applying both approaches. The NSM, because it assumes “large processes of historical or societal transformation which remain unproven” and the RM for making bold methodological assumptions without cultural and historical context. It is thus important to recognize the historical, social, cultural and political realities that differ from Europe and North America in order to study Latin American movements. A significant distinction is that movements in Europe and North America have emerged out of the effects of industrialization and the frustration over the failing welfare system in times of transition from industrialist to post-industrialist society. Most Latin American nations and Bolivia in particular have not been industrialized and this does not coincide with the NSM perspective of social movements “reflecting a qualitative shift in the nature of capitalist society”. Latin American movements reflect different and harsher societal shifts as the same neoliberal reforms that were applied in the North were applied to semi or pre-industrialized societies in the South. RM on the other hand, is based on the idea that successful movements acquire resources and create advantageous exchange relationships to achieve their goals with better

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1 Ibid. p. 6.
4 Ibid. p. 3.
5 Ibid. p. 3.
6 Ibid. p. 3.
7 Ibid. p. 3.
and more efficient leadership and organization. It adheres to rational economic models of human agency leaving out social, political, cultural and historical factors that are crucial to the Latin American context.

Civil Society and the State
A central assertion in social movement research is that movements act in defence of their autonomy of the state. This is based on a sociological approach that tends to confine the activity of social movements to civil society resulting in a restricted identity of a self-limiting radicalism that is not necessarily or primarily orientated towards the state. Thus expanding civil society and the public realm but only through cultural innovations outside the political system. But this is, according to Foweraker, not viable in the Latin American context because social movements are inevitably political, as they are understood as a direct response to authoritarian, repressive and incompetent regimes that exclude large sectors of the population from social benefits or political participation. Furthermore, social movements politicize issues extending politics to cover a wider range of concerns and social relation, and because no form of politics can occur in a political and institutional vacuum they have little choice but to enter the political and institutional arena to engage in strategic interaction with the state. Autonomy is therefore seen more as a precondition of negotiation rather than the absence of political linkage. Thus “all social movements must be defined to some degree by their political projects, or attempts to influence institutional and political change.”

Traditional/Modern Dichotomy
In relevance to Foweraker’s position on SMT and political projects Posner suggests that an increasing consensus has emerged over the dynamic interrelation between state and civil society in shaping the capacity for political participation and collective action. While proponents of neoliberal reform advocate state neutrality in the context of market economy, critical studies have increasingly showed that state and civil society actors work together to generate effective development outcomes. In the Latin American context, theories of popular participation and collective action have essentially been theories of marginality. Functionalist social science emerged as a reaction to the increase in size and power of the popular sectors after the great depression. Due to state interventions such as import substitution industrialization, ideas of European socialism united the rising industrial sector against the dominant classes and this was intensified with an unprecedented urban migration after the modernization of agricultural production was initiated. To protect their

privileged positions under this increasing threat, a traditional/modern dichotomy emerged with the functionalist approach that attributed the responsibility for inequality to the cultural, ethical and psychological backwardness of the disadvantaged. Thus promoting participation for marginal groups to include in them modern values, behaviour and thus pre-empting radicalization of the popular sectors, in the context of the cold war fear of communist threat in the continent. Likewise development theories that focus on NSM, market orientated reforms (like the Washington Consensus) or social capital articulate cultural and economic means by which to develop and include the marginalized in the benefits of modern society. However, as Posner concludes, theses approaches have in later time also recognized the state’s role in either the promotion or the impeding of social and economic development. These development approaches have furthermore not adequately considered how economic liberalization can negatively impact on national development and the organization and potential for collective action of the disadvantaged. Instead they promote the improvement of public policies through domestic institutions. This approach presumes that the marginalized sectors can be *empowered* without seriously challenging the status quo, a highly questionable assumption considering the history of political exclusion and repression in Latin America.

The notion of civil society and state as autonomous entities has with the failure of the orthodox neoliberal approach to produce the anticipated results, led policy makers and financial institutions like the World Bank to adapt a more nuanced approach focused on the cultivation of social capital. However, as Posner shows, the social capital approach lends itself to the same traditional/modern dichotomy as before, promoting the advancement of societal development through the adaptation of norms and practices of more advanced societies. This approach ignores the vital role of the state in structuring power relations, living conditions among competing groups in society, organization possibilities in civil society and the potential for participation and collective action. Posner concludes that it is important to view the state as embedded in a set of social relations that shape state structure and policies, thus shaping the political opportunity structure and the capacity for collective action.\(^\text{13}\)

**Demand Making and Collective Identity**

This leads us to the notion that “the dynamics of collective action are best understood in relation to a political process”\(^\text{14}\). A variety of conceptual schemes have been developed to address how social movements can pressure their way into becoming legitimate political actors. While different


interacting vehicles have been formed to negotiate with the state, the Latin American context points to mobilization as the main means available for social movements to press their demands. When social and economic demands are rejected the attention is focused on political conditions to meet these demands. This leads us to a significant point of Foweraker that unites both the NSM and the RM traditions. By using Tilly’s definition of social movements as “a series of demands or challenges to power holders in the name of a social category that lacks an established political position”, Forwaker makes it clear that “both the process of demand making and the content of the demands are important to the description of social movement activity”. Therefore he distinguishes two types of demands:

**Material demands:** Representing demands for social inclusion and greater participation in the commonwealth, such as, for example, economic distribution, public utilities and social benefits.

**Legal and political rights:** which together present a claim of citizenship.

While material demands might be problematic they do not “call for new rules or challenge the central norms of the political system overall”. Legal and political rights, on the other hand do “challenge the core values and operational codes of the system”. In Latin America these demands are often integral to the social movements continuous process of demand making. Particularly in the case of Bolivia where citizenship demands are strongly linked to the indigenous movements struggle for political inclusiveness based on a collective cultural and social identity. Melucci describes this collective identity, according to Foweraker, as a group’s sense of the meaning of their actions. Emphasizing the idea that a group’s identity is formed through a continuous process of interaction, within the group and between the group and the rest of society that produces meaning and collectively constructs a collective identity. This relates to Hickey and Mohan’s critical study of the participation discourse that shows that “participatory approaches are most likely to succeed where (i) they are pursued as part of a wider radical political project; (ii) where they are aimed specifically at securing citizenship rights and participation for marginal and subordinate groups; and (iii) when they seek to engage with development as an underlying process of social change rather than in the form of discrete technocratic interventions.”

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16 Ibid. p. 80.
17 Ibid. p. 80.
18 Ibid. p. 80-81.
19 Ibid. p.80-81.
Decentralization, as the transfer of governance to sub national level, has acquired a central role in
the political agenda of Latin American countries in the last two decades. But despite the great
attention paid to decentralization we still know too little about the impact various decentralizing
reforms have on service outcomes in the social and urban sectors. While a great amount of work
has determined the wide spectrum of results as well as the potential adjustments needed to fulfil
their purpose it is safe to say that it has been difficult to correlate theory and practice. Considering
the recent political developments in Latin America where a wave of left wing governments
propagating an end to neoliberal policy are cooperating to find other solutions, the current world
economic crisis and the proclaimed death of the globalization consensus, it is also safe to say that
the discussions on the correlation between macro economic growth and human development will
take a new route. Nevertheless, the purpose of my study is not to falsify the ideas of neoliberalism
nor to defy the purpose of neoliberal economists, but to study the impact of neoliberal restructuring.

The decentralization discourse has been determined by concepts like devolution, participation and
empowerment. It is especially concerned with the improvement of democratic governance by the
promotion of accountability and transparency in public administration and the institutionalization of
democratic culture by providing opportunities for groups and individuals to make political and
financial decisions affecting their own jurisdiction. This promotes a political environment of
accommodation and negotiation facilitating the growth of civil society organizations and enabling
local issues to be attended to, thus emphasizing the contribution of community organizations in
poverty reduction in the neoliberal context of globalized competitiveness.

This discourse is aligned with the decentralization reforms promoted by transnational finance
institutions like the IMF and the World Bank and implemented with the help of the United Nations,
international aid and non governmental organizations.

22 Gershberg, Alec Ian (1998), Decentralisation, Recentralisation and Performance Accountability: Building an
23 Alianza Bolivariana para los Pueblos de Nuestra América - Tratado de Comercio de los Pueblos, ALBA-TCP. Trade
agreement, financial institution and development cooperation between Venezuela, Cuba, Nicaragua, Bolivia, Antigua
and Barbuda, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Honduras, San Vincente and the Granadinas.
Innovative Governance in the 21st Century, eds. G. Rizvi, Washington, D.C.
Accountability and Social Control

A central concept in the decentralization discourse is accountability. Referring to the ability to ensure that public officials attend to the needs of the population and are answerable for their actions. This concept is closely related to a central term in my paper, namely social control. A crucial function in the municipal governing system as well as the traditional function of the juntas. Social control is a rhetorical term that is commonly used to promote citizen supervision over public policy. I will present two interpretations of this concept to relate my study to previous work on social control, namely Peruzotti’s Social Accountability and Komives’s and Dijkstra’s Downward Accountability.

According to Peruzotti political and legal accountability faces two problems. The first is intrinsic to the imperfect nature of the relationship of representation and the second derives from the absence of certain institutional preconditions necessary for the effective functioning of controlling agencies. In the discussion regarding the two forms of accountability: horizontal and vertical, Peruzotti draws attention to what he calls Social Accountability, a non-electoral yet vertical mechanism of controlling public authorities through the actions of an array of citizens associations, social movements and the media. Emphasizing the point that while the electorate needs to maximize the extension of their support in order to control social actors, who can rely on the intensity of their claims or their impact on public opinion. Even though Peruzotti asserts that this concept has little empirical basis, it touches on the case of the juntas because it specifies social mobilization as a strategy to influence public policy. Komives’s and Dijkstra's study on poverty reduction strategies in Latin America also describes mechanisms of accountability and civil society participation as crucial for the development of public administration. They describe Downward Accountability systems as a series of mutually self-reinforcing interactions between government and non-governmental actors in which governments feel a responsibility to the public to achieve poverty reduction results, and the public in turn holds government officials accountable for achieving these results. This system relies on transparency to facilitate civil society’s contribution and the condition that a weakness in one phase of the system contributes to a failure of the entire system.

28 “the existence of state agencies that are legally enabled and empowered and factually willing and able, to undertake actions that span from routine oversight to criminal sanctions or impeachment in relations to actions or omissions, by other state agents or agencies, that may be qualified as unlawful” Peruzzotti – Smulovitz (2006) p. 334.
CONTEXTUAL BACKGROUND
THE CITY OF EL ALTO

On the Andean high plateau 4000 meters above the sea protecting the capital of Bolivia, Nuestra Señora De La Paz, from the cold winds of the mountain range lies the impoverished migrant city of El Alto. On the rim of the canyon that holds La Paz and stretching out on the high plateau the city has grown immensely in the last two decades surpassing its twin city in size and population. With temperature fluctuations of more than 30 degrees because of the radiant sun and the cold dry winds from the north, there is little precipitation and sometimes even snow in the wintertime. Locals refer to two types of climate: Dry cold and wet cold. It is therefore better to always dress warmly and gradually adapt to the sun than vice versa.

With little natural vegetation and a completely flat surface the city has a desert like ambiance with lots of wind and dust. The buildings are made almost exclusively out of bricks and adobe are mostly one or two stories high and spread across the city in a disorganized pattern creating a mishmash of roads and blocks making it very easy to get lost. The only two rivers that pass through the city are El Rio Seco and El Rio Seke, both contaminated by industrial waste and garbage dumps in open public spaces as a result of El Alto’s poorly managed public policies. A lot of alteños have no choice but to use these rivers as the only means to wash their clothes. According to the census of 2001 carried out by the National Institute of Statistic of Bolivia 66.9 % of alteños are considered poor.

The table below shows telling figures (percentage of the population) according to the method of Unsatisfied Basic Necessities.

| Insufficient living materials urban area | 29.12% |
| Insufficient living materials rural area | 82.25% |
| Insufficient living space | 72.36% |
| Inadequate energetic services | 13.42% |
| Inadequate water and sanitation services | 50.73% |
| Inadequate education | 47.43% |
| Inadequate healthcare attention | 68.75% |

31 See Picture 11 in Appendix 4.
32 See Picture 1 in Appendix 4
33 Residents of El Alto
34 Instituto Nacional de Estadistica (2008).
These figures reveal the consequences of an indiscriminate and excessive urbanization process that affects the province of La Paz and almost exclusively El Alto because of its social, economic and geographic conditions. With a population growth factor of about 10% per year El Alto has gone from 11,000 inhabitants in the revolutionary year of 1952, to 30,000 in 1960, 95,000 in 1976, 405,492 in 1992 and is estimated to reach 896,773 this year making it one of the fastest growing cities in the whole continent.35 See Appendix 5. Map 1.

As with most nations in the South, Bolivia has undergone an extensive process of neoliberal restructuring from the mid eighties onwards resulting in a rapid urbanization process described by Gill as underpinned by many structural factors but propelled by economic reform programs of structural adjustment, market enablement and economic globalization.36 In El Altos case, the first big wave of migration was directly related to the privatization of the tin mine industry. Unemployed miners and peasants escaping deteriorating conditions in the countryside were forced to either settle down on the urbanized areas around the major cities in Bolivia or to colonize the lowland regions of the country like El Chapare or Los Yungas in order to find work.37 As this massive urbanization pressed the physical limits of La Paz, poor migrants had no other choice than to populate the periphery of the capital urbanizing El Alto at a rapid rate. Once merely a point of juncture between the railway from Lake Titicaca, the first airport installed by the aviation school Lloyd Aereo Boliviano, the highway to Oruro in the south and the Pan-American highway in the north, El Alto has become the epicentre of formal and informal commerce and a bottleneck of transportation to and from La Paz.38 La Ceja39, as the city’s center is called, is filled with street vendors and hundreds of mini-buses tooting horns on their way through the traffic lines along routes spreading like a web to the outskirts of the city. See Appendix 5 Map 2.

El Alto's economic development has been dependent on and grown along the highways introducing different types of activities predominantly surrounding commerce, manufacturing and services, from depots and workshops to industrial complexes and numerous units of formal and informal services. 80% of the whole region's economic establishments are situated here giving work to 31% of the alteños.40 Migrants have come to depend on the relatively small occupational market of La Paz and are contributing to the growth of the informal sector, a family- and household-centred auto-

35 Ibid.
37 Ibid.
39 See Picture 3 and 4 in Appendix 4.
generated sector characterized by the migrant’s own communal traditions and the inter-familiar relationships of everyday life.\textsuperscript{41} A telling example of this are the intricately planned weekly markets of the 16 de Julio neighbourhood, where everything from “needles and pins to airplane parts”\textsuperscript{42} are sold from stalls that cover every street and attract merchants and customers from all parts of the country and even abroad. When walking through this huge market one notices that the majority of vendors are women, simultaneously attending their children, their work and preparing dinner. All of them members of the street vendors union which is by far the largest in El Alto with hundreds of thousands of members comprised of mostly poor indigenous mothers. Women in El Alto are particularly affected by the poor living conditions because of their unpaid child caring labour, gender discrimination and other problems associated with the day to day strife of maintaining a household. Men are more flexible in this sense and not tied to a particular place when searching for work. Street vending is therefore usually women’s only job alternative.

THE JUNTA VECINAL

Another extensive source of income intrinsically tied to the cultural characteristics of alteños is agriculture as most residents are of indigenous Aymara descent and come from the countryside. They usually have plots of land that they care for and attend continuously throughout the year.\textsuperscript{43} This explains the low population density in El Alto and leads us to a fundamental issue concerning my study, the relation between culture, territory and community.

The communal traditions of the migrants and the indigenous conceptualization of territory and family combined with the absence of official urban planning and poorly managed public policies have all shaped the chaotic and spontaneous urbanization process of El Alto causing the emergence of various types of social organizations. The most significant being neighbourhood associations called Juntas Vecinales. There are about 570 juntas in the eleven districts of El Alto each with their own directory and functioning under the rules of the federation of Juntas Vecinales of El Alto. Juntas were initially formed as a means of protecting the migrants from land speculators, criminality and as a vehicle for pressuring policy makers to attend to their needs for basic services and infrastructure.\textsuperscript{44} But the juntas of El Alto differ from similar organizations elsewhere as they are closely tied to the migrants cultural background as Aymaras and the communal traditions of collective decision making pre-dating the Inca empire. Another influential factor is the syndicalist

\textsuperscript{41} Sandoval - Sostres (1989) p. 38.  
\textsuperscript{42} Interview: Anonymous.  
\textsuperscript{43} Sandoval - Sostres (1989).  
traditions of the miners who until the eighties headed the strongest popular force in Bolivia.\textsuperscript{45} Zibechi describes the role and diverse functions of the juntas as showing a complex logic of political and social exchanges where diverse fluxes of services and wealth intertwine. These exchange-networks are rooted in the camaraderie between families, neighbours and colleagues and are closely tied to the resident’s daily needs but also characterized by power structures of political influence higher up in the hierarchies of the organizations.\textsuperscript{46}

Picture 10 in Appendix 4 shows a march with all juntas of El Alto supporting the unity among Bolivians against a referendum for autonomy in the department of Santa Cruz.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Introduction

The history of the juntas is roughly divided by two significant events: the neoliberal decentralization reforms of the nineties and the Gas War of 2003. The first phase from 1950 to 1985 characterizes the juntas as fairly independent and pragmatic civic organizations responsive to grassroots demands but strongly influenced by the political party affiliation of its leaders. The second phase from 1985 to 2003 is characterized by the institutionalization of the juntas and the resulting clientelism between juntas and political parties competing for municipal power. The third and current phase begins with the Gas War and is marked by a drastic change in the internal power structures of the juntas as the grass roots have pressured the leadership to radicalise their political positions resulting in an uprising that had national repercussions. My case study is based on the political and social context of this last phase. It is thus crucial for my study to describe the historical process of the juntas in order to understand the many factors that have shaped the role of these social organizations.

Party Political Influence

The initial sporadic and flexible nature of the juntas was soon transformed in the revolutionary times of the fifties as the Movimiento Nacionalista Revolucionario (MNR, National Revolutionary Movement) incorporated them into the party as zonal commands. They retained their civic posture after the revolution but were molded into the paternalistic bureaucracy of the MNR party, influencing the organizational traditions of the juntas to this day.\textsuperscript{47}

\textsuperscript{45} Zibechi, Raul (2006) \textit{Dispersar el poder: Los movimientos como poderes antiestatales.}
\textsuperscript{46} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{47} Quisbert Quispe (2003) p. 5.
The revolution of 1952 was a huge transformation for Bolivian society that redefined the nature of citizenship and politics in the country. The most important results were the nationalization of the mines, the agrarian reform, universal suffrage and a diversification of the economy. After the MNR lost power several authoritarian regimes prevailed marginalizing the juntas along with other elements of the popular classes. This period enabled the juntas to distance themselves from party politics and to gain popular strength as part of the growing democratization movement beside the Central Obrera Boliviana (COB, the national union organization) and the Katarista movement of the Confederación Sindical Única de Trabajadores Campesinos de Bolivia (CSUTCB, the Unique Confederation of Rural Laborers of Bolivia). The juntas created a federation to represent them and attend to the collective needs of El Alto, La Federacion de Juntas Vecinales de El Alto (FEJUVE) surfaced out of five significant demands: a general hospital in El Alto (not met to this date), the asphalting of the Pan-American highway, municipalization of El Alto, a public university and basic services for the whole population.

After the reinstatement of democracy in 1982 Hernan Siles Zuazo and the Unidad Democratica Popular (UDP, Popular Democratic Unity) rose to power with a broad coalition political party's rooted in the democratization movement after three elections and successive coups. Even though there was strong support in El Alto and high hopes of forming a strong popular force to meet the demands of the population, mismanagement and an emerging economic crisis led to the fall of the UDP making way for the return of the MNR and the neoliberal shock therapy that followed.

The return to democracy made the juntas once again subject to co-optation by aspiring political parties as vehicles to win the now crucial alteñan vote. Popular demands became subordinated to the conflicts between party affiliation and the struggle to control the FEJUVE. The leadership distanced themselves from the grass roots, thus weakening the strength of the juntas as social organizations.

**Neoliberal Restructuring**

The next historical phase of the juntas is the neoliberal era that began in 1985 after a profound economic crisis that caused inflation to soar and hit levels equivalent to an annual rate of 25 000

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48 Katarista movement reclaimed the legacy of Tupac Katari and Barolina Sisa, indigenous rebellion leaders of the late-19th century.
50 Interview: Mamani (February 19, 2008).
52 Sandoval- Sostres (1989) p. 89.
percent per year.\textsuperscript{53} The winner of the elections the same year Víctor Paz Estenssoro led the return of
the MNR and took a sharp turn away from the corporatist traditions of the party implementing a plan of shock therapy, advocated by Harvard professor Jeffrey Sachs, to halt the inflation. The so-called \textit{Nueva Política Económica} (NEP, New Economic Policy) included “the devaluation of the Bolivian currency, elimination of producer subsidies, deregulation of interest rates and repressive actions against labour unions to prevent demands for higher wages.”\textsuperscript{54} Commonly known as the 21060 after the proclaimed decree this new economic course included all the main ingredients of
the market orientated policies, known as Reaganism and Thatcherism in the North and as structural
adjustment in the South, which promised economic growth and poverty alleviation by increasing
exports and creating jobs to afford public policy investments.\textsuperscript{55} To support this transformation the
IMF and the World Bank offered economic assistance but on the condition that structural
adjustment programs be adopted that would come to mold Bolivian economy policies for the next
20 years. Although macro economic stabilisation was reached the new course failed to “provide a
propitious environment for growth and democracy to take root” \textsuperscript{56} and came to hit the living
conditions of the poor majority hard.\textsuperscript{57}

\textit{Decentralization as Popular Participation}

To complement the first wave of neoliberal restructuring a second wave of structural reforms was
applied in the nineties aimed to “reintroduce the poor as agents of public policy”\textsuperscript{58} and to modernize
the state focusing on decentralization, capitalization, pensions, education and judicial reform.\textsuperscript{59}
Grindle describes it as “an effort to marry the imperfect representative democracy of the Bolivian
constitution with ‘other’ traditions of self-government”\textsuperscript{60}. These reforms institutionalized the juntas
and drastically changed their role in civil society.

The \textit{Ley de Participación Popular} (LPP, Law on Popular Participation) and the \textit{Ley de
Decentralización Administrativa} (LAD, Law of Administrative Decentralization) instated in 1994
and 1995 respectively, transformed the highly centralized political-administrative system of
governing into regional and local levels of government.\textsuperscript{61} The main purpose was to transfer

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{53} Shultz – Draper (2008) p. 124.
\item \textsuperscript{54} Ibid p. 125.
\item \textsuperscript{55} Ibid p. 155.
\item \textsuperscript{57} Shultz – Draper (2008).
\item \textsuperscript{58} Gray Molina, G. (2003) \textit{Exclusion and the Promise of Popular Participation}, Domingo, Pilar – Grindle, Marilee
\item \textsuperscript{59} Ibid. p. 351.
\item \textsuperscript{60} Grindle, Merilee S. (2000), \textit{Audacious Reforms: Institutional Invention and Democracy in Latin America}. p. 96.
\item \textsuperscript{61} Bustamante Antezana, Alejandra I. (2002) \textit{The implications of the Popular Participation Law on Local Governance
Conditions in the Bolivian Municipalities}.
\end{itemize}
resources and responsibilities to locally elected municipal governments and to give community organizations legal status to participate according to their uses and customs. The following year the LDA adapted the 9 departments of the country to this system and in 1999 the Law of Municipalities (LM) reorganized and defined the municipality as the basic unit for public policies with a budget of 20 percent of national taxes, on a per capita basis, for investment, administration and maintenance of infrastructure for health, education and basic services.\textsuperscript{62} This meant that territorially based organizations such as juntas and indigenous communities earned the right for the first time in history to have legal status as Organizaciones Territoriales de Base (OTB, Territorially Based Organization) and as such participate in planning public policy in the new instated municipalities.\textsuperscript{63} This was a "significant improvement over conditions that had excluded two fifths of the country’s population from access to local government".\textsuperscript{64}

The impact of decentralisation is according to Domingo complex and she points to different experiences throughout the country, especially between rural and urban municipalities. Nonetheless Domingo concludes that it clearly has contributed to the transformation of the political landscape and new social movements have successfully capitalized on the political space provided by municipal elections.\textsuperscript{65} Likewise Maydana concludes that the LPP has opened up the political system for citizens to appropriate administrative spaces giving democracy a big push.\textsuperscript{66}

On the other hand, more critical studies from scholars like Grindle, point out that the LPP was an elite project involving a small number of officials who worked in close collaboration with the president.\textsuperscript{67} It was therefore not surprising that the initial reaction from Bolivian society was negative because of the obvious fact that participation is a society-driven process and should not be designed by technocrats behind closed doors.\textsuperscript{68} The LPP was soon labelled as a doomed law from both the oligarchies on the right, that were scared of losing political power to indigenous peasants\textsuperscript{69} and from social movements on the left that saw the law as an assault on pre-existing popular organizations like the COB, the CUSTCB and the FEJUVE.\textsuperscript{70}

\textsuperscript{62} Grindle (2000) p. 94.
\textsuperscript{63} Nijenhuis, G. (2002), Decentralisation and Popular Participation in Bolivia: The link between local governance and local development. p. 53.
\textsuperscript{64} Grindle (2000) p. 94.
\textsuperscript{65} Domingo (2005) p.1734.
\textsuperscript{66} Maydana Choque, Raúl M. (2004) El Comité de Vigilancia y la participación y control social en el modelo municipalista de descentralización del Estado boliviano.
\textsuperscript{67} Grindle (2000) p.126.
\textsuperscript{68} Nijenhuis (2002) p. 57.
\textsuperscript{69} Harnecker, Marta y Fuentes, Federico (2008), MAS-IPSP de Bolivia: Instrumento político que surge de los movimientos sociales.
\textsuperscript{70} Gill (2000).
Another crucial factor pointed out by Grindle is that the requirements of implementing the LPP were astonishingly difficult and highly questioned.\textsuperscript{71} They were furthermore rapidly designed, approved with minimal discussion in congress and implemented in a matter of eight months. Within a year nearly two hundred new municipalities had been created.\textsuperscript{72} According to Grindle political decentralisation seemed far fetched to any decision maker taking into account the "weak state" and incomplete sense of nationhood that exists in Bolivia, and considering its long history of economic and political instability.\textsuperscript{73} Even though the architects of the law believed that they could strengthen the power and legitimacy of the Bolivian state by decentralizing power “[i]neffectiveness, corruption, and regional separatism threatened the potential to govern and to deal with the deep problems of the country’s economic and social development.”\textsuperscript{74} Because other less bold alternatives existed, much indicates that the “shape of the reform was fundamentally set by the interests of the design team and its leadership”.\textsuperscript{75}

\textit{The Juntas and the LPP}

The main outcome of these reforms on the juntas was firstly the disarticulation of the organizational structure of the FEJUVE. As juntas became OTBs the federation remained unrecognised by the LPP. This role was instead attributed to the so-called \textit{Comite de Vigilancia} (VC, Vigilance Committee) a new institution formed by the \textit{Ley de Municipalidades} (LM, Municipal Law) to function as supervisor of public policies. The VC is comprised of a junta delegate from each district of El Alto.\textsuperscript{76}

Secondly, the political “playing field” was decentralized making juntas ideal platforms for political parties to win the elections in the newly instated municipal governments. This particularly affected El Alto because of the size of the municipality and the extension of the juntas throughout the city. A clientèle relation was formed between juntas and local politicians creating according to Quisbert Quispe a flourishing market for votes where personal interests and competition between juntas overshadowed grass-root demands.\textsuperscript{77} The political agenda, on the other hand, shifted towards local issues like basic services and healthcare, thus democratizing the system in that sense.\textsuperscript{78}

\textsuperscript{71} “The capacity of the national government to draw new municipal boundaries; to educate local populations about the new institutions; to hold 125 local elections; to train newly elected public officials in their responsibilities; to help grass-roots organizations such as local village councils select representatives to form the vigilance committees and train the new committees; to transfer funds, expertise, and responsibilities for the provision of public services; and to monitor the use of funds.” Grindle (2000) p.124.
\textsuperscript{72} Grindle (2000) p.125.
\textsuperscript{73} Ibid. p.123.
\textsuperscript{74} Ibid. p.124.
\textsuperscript{75} Ibid. p.124.
\textsuperscript{76} Art. 150: Ley no. 2028 de Municipalidades
\textsuperscript{77} Quisbert Quispe (2003) p. 7.
\textsuperscript{78} Grindle (2000) p.140.
The Vigilance Committee and Social Control

The purpose of the VC is to enable civil society to supervise public policy in the municipality and to channelize actions and initiatives for the collective benefit of the population.\(^{79}\) A function with direct relevance to the traditional role of the juntas. I will therefore go into depth on this issue to describe how this function has been implemented.

The term social control is commonly used in Bolivian civil society and can be interpreted as Peruzzotti’s Social Accountability or Komive's and Dijkstra's Downward Accountability. This concept defines the VC’s main objectives and is constituted according to España in “an authority that can realize a direct practice of the citizen’s right to know, in a clear and transparent way, the management of public policy. Consequently it permits development of critical and regulatory actions” and “…contributes to the democratization of the State in promoting social participation and demanding previous deliberation processes in the formulation of public policies.”\(^{80}\)

The implementation of social control through the VC has not been successful, as Maydana argues in his study. The VC has come to be the most questioned, debated and distrusted institution in decentralized municipal system of Bolivia. The most significant problem with this institution is according to Maydana that the interpretation of the law gradually consolidates the VC as the only legitimate actor of social control. This makes the VC not dependent on its grass roots and therefore easily co-opted by the municipal government. Maydana concludes his study by affirming that despite important advancements there are no definitive achievements and it is probably safe to say that the practice of social control by the VC is more dependent on external help, whether from the state or from international cooperation programs than from the social organizations themselves.\(^{81}\)

The VC is strongly questioned by civil society in El Alto often seen as a part of the municipal government rather than a representative of the residents. However the situation has improved since the implementation of the LPP according to the president of the VC of El Alto Richard Quispe and has brought various results depending on the commitment and the integrity of the actual members of the VC. The biggest problems are lack of financial, technical and legislative resources. According to Quispe it is crucial that the members of the VC utilize external expertise and stay neutral with no salary from the municipality to conduct efficient and independent work. So “we can defend the residents from public works that are completed late, uncompleted or those falling apart. And to prevent the municipal government from having a carnival with the money.” A significant problem is

\(^{79}\) Art #14, Decreto Supremo # 23858 Reglamento de las Organizaciones Territoriales de Base.


therefore the funding of the VC’s work, according to Quispe. The current funding is only sufficient to pay for bus fares, lunches and office material. Another problem is the non-equitable distribution of resources: “There can be streets paved with gold beside poor ones” The resources should be distributed justly depending on the necessities of the zones and not the population size.  

To conclude this section it is important to point out that the political establishment in Bolivia has since the incomplete corporatist revolution of 1952 failed to create political stability, which, in turn, has led to governance through political coalitions that have molded a culture of clientelism at all levels of public office. This has contributed to a process of increasing disenchantment and disaffection with the political system and the institutions of representation. Opposition to the neoliberal model not only reflects the widespread notion that it only has benefited a few and excluded the majority, it has also been imposed through repressive and violent measures resulting in the fact that “[e]very government since 1985 has had to resort to states of emergency to quell social protest.”

The Post Liberal Challenge

This section introduces the last phase of the juntas historical background emphasizing their role in the social struggles that have transformed Bolivia by ending the rule neoliberal governments through the emergence of urban and rural social movements. I will therefore describe the events that have led to this so-called process of change in detail in order to fully comprehend the collective identity that unites the juntas with other social organizations and movements.

Bolivia has experienced three major revolutionary movements according to Hylton and Thomson. The first one was led by Tupac Katari in 1780 against Spanish colonial rule. The second is the revolution of 1952 and the third is the current transformation of Bolivian society initiated by rural and urban social movements that pose, according to Yashar, a postliberal challenge to third wave democracies and for liberal state formation insofar as they “demand new forms of representation, political autonomy, and multicultural recognition”.

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82 Interview: Quispe (March 5, 2008)
The Water War

The event that marked the beginning of this movement in Bolivia was the so called Water War in Cochabamba\(^\text{87}\) in 2000, an event that became an international sensation story of great symbolic value for the emerging anti-globalisation movement of that time. The conflict was sparked by the take over of the city's water supply by a subsidiary of the U.S corporate giant Bechtel that due to the new national water law was threatening to monopolize the control of rural water systems. \(^\text{88}\) A united front of citizens from all classes led by the Coordinadora\(^\text{89}\) paralysed the city with several general strikes, road blockades and marches to protest the privatization of the city’s water service. The government answered furiously as former dictator and current president Hugo Banzer Suarez suspended constitutional rights and sent in 1200 troops to deal with the protesters. The outcome was devastating with hundreds of wounded and one killed. But the people did not give up and Bechtel finally left the city resulting in the return of public control over water services as well as the abolition of the new water law.\(^\text{90}\)

This event was a prelude to the nationwide revolt of the Gas War of 2003 for two key factors, according to Hylton and Thomson. Firstly, the horizontal structure of the Coordinadora, that was “uninfected by clientelism and caudillismo” representing a new form of political organization apart from political parties and secondly, the call for a constitutive assembly, to reconstruct Bolivia in accordance with the demands of the poor majority. \(^\text{91}\)

Goni

The subsequent presidential elections of 2002 revealed the rising political profiles of the strongest social organizations of the lowlands: the CSUTCB led by Felipe Quispe and Movimiento al Socialismo (MAS, Movement Towards Socialism) led by coca-grower syndicate leader Evo Morales, who got 20.9 % of the vote losing by 1.6 % to Gonzalo Sanchez de Lozada of the MNR, commonly known as Goni, mine industrialist and former Minister of Planning under Paz Estensoro. Goni was “probably Bolivia’s most unpopular man”\(^\text{92}\) in the election campaign but won with help from the prestigious advising firm of the former president of the United States Bill Clinton,\(^\text{93}\) as well as the threat by US officials to cut off aid to Bolivia if Morales won.

But Goni’s burden was heavy as Hylton and Thomson point out. Following seventeen years of

\(^{87}\) The third largest city in Bolivia.
\(^{89}\) Coalition for the defense of Water and Life
\(^{91}\) Hylton and Thomson (2005) p. 49.
neoliberal orthodoxy per capita income had not risen since 1986 and Bolivia had the second most unequal distribution of income in the continent. The official unemployment rate had tripled to 13.9%, while the informal sector had risen to 68%. Goni was never the less determined to keep the neoliberal course and proclaimed an IMF-dictated tax increase to tackle Bolivia’s budget deficit as a condition for receiving long-term support from the IMF. The public saw it as an attempt to balance the country’s budget on the backs of the working poor. This led to popular mobilization in La Paz and El Alto. Angry youth stoned the presidential palace and looted official buildings while the juntas in El Alto burned the mayor's office and mobilized in case of state reprisals. Goni’s answer was swift and brutal as military forces attacked the striking police force turning the central square of La Paz into a war zone with snipers killing protesters and rival police. Twenty nine people were killed and 200 injured. The incident became known as Febrero Negro, black February.

**The Gas War**

Goni’s next plan to export Bolivia’s gas reserves via Chile to the United States for half the price of what Brazil was currently paying, after pressure from the US ambassador, finally tipped the scales creating a uniform opposition of urban and rural movements demanding that Brazilian gas be defended. This issue was particularly loaded as the majority of Bolivians have no access to their biggest natural resource and because Chile is generally seen as the historic enemy since the loss of Bolivia’s coastline in the War of the Pacific of 1879-83.

On September 8 various sectors of the indigenous communities headed by the Omasuyos province along with chauffeurs, juntas and students from El Alto’s public university UPEA organized a march to La Paz to make the initial demands that later became the words uniting the coming nationwide revolt. A dialogue was initiated with government officials at the San Garibaldi radio station in El Alto, but when the demand to free indigenous leader Edwin Huampu was not met the dialog ended and Quispe of CSUTCB announced a hunger strike and a shut down of all the roads in the entire department of La Paz closing all transport to the capital. The next day the FEJUVE announced an indefinite general strike that would last a week, successfully abrogating the main claim for alteños, a real estate tax increase called “Maya y Paya”. During the following weeks indigenous communities from the south side of La Paz started a march to the capital where 58 chauffeur unions joined the protests and a new Coordinadora was formed in Cochabamba, now in the defence of and for recuperation of the gas reserves. Soon Morales and MAS joined in and a

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95 Hylton and Thomson (2005).
96 The second largest in South America after Venezuela - Gomez (2004)p.25
97 Shultz – Draper (2008) p. 91
resolution was agreed on. With Febrero Negro fresh in the memory of the public everyone was expecting the worst and when a bricklayer, a student and an eight-year-old girl were killed in a military operation to bring home about 1000 tourists stranded by the road blockades at Warisata, the mobilizations intensified creating public outrage among the citizens of Warisata.\textsuperscript{99} CSUTSB responded by announcing a state of siege in indigenous territory from the alteñan radio station, intensifying the road blockades and calling for demilitarization of the department. The following weeks more and more sectors across the country joined the protests and on October 1\textsuperscript{st} a set of common demands was agreed on including: the resignation of the president, no export of the gas, state control over the processing of gas, abrogation of the “Citizen protection and security law”, (which set jail terms of up to eight years for road blockades), no to the FTAA, (the US foreign free-trade agreement), a call for a constitutive assembly and prosecution for the killing of protesters. On the 8\textsuperscript{th} the FEJUVE and COR (Central Obrera Regional, regional chapter of the central union in EL Alto) called an indefinite general strike to pressure the government for the agreed demands. The next day the neighborhoods of Sinkata and Ventilla in El Alto became war zones as police and military attacked demonstrating miners, who responded with stones and dynamite resulting in the killing of two residents the next day. Barricades went up all over the city and protesters cut the supply of gas to La Paz. On the 11\textsuperscript{th} Goni issued an executive decree of national emergency to stop road blockades by all means necessary causing the massacre of 11 civilians as more than 300 soldiers escorted the gasoline trucks shooting their way through the city. On the 12\textsuperscript{th} 23 civilians were killed and the next day the death toll rose to a total of 53, a lot of whom were women and children. But nothing could calm the people down now, as a woman protester expressed it to the local radio Pachamama: “We demand the resignation of this government, if the case is contrary we will proceed until our final consequences”.\textsuperscript{100}

\textit{Territorial Micro-Governments}

In District 5 of El Alto junta presidents formed a military structured organization with general quarters that instructed the juntas of the district to independently organize their plans of attack and defence. Soon a communication system of signs and signals was established and the patrol of neighbourhoods by residents taking turns.\textsuperscript{101} According to Mamani Ramirez the juntas acted as \textit{microgobiernos territoriales}, territorial micro-governments, in the sense that all collective action was coordinated through them, like for example: organizing road blockades by digging 80-cm-wide ditches to stop military vehicles, daily and nightly vigilance of each neighborhood, soup kitchens and the construction of barricades. Because of the horizontal nature of the juntas, collective

\textsuperscript{99} Hylton and Thomson (2005).
\textsuperscript{100} Gomez (2004) p.15 – 84.
decisions were made without an apparent leadership making the juntas “a field of socio-political redefinition and reinforcement of the popular identity of the indigenous” according to Mamani Ramirez.\(^{102}\) Likewise Zibechi describes the juntas as not functioning as mobilizing structures but as a territorial identity consisting of different forms of trust, closeness, organizing nets, solidarities and initiatives that are formed in the margin or sometimes even outside of the juntas.\(^{103}\) In these conditions the directories and junta presidents ceased to exist as the grass roots took command as a consequence of the closely netted relations between alteños. A telling example are the soup kitchens that emerged sporadically due to the total shut down of all labour and businesses in El Alto.\(^{104}\) Furthermore, open air assemblies were held to transparently exchange information and make decisions. Local radio stations had a crucial role in this as almost all national news coverage was government-biased with the intent to disinform the public. As the entire city was shut down the only way to distribute information was through the San Garibaldi and Pachamama radio stations and by word of mouth spread through flyers that where handed out each morning in the city centre.

**The End of the Neoliberal Era**

After the tragic massacre of the alteños the government tried to calm down the situation by proclaiming a new decree to stop the exportation of gas, but this came “too late”, according to Mamani Ramirez and was not enough as the protesters demanded the resignation of Goni and the end of neoliberal governments in Bolivia.\(^{105}\)

On the 13\(^{th}\), 100 000 alteños marched down to La Paz overwhelming the police and taking over the city centre. Simultaneous mobilizations occurred in in the southern parts of the capital with disastrous consequences and a total of 11 protesters were killed. While mobilizations and general strikes spread to major cities like Cochabamba, Sucre, the surroundings of Santa Cruz, Potosi and Oruro, thousands of protesters were marching to the capital. Now the middle class population of La Paz joined the protesters as the mayor Juan del Granado and fractions of the governing parties demanded Goni’s resignation. Hunger strikes were proclaimed in churches across the city as special military forces were sent to protect the wealthy Zona Sur.\(^{106}\)

In the presidential palace, Goni sat tight backed by the US Ambassador David N. Greenlee though the Argentinian and Brazilian embassies urged him to resign. That night on a television broadcasted speech Goni insisted “yo no voy a renunciar”, that he would not resign, flaming the anger of the

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\(^{102}\) Mamani Ramírez (2004).

\(^{103}\) Zibechi (2006).

\(^{104}\) Interview: Cuellar (March 13, 2008)


\(^{106}\) Gomez (2004).
public that perceived him as openly confronting them and legitimizing the massacres. By now the
government had lost all political and social power and had only the monopoly of violence left. Later
on Vice President Carlos D. Mesa distanced himself from the government not wanting to participate
in the killing, and leaving open the possibility, (which he later took) of constitutional succession.
The next day thousands of marchers arrived from northern parts of the department and the lowlands
of the Yungas creating a siege reminiscent of Tupac Kataris in 1781.\textsuperscript{107}

On the 16\textsuperscript{th} hundreds of thousands of alteños descended on La Paz in a final offensive shouting “El
Alto de pie, nunca de rodias!!”, El Alto stands up, never kneels down, effectively taking over the
whole city except for the blocks around the presidential palace. By the next day Goni had resigned
but not before collecting 2.6 million dollars before he was spirited out of the presidential palace and
on to a flight to Miami.\textsuperscript{108}

**CONCLUDING COMMENTS**

The Gas War that brought down Goni’s government was not just about Bolivia's gas reserves but a
rejection of the whole neoliberal economic and political system that had failed to deliver the most
basic of its promises to the vast majority.\textsuperscript{109} The demand for a new constitution has changed the
course of history and marked the fall of the traditional political establishment. The presidential
victory of the MAS party and Evo Morales Ayma in 2005 started a democratic revolution that has
resulted in a new constitution and a series of reforms for the benefit of the poor. The MAS
government has won a second term with massive support from the population and proved
themselves very competent in governing this societal transformation that has even surpassed the
neoliberal governments on macro-economic factors.

The juntas of El Alto are protagonists of this process of societal change but this multitude of
organizations are not homogenous with clear political goals and strategies. They are complex and
had until the Gas War been pragmatic, corrupt and vertical in their structure. This leads us to my
case study and the questions I intend to answer with this paper.

\textsuperscript{107} Gomez (2004).
\textsuperscript{108} Ibid (2004).
\textsuperscript{109} Shultz – Draper (2008) p.94
CASE STUDY OF THE JUNTAS VECINALES OF DISTRICT 5

INTRODUCTION
District 5 is part of the northern districts of El Alto, commonly recognized as being more radical, independent and the avant garde of the resistance against the brutal military oppression in the Gas War of 2003. Many residents of District 5 where victimized when the military convoy passed this fairly large district that holds approximately 109,000 residents in about 50 urbanized and semi-rural zones. All very demographically and socio-economically diverse yet interrelated through the work of the juntas. See Appendix 5 Map 2.

The first contact I had with my study subjects, the junta presidents of District 5 was when I was invited to attend a so called district assembly at the Sub mayor’s office. An old factory in the centre of the district (see Picture 6 in Appendix 4). This meeting was exclusive for junta president's and was held at short notice to plan strategies for pressure actions against the state-owned electricity service provider ELECTROPAZ. This is a common procedure among juntas and displays their traditional role as supervisors of public and private services in El Alto. Representing the best interests of the residents by demanding accountability from power holders by various forms of collective action. Commonly known as the practice of social control, a process of demand making that is initiated by the residents and branches off to a formal procedure determined by municipal law and an informal procedure determined by the norms and customs of the juntas. I will begin the presentation of my findings by defining both forms of social control. I will then describe the organizational structure of the juntas to determine the three basic entities (resident, junta and district) and three spaces of social control activity (zone, district, municipality) that portray the practice of social control.

Informal Social Control
The informal branch of social control is determined by the traditional norms and customs of the juntas as social organizations practising various forms of pressure actions to meet the demands of their members. This role is exclusively defined in the Estatuto Organico FEJUVE El Alto (the Statute of the FEJUVE), a document designed to “better serve the residents of juntas; improve the planning of public works and to investigate [or supervise] the system of tariffs of the following services: electricity, water, sewage, garbage, telephone and transport in the concern of the economic situation of the members.”111 The basic functions and objectives of the juntas are established in the

110 Dirección Ordenamiento Territorial y Administración Urbana GMEA (2002)
first article constituting the junta as an entity of supervision and social control over the different public and private services of El Alto with the objectives of incentivize, motivate and strengthen the civic sentiments of the community. Furthermore to know the natural, economic-, socio-cultural and organizational aspects of the community, in order to establish the strategic lines of work to improve the population's quality of life. The FEJUVE also states its commitment to act as a spokesperson for all juntas in the cooperation with central, departmental and local governments to obtain sustainable and humane development promoting social justice, women’s rights and the environment.

**Formal Social Control**

The second branch of social control is determined by the Municipal Law that defines it as:

“The right of the organizations and institutions of the civil society to know, supervise, and evaluate the results and impact of the public policies and the participatory decision making processes, as well as the access of information and analysis of the instruments of social control”.

This right is implemented through the legal attributes of the junta as OTB and the VC, comprised of one junta president from each district who assumes the position of Delegado de Comite de Vigilancia (VCD, Vigilance Committee Delegate). This branch is in practice only concerned with the planning, execution and supervision of public works financed through the Programa Operativo Anual (POA, Annual Operative Program). A tax revenue that is distributed according to the population size of each zone.

**Organizational Structure**

The organizational structure of the juntas is based on three fundamental entities of representation according to Article 67 of the Statute of the FEJUVE:

1. **The Resident**
   - Every person residing in the territory of a junta.

2. **The Junta Vecinal**
   - A natural organism and communal authority of a territorial character, urban or rural, objective of which is to promote development, defend interests, and guard the resident’s rights. Comprised of the residents and the following directorial positions: President,

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113 Art. 6 Estatuto Orgánico (2001).
114 Ibid.
115 First chapter, Art. 25 of the law No. 2235 Dialogo Nacional.
Secretary General, Fiscal General, Secretary of Relations, Property, Acts, Sports, Transport, Culture, Youth and several substitutes. 116

3. *The District of Juntas Vecinales*

A viable and independent structure within the FEJUVE defined by the district boundaries of the municipality.

These entities function in what I will define as three territorially based areas of social control activity:

*The Zone*

*The District*

*The Municipality*

Juntas can be described as social exchange networks that emerge out of the resident's camaraderie and mutual needs. This is the core of the juntas and the grassroots of the organizational structure that initialize and propel the demand making process of social control. But this core is only evident in the zonal space and has very limited possibilities to practice the formal branch of social control. I have therefore concentrated my study on the activity of the junta directories and the junta presidents in particular, because they work within both branches of social control and are evident in all three spaces.

Before I continue with my findings I will briefly summarize the role of the Municipal Government (MG) which although very important is not studied in detail in this paper. It consists of a Municipal Council: The representative, deliberated, normative and accountable organ for the management of the municipality and the Mayor: The highest executive authority.

The picture on the next page shows a scheme of the municipal system of governing in El Alto to help the reader along with the study and the main actors of social control.

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THE ZONE

The practice of social control in the zone is strongly conditioned by the necessities of the residents and the competence of the junta. Demands must be pressured from the residents in each zone’s junta assembly to be properly attended to in the following stages of the process of social control. This space is therefore characterized by the relation between its two main actors, the resident and the junta president.

Necessities to Demand

The most urgent necessities in District 5 of El Alto concern employment, healthcare, education and basic services but these matters are not within the competence of the OTB's which are limited to using their POA budget exclusively for zonal public works like roads, pavements, street lighting, sewage canals, squares, junta centres and sporting facilities. While this work improves the zone's infrastructure much more is needed to really meet the residents' demands. A common practice is therefore to use other resources, like the HIPIC and IDH\textsuperscript{117} funds to fill out the gaps. The local authorities of the district usually distribute these funds at district assemblies. I will return to this later on. An important consequence of this informal way of financing their activities is that the marginal zones of the district that lack infrastructure and almost every basic necessity (from roads, pavements, sewage, public lighting, telephone lines, to running water and collective mobility) are strictly dependent on their relation to the local authorities. The reason for this is that the POA budget is based on the population size, that gets re-counted every decade, so all zones that are registered after 2001 have to wait until 2011 before they can enjoy a POA budget. This also means that POA budgets are generally insufficient considering the large population growth factor in El Alto. Junta presidents in these marginal zones are therefore pressured to find alternative ways of financing their activities and rely on help from neighbouring zones or NGOs operating in the area. Usually the residents finance the public works themselves. President of 3 de Mayo explains:

“There are currently 100 families in this zone. We do not enjoy resources like the HIPIC, IDH or POA. We just receive a little amount, say 5 to 10 thousand Bs\textsuperscript{118}. We have to suffer in order to get that amount despite paying taxes. Only the 30-year-old zones come out well enjoying all of the resources of the municipality. They have all basic services and the improvement of roads, we have nothing…and as a new migrant its even hard to find employment”.\textsuperscript{119}

\textsuperscript{117} HIPIC is the World Bank’s heavily indebted poor countries initiative and the IDH is the direct hydrocarbons tax. HIPIC is devised into healthcare (10 %), education (20 %) and productive and social infrastructure (70 %). IDH is exclusively for education.
\textsuperscript{118} Bolivianos, the bolivian currency.
\textsuperscript{119} Interview: 3 de Mayo.
The Junta Assembly

The junta assembly is the forum where residents express their concerns and discuss the necessities of the zone. These meetings are usually held in the main square of the zone or in a big open space, like a soccer field. Some juntas hold assemblies on a monthly basis, others depending on the need and demands of the residents. President of Urbanizacion Mercurio Plan 400 explains:

“It is generally in the junta assemblies where the residents voice their demands and we as representatives of the zones have the obligation to bring these demands to the district meetings to decide on collective approaches to these questions. We are spokespersons for the grass-roots demands and depend on our relation with the VCD, the participation of the FEJUVE executives and other presidents of the district we are able to support and solve these matters through the planning of the POA’s.”

The assembly follows a distinctive protocol but is dependent on the FEJUVE executives to validate the legitimacy of the resulting decisions, particularly regarding the electoral process of new directories. To be elected junta president some requirements must be met. According to the Statute of the FEJUVE the most important are: Not being a land or real estate speculator; Bolivian from birth; Resident in the zone for more than 5 years; Have completed military service; No party political affiliations, no previous convictions and not employed by the municipality. These requirements show the idiosyncrasy of alteños as well as the historic role of the junta as a form of protection against land speculation. Picture 7 and 6 in Appendix 4 show two junta presidents. One from a more developed central zone and the other from a marginal semi-rural zone.

Resident Control

The essential task of the junta directory regarding formal social control is to provide the amenities that can be petitioned for in the POA budget and to supervise the construction of them. It is the responsibility of the municipal government to approve the petitions and execute the work in a satisfactory matter. President of Complemento Mercurio explains:

“At this point we start to control the specifications of the public works and seek their completion. Some residents monitor the public works to see if for example the cement is fragile or the mix is good... [m]ost residents have experience in construction work as brick layers or welders so they know the quality of the public works.”

120 Interview: Urbanizacion Mercurio Plan 400.
121 Art. 79 Estatuto Organico (2001).
123 Interview: Complemento Mercurio.
According to the municipal laws residents have the right to benefit from public services and to demand the adequate operation of the same\textsuperscript{124}, but they also have a duty to contribute to the supervision of these services in the ambit of their zone and their municipal district.\textsuperscript{125} It is therefore crucial for the residents to know these rights in order to practice formal social control. The president of Villa Esperanza sums it up: “The best social control is from residents who know their rights”\textsuperscript{126} According to the presidents in my study, the level of knowledge has increased a lot in the last couple of years but is still, in their opinion, too low. The quotes below shows the varying answers I got from seven presidents.

“Only 10% know of their rights and practice them”\textsuperscript{127}

“In my zone there are responsible delegates that socialize social control, all residents know how much the POA budget is and what amount of public works the zone gets. That’s the way a transparent cooperation is achieved. Consequently 80% of my residents know their duties and their rights”\textsuperscript{128}

“Many residents, for personal reasons or due to work and domestic chores, aren’t up to date with the norms of social control, the ones that are informed are directly involved in syndical- or junta organization matters.” 129

“...thanks to the struggles they are immersed in the issue, and due to the results they understand them very well, they know how to practice the social conquest they won...there is consciousness among residents”\textsuperscript{130}

“The residents are informed of their rights and duties...but they only demand their rights forgetting about their obligations...this generates a problem when its time to control and care for the designated public works”\textsuperscript{131} “Only presidents practice social control, Maybe 5% of residents”\textsuperscript{132}

“My zone has 44 blocks with different street chiefs. And in the last 2 years there’s been a lot of movement concerning pavements, the junta has a operative arm called the public works’ committee consisting of 60 residents, so there exists maybe 60-70 % practice of social control among residents”\textsuperscript{133}

\textsuperscript{124} Art. 146, Law nr 2028 Ley de Municipalidades.
\textsuperscript{125} Art.148, Law nr 2028 Ley de Municipalidades.
\textsuperscript{126} Interview: Villa Esperanza.
\textsuperscript{127} Interview: Villa Ingenio 4:a sección.
\textsuperscript{128} Interview: Tupac Katari.
\textsuperscript{129} Interview: Villa Ingenio 1:a sección
\textsuperscript{130} Interview: Tahuantinsuyo.
\textsuperscript{131} Interview: Huayna Potosí.
\textsuperscript{132} Interview: German Busch.
\textsuperscript{133} Interview: Tupac Katari.
Internal Dynamics

While some presidents are apprehensive of the rights of the residents others profit from their ignorance. As one resident told me “There is no confidence among residents because most presidents work for their personal interests and profit on fines they impose for not attending meetings.” 134 When visiting a zone I observed this. The president summoned residents to the head office at weekends to collect fines for not attending junta assemblies. They had to pay all the fines to be able to obtain a certificate for the gas company to install gas pipes to their houses. These types of methods are widely practised by junta directories throughout El Alto and are often used to compensate for the unpaid directory work. This issue is not determined by the LPP nor the Statute of the FEJUVE but is a compromise within each junta. It can therefore also be understood as a form of collective control to ensure every resident's participation in junta matters. The president of Urbanizacion Mercurio Plan 400 points out that she wants to have a clear conscience and not be accused of demanding money from her junta. That is why all participation is voluntary. “[I]t gives me more legitimacy…”, she says. 135 The residents of her zone also demand that she accounts for all expenses. “It is the most direct way for the residents to control the directories...they have learned from past mistakes and demand frequent accountability for budget plans and expenses...the past directory didn’t account for 6 years of POA expenditures, that’s why the residents demanded their replacement”. 136

Other juntas like Rio Extranca and 8 de Septiembre have assemblies each year when rendition is accounted for and the directory is evaluated and ratified. 137 The president of Rio Extranca continues, “It’s important that all matters are approved by consensus to avoid presidents just improving their own street”. 138 This shows that juntas are fairly independent and flexible regarding the Statute of the FEJUVE that establishes a presidential term of 2 years after which a complete report of all expenditures should be presented in the junta assembly. If everything is approved they are authorized for a re-election. 139

Concluding Comments

Social control in the zonal area is strongly conditioned by the participatory structure of the junta, the level of knowledge among residents and the limitations of the municipal system. The problems of transparency and accountability are evident as no legal obligations are imposed on the

134 Interview: Anonymous
135 Interview: Urbanizacion Mercurio Plan 400.
136 Ibid.
137 Interview: Rio extranca and 8 de Septiembre
138 Interview: Rio extranca.
139 Art. 78 Estatuto Organico (2001).
directories. This has a negative influence on participatory factors resulting in the verticalization of the juntas. Furthermore, residents are limited by the municipal system to only having influence over POA petitioned public works and their supervision. This further reduces the incentives for participation as more important necessities and demands lie elsewhere. Another conclusion we can draw is that the POA is inequitably distributed as the more developed zones get more of the POA budget, when they already have had the most important infrastructural work done, leaving the marginal zones undeveloped for lack of financing. The development becomes even more irrational as junta directories have to invest their POA budgets on squares, sporting facilities and other public works that does not improve the residents' living conditions. This situation leads to further distancing of the residents from the junta.

The most obvious finding in this area is that formal social control only concerns work that is approved in the POA budget and the problems obtaining them. This results in the unbalanced and irrational prioritizing of roads, pavements, street lighting, sports fields and junta centres and the neglect of more important amenities like basic services, transportation and security. Informal social control on the other hand takes care of these problems and others outside junta matters like healthcare, employment and education, but these matters are usually handled in the district and the municipal space. This can explain why the majority of residents have little knowledge of their legal rights as members of the OTBs.

The picture below shows a very telling picture of the situation in El Alto. A big, but empty square, an unfinished basketball field, the junta office and a Cuban healthcare centre.
THE DISTRICT

The practice of social control in the district area is characterized by the relation between the so-called local authorities and the junta presidents of each zone. This area is the main focus of my study because it represents the arena where juntas interact and consequently develop internal hierarchies, political power struggles, conflicts and problems in both dimensions of social control.

The main finding in this area is the unanimous rejection of formal social control as a functioning system of supervision and accountability by all my study subjects.

Local Authorities

The positions of the VCD, the Sub Mayor and the FEJUVE executives are commonly known as local authorities by the residents of District 5. The first two are required from each district by municipal law and the third is part of the organizational structure of the federation of juntas. The instalment of these positions is thus a formal and informal procedure and this is evident in the electoral process that follows indigenous communal traditions of rotating leaderships and collective deliberation. Each side of the district is entitled to either one of the positions.

The electoral process is held, as all matters between juntas, in district assemblies usually at the Sub Mayor's office, a closed down factory in the heart of the district. According to the Statute of the FEJUVE, district assemblies are to be held every six months to evaluate the work and achievements of the elected local authorities, but the actual situation can vary as all 11 districts of El Alto have their own way of organizing among juntas and electing their delegates.

The Sub Mayor is the municipal government’s representative in the district. This local authority is a junta president elected in accordance with the Statute of the FEJUVE by the other presidents of the district but designated by the Mayor of El Alto and therefore employed by the municipality as district administrator. His/Her job is to: supervise public services; coordinate and participate in the formulation of POA petitions by consulting the juntas; present reports to the mayor on the progress of the POA petitions and to administer the district's designated resources and account for expenditure. This position is problematic according to my study subjects who described the role as contradictory. President of Huayna Potosi sección 2 explains:

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141 Art. 54 Ley no. 2028 Ley de Municipalidades.
142 Ibid.
“He is elected by the juntas and should represent the juntas, but legally and practically he represents the municipal government because they pay his salary.”\textsuperscript{143}

The sub mayor of District 5 did not have much influence over the other local authorities and was consequently responsible for more administrative tasks and the management of heavy machinery like tractors and trucks used to pave new roads. A very difficult and criticized task because there are only three machines for the 50 zones of the district. As the president of Complejo German Busch points out:

“\textit{We have been waiting a year since we applied to get heavy machinery and he hasn’t responded. It seems that the machinery only is destined for his personal friends…}”\textsuperscript{144}

The VCD is the most influential actor in the district. He administers the districts resources and approves the petitions for zonal public works by signing them, an informal function that is not laid down by the municipal law but collectively decided on by the district in accordance with the uses and customs of the juntas. His position is at the top of the hierarchy and thus subject to a lot of the problems and conflicts I will cover in the study of this area of social control activity.

The remaining local authority positions belong to the junta presidents who hold executive positions in the FEJUVE. They have the duty to approve and sign the POA petitions after the VCD. Furthermore, they are influential when dealing with the FEJUVE matters in the district and also assist junta assemblies to supervise the conduct of directory elections, conflicts between juntas as well as other matters regarding the norms of the FEJUVE. In the time of my study there were 5 executives of the FEJUVE in District 5.\textsuperscript{145}

\textbf{Cooperation and Division}

The day-to-day work of most junta presidents consists essentially in getting zonal public works done. This means having good relations with the VCD and other presidents, to giving and receiving favors in order to maintain an unproblematic source of income. Usually this requires a great deal of pragmatism and diplomacy to avoid conflicts with neighbouring zones or local authorities. “You only make enemies waving laws and statues around”\textsuperscript{146} comments the president of Urbanizacion Mercurio Plan 400 with resentment. She continues:

“[T]here are many ways to trip when attending to the demands of the residents. We

\textsuperscript{143} Interview: Huayna Potosí 2:a sección.
\textsuperscript{144} Interview: Complejo German Busch.
\textsuperscript{145} Interview: 8 de Septiembre.
\textsuperscript{146} Interview: Urbanizacion Mercurio plan 400.
have to meet difficult requirements and deal with various bureaucratic procedures simultaneously. We just have to do it and learn on the way. The important thing is to stay optimistic.”

The president of Complemento Mercurio continues describing his experience:

“[W]e have to have good relations with the VCD and know how much is allocated to us, otherwise the money goes elsewhere…It's a difficult relationship, one must ask nicely, not demand…On the other hand, junta presidents that insist on their demands enjoy more benefits. One must simply be persistent.”

Experience is a crucial factor that explains why some presidents stay in power for so long. It is difficult to start from scratch without know-how and functioning networks.

Another consequence of the municipal laws is that juntas become more concerned with developing their own zone instead of cooperating with others to find collective solutions. The president of Urbanizacion Mercurio Plan 400 describes her situation:

“In the case of my zone we already have all basic services, but neighbouring zones do not. And they have the right from the fiscal contributions to get basic services and sewage for example, so we should help them out … because the fact that my zone has all services doesn’t mean that we won’t need their help in the future. So we have concluded that it’s better to work collectively, even if there is a notion of working alone in order to find the right people to facilitate this process. We can contribute with what we can and complement each other…District 5 lacks interrelations with public functionaries because we are not technicians, we realize now that we need to have good relations in order to benefit all zones. Good cooperation is important to be able to attend the demands of our residents.

Other forms of cooperation between zones are the district assembly resolutions collectively agreed upon to help out poorly developed zones with the HIPIC fund. The president of Tupac Katari explains:

“We passed a resolution in the district assembly to help zones with little resources by re-distributing the HIPIC fund, but when we reviewed the documentation we saw that this decision which we previously agreed upon was altered. The VCD doesn’t comply with what the assembly determines. Only juntas with good relations with the VCD get help. It has turned in to a plundering campaign. To be ratified they [local authorities] chose certain juntas and offer bribes in order to stay in power.”

Clientelism in all forms of governing is a serious problem at all levels of society. Especially in

147 Ibid.
148 Interview: Complemento Mercurio.
149 Ibid.
150 Interview: Urbanizacion Mercurio plan 400.
151 Interview: 8 de Septiembre.
152 Interview: Tupac Katari.
countries like Bolivia with a weak state that has not been able to develop a functioning social apparatus. The situation in El Alto is no different making bribes part of the rules of the game. Local authorities take advantage of their privileged positions by bribing junta presidents to get political support in order to uphold their privileges. This has consequently resulted in the division of the district. As I described before, the river Río Seco marks a division between the more established and influential central zones on the west side and the newer and poorly developed zones on the east side of the river. This breach has grown as a result of the last district elections of the VCD and sub mayor. The president of Villa Esperencia recalls, “The district is divided because the VC and the sub mayor were not elected by the majority”. There was a power struggle between various fronts in the election and this was apparent in all my interviews. Presidents were either discreetly in favour or openly against depending on their relation with the local authorities. Although many were distrustful they also showed gratitude for what they got from the VCD without questioning the origins of the money. As the president of 8 de Septiembre tells me:

“the VCD helps out a lot… I got a 15 000 Bs for a pavement job. But we don’t know where the money comes from, maybe from the IDH fund.”

The president of Nueva Asuncion confirms that the VCD takes advantage of the poor knowledge of the HIPIC and the IDH funds to buy political support to stay in power. The president of Huayna Potosi 2:a sección is also distrustful commenting that the sub mayor only attends the zones on his side of the river. The president of Complemento Mercurio continues explaining that in the next term the VCD and sub mayor will change sides. Pointing out that the less developed east side has gained influence with the system of alternating sides. “Before the richer side was always in power.”

The president of Puerto Mejillones describes the situation as a political game between local authorities to stay in power for personal interests. The president of 3 de Mayo continues “[We have] little confidence in them… There will always be corruption if there is no transparency”. The president of Huayna Potosi also expresses resentment over the biased support of the VCD pointing out the distributing functions as problematic.

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153 Interview: Villa Esperanza.
154 Interview: 8 de Septiembre.
155 Interview: Nueva Asuncion.
156 Interview: Huayna Potosi 2:a sección.
157 Interview: Complemento Mercurio.
158 Interview: Puerto Mejillones.
159 Interview: 3 de Mayo
“The VCD, as the body distributing resources does not coordinating well with all juntas, there is no equity in the distribution and some zones benefit more because they support him…there exists discrimination because he isn't fulfilling the distribution nor the social control of the designated public works as he should”\textsuperscript{160}

This explains why the VCD and the other local authorities benefit so much from their position, they have the power to approve or disapprove all petitions to the POA by the action of signing the acts before they get sent to the municipal government.\textsuperscript{161}

**Distribution of Resources**

The customary way of elaborating the POA budget petitions in District 5 deviates from the intended procedures according to the municipal laws. Firstly, the VCD distribute the corresponding POA budgets and other funds to each president at the district assembly. Secondly, the presidents decide with their junta what public works to petition for. Thirdly, all petitions in the district are approved by consensus and with the “good view” of the local authorities. Meaning the signing of the acts by the VCD and then by the other local authorities.\textsuperscript{162} The president of Rio Extranca explains:

“[the VCD] administrates, he doesn’t have it in cash, the budget roofs are in the charts. He just administrators the distribution by informing each zone of how much they get.\textsuperscript{163}

The president of 8 de Septiembre continues:

“[The VCD is then] the one to sign all the petition acts, he gives good view, the FEJUVE executive also signs, both have to approve.”\textsuperscript{164}

Social control has improved since 1996, according to the president of Tahuantinsuyo. Before the money went directly to the VCD and he distributed it as he saw convenient, but now “we know that it’s dependent on the population of each zone”.\textsuperscript{165} The president of Urbanizacion Mercurio Plan 400 concludes:

“The VCD’s only obligation is to supervise the execution of zonal public works…not like it has become, by use and customs, that he has the power to sign the acts of every petition, it doesn’t say so in the LPP, he only has to push, keep an eye on and supervise…its backward…and if the VCD doesn’t sign them no one else will …it’s the uses and customs not the law…the law is applied when it suits them, when it

\textsuperscript{160} Interview: Huayna Potosí 1:a sección
\textsuperscript{161} Interview: 8 de Septiembre
\textsuperscript{162} Interview: Rio extranca
\textsuperscript{163} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{164} Interview: 8 de Septiembre.
\textsuperscript{165} Interview: Tahuantinsuyo.
doesn’t other norms are applied to benefit their personal interests.”

Clique of Local Authorities

The vertical relation between local authorities and junta presidents in District 5 is evident. Some describe the local authorities as a “clique” with an underlying political agenda to stay in power. The case of the Urbanizacion Mercurio plan 400 shows a clear example of the how the personal interests of this clique can override the municipal laws and even the norms of the juntas. The president of Urbanizacion Mercurio plan 400 relates:

“At that particular time the local authorities of the district had a special relationship with the junta president of my zone and didn’t approve of the decision we collectively made in the junta to oust him due to acts of corruption. They brought the matter to the district assembly and acted above the law, freezing the budget for my zone, with a verbal petition. This stopped all planned public works in my zone for 17 months. We were, just a few weeks ago, able to unfreeze our budget…Our relationship with the VCD has not been good, because we know what they where doing was totally illegal, one can’t freeze zonal budgets according to the law, except when there is a jurisdictional problem…so what [the local authorities] did was to create a fictional problem asserting the old directories' legitimacy to claim jurisdiction over the zone. But we were the current elected directory with the majority of support from the residents. The supporters of the old president were a mob that even threatened the president of the FEJUVE with hanging if he didn’t comply…So he went for the first time to my junta assembly, where the old president and his group also attended and saw that I had the residents' support…So a resolution was passed announcing me to be the only representative of the zone. After this I became confident so I reported the incident to the vice ministry of Popular Participation that sent a warning letter to the VCD and this made him tremble, so the matter was settled with support from other presidents who realized the injustice of my situation… This case was a clear manipulation by a group of people with influence that wanted free housing, which they could only get from the old president. For that sole reason they froze the budget”

She continues.

“The biggest risk of being president against the will of those who benefit a lot from their position was to my life. Our directorial counterpart didn’t just pose threats, they found out about my personal details. They even followed and persecuted me…I have the right to be very resentful over their actions but it is crucial for the development of my zone that I try to build good relations…I should audit the VCD for what he did to our budget. And demand explanations of where the money has gone because it’s our tax revenue. To date we haven’t got a dime, it’s important to know what the VCD has done with our share because we have reason to believe that other zones were benefited…I asked the municipality for an extract from the budget detailing how much money was designated for my zone, but only the neighboring zone, Villa Mercurio was registered, we think that is where the money has gone.”

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166 Interview: Urbanizacion Mercurio plan 400.
167 Interview: Complejo German Busch.
168 Interview: Urbanizacion Mercurio Plan 400
Evaluation of Formal Social Control in D5

All presidents I interviewed evaluated the results of formal social control as unsatisfactory. Everybody was fairly consistent about the VCD and the sub mayors work also being unsatisfactory, although support for them shifted among junta presidents. The main reason for this is lack of communication and cooperation. The Statute of the FEJUVE and the municipal laws state that all actors have to send reports frequently to stay informed and updated, but this is not followed through. “The truth is that after a year in management we have not received any reports from the VCD or the FEJUVE”\textsuperscript{169} claims the president of Tupac Katari and the other presidents affirm this:

“At the moment we haven’t seen any information from the FEJUVE, this is the worst management in a long time…and the VCD too…no information”\textsuperscript{170}

“Everybody sees to their own interests with no regard to the resolutions approved in district assemblies, the statues of the juntas or the law.”\textsuperscript{171}

“There is no coordination, everybody works in isolation. There’s no direct way of disseminating information and communicating between VCD and presidents. The FEJUVE also work by themselves…”\textsuperscript{172}

“There are no rapports from the VCD, nor from the FEJUVE”\textsuperscript{173}

The main coordination problem is lack of communication between the VCD and the juntas. The president of German Busch explains:

“The VCD is not likely to rapport on changes in the budget if it doesn’t benefit his interests. There is no information on behalf of the VCD about the amount and the quantity of public works in the district.”\textsuperscript{174}

The VCD is according to the corresponding norms obliged to inform the presidents of all matters concerning social control and other common issues on a regular basis. This is seldom done according to the presidents. Apart from obvious reasons of malpractice some presidents claim that the VCD is not likely to inform them on matters that do not benefit him because he wants to stay in control of the finances.\textsuperscript{175} The president of Huayna Potosi 2:a sección continues:

“The current VCD is similar to the others as he informs us via bulletins of our budget...

\textsuperscript{169} Interview: Tupac Katari
\textsuperscript{170} Interview: Villa Ingavi
\textsuperscript{171} Interview: Nueva Asuncion
\textsuperscript{172} Interview: Villa Ingenio 1:a sección
\textsuperscript{173} Interview: Villa Ingenio 4:a sección
\textsuperscript{174} Interview: German Busch
\textsuperscript{175} Interview: Huayna Potosi.
and about the public works. The bulletin comes every 6 months, I don’t know if all zones get one. We do”\textsuperscript{176}

The president of German Busch concludes that “not all records of the POA budget designated to this district are mentioned, nor the amount of public works…we have good personal relations but regarding social control there is no complete report from the VCD”\textsuperscript{177} and puts it bluntly:

“There are no results. Social control has failed in the municipality. Juntas, the VCD and the FEJUVE do as they please”.\textsuperscript{178}

The president of Villa Ingavi agrees:

“We are seeing that the VCD is not fulfilling his duty entrusted by the juntas,…that there is no social control of public works and economic matters of the municipal government…that the VC is working with half of its potential ….but I think it’s the same in the majority of districts”\textsuperscript{179}

The president of Villa Ingenio 4:a sección continues :

“The VCD has many errors and doesn’t work with social control as he should. He should be up to date with all the district's acts and coordinate with the mayor's office for every zonal matter.”\textsuperscript{180}

**Concluding Comments**

As we have seen there are considerable problems among junta presidents in the district area. There is a local authoritarianism that determines the funding of public works, the coordination and cooperation among juntas and the transparency of administrative activity. Some cases even show criminal practices by cliques that are formed by local authorities. The evaluation of formal social control by the majority of District 5’s presidents shows a bitter and almost resentful attitude towards the incompetence of the mechanisms of formal social control. Junta presidents are conditioned by limiting possibilities when fulfilling the functions attributed to them by the LPP, resulting in a pragmatic attitude towards the possibilities to meet the demands from below because uses, customs and the internal dynamics of presidential relations determine the results of their work. The breach of influence between residents and president becomes even wider considering the vertical relations to local authorities. This has caused a division of the district that is fuelled by bribes from local authorities to maintain support so they can benefit from the re-distribution of financial resources

\textsuperscript{176} Interview: Huayna Potosi 2:a sección.
\textsuperscript{177} Interview: German Busch.
\textsuperscript{178} Ibid
\textsuperscript{179} Interview: Villa Ingavi.
\textsuperscript{180} Interview: Villa Ingenio 4:a sección
and the administration of the districts public services.

These informal methods of redistribution can on the other hand be useful for a more equitable distribution of resources considering the inequalities of the POA budget requirements. Within each district presidents can decide to help out juntas by taking funds from zones that already have all the basic services to assist poorer ones. They can even act outside the norms of the FEJUVE for the benefit of the collective majority.\textsuperscript{181} But all this depends on the cooperation between juntas, presidents and local authorities.

**THE MUNICIPALITY**

Social control at municipal level has two main actors, the Vigilance Committee of El Alto and the FEJUVE. The dual dynamics of formal and informal social control become even clearer in this area as the practice of social control becomes strictly divided between a formal and an informal actor. The first one is a product of the LPP with no solid connection or role in civil society and the other, the juntas own federation. This results in the predominance of informal social control as the FEJUVE becomes the most influential representative of the juntas. Pressure actions have come to be the most common form of attending demands for better basic services, sewage, transport and residential security due to the limited possibilities of formal social control to solely supervise public works. But this is by no means an easy solution as the efficiency of social control becomes the outcome of the residents' level of influence over an organizational structure that encompasses about 570 juntas and has conflicts and problems in all the areas we have described. The directory of the FEJUVE was at the time of my study, highly questioned by the majority of residents and presidents I interviewed.

The president of Huayna Potosi 2:a sección summarizes the main finding in this area:

“To practice real social control all organizations should know their obligations, like the LM and the LPP, but neither the VCD nor the Sub Mayor consider achieving this because we as social organizations are already a part of [informal] social control. We only have [formal] social control in theory, so the VCD’s functions have resulted in the redistribution of resources, nothing more”\textsuperscript{182}

This statement shows how the juntas' role hasn’t really changed with the institutionalization of their functions of social control and explains why informal social control is the predominate function of the juntas.

\textsuperscript{181} Interview: Cuellar (March 13, 2008).
\textsuperscript{182} Interview: Huayna Potosi 2:a sección
Pressure Actions

“The only method of social control that works is pressure actions. As residents we are tired of the bureaucratic process of the municipality. A month ago we were opting for a blockade of the Mayor’s office if he didn’t pay attention to our zone…the municipal authorities only function when pressured.”\textsuperscript{183}

“Pressure actions are the most effective strategies for the moment … We always go to the local authorities to organize a decision on how to apply pressure for the realization of postponed public works. There is unfortunately a lot of bureaucracy in the central and municipal governments so we try to interrelate with the VCD and the FEJUVE to work for an integrated effort.”\textsuperscript{184}

As these statements show my subjects all agree that pressure actions are effective. The process pressuring on public and private officials is according to Carlos Rojas, junta president and former executive of the FEJUVE, initiated by a demand or a claim from the residents to the junta. The junta president then channels it to the district assembly where a resolution is formed to be presented at the general assembly of all the juntas of El Alto. A decision is then made to proceed with the demand to the authority in question if all juntas are affected, if not the particular junta or district in question continues by itself. If the authorities give a negative response an initial discussion begins on what collective challenge strategy to proceed with. Usually a demonstration, and if that is unsuccessful a hunger strike. If these two strategies do not suffice the last alternative is the blockade of roads and highways. About 60 percent of these actions lead to a compromise between the FEJUVE and the authorities in question, the rest lead to a direct solution of the demands. The initial response from the municipal government is always to postpone the demand because this causes the actions to lose their momentum and forces the initiating junta to start over again. It is therefore a continuous political struggle that determines the end result.\textsuperscript{185}

Pressure Actions in District 5

As I recalled in the introduction of this chapter, the first district assembly I attended in District 5 was initiated by grass roots’ demands to prevent an increase of the electricity tariff. The assembly was going to decide on how to continue their pressure actions campaign against the service provider, ELECTROPAZ. A week earlier the juntas had clashed with the police in a demonstration outside the offices of ELECTROPAZ in La Paz. A second demonstration was now being planned but to the ELECTROPAZ offices in El Alto. The president of Urbanizacion Mercurio plan 400 explains the situation:

\textsuperscript{183} Interview: German Busch.  
\textsuperscript{184} Interview: Urbanizacion Mercurio plan 400.  
\textsuperscript{185} Interview: Rojas (March 24, 2008).
“All problems that emerge from the necessities of the residents and the population as a whole and affect the community on a macro level, like for example the rise of water and gas tariffs, are dealt with by the juntas by means of pressure. In the last campaign against ELECTROPAZ we obtained half of our demands but unfortunately not the issue on tariffs…We are presently handling the EPSAS [water and sewage provider] matter the same way. Here, elevated costs and unjustified water cuts have been the result of the opening of new trenches. We are seeking a dialogue with this last company but if this doesn’t resolve the problem the grass roots will demand pressure actions. This is the only way for us to get heard. Just opting for a constructive dialogue with the company is not that feasible.”

Another issue advanced in the assembly was the problems with the municipal provider of garbage disposal. A matter that was directly connected with the electricity tariffs as both services are paid with the same bill. The president of 3 de Mayo explains:

“These services [garbage disposal] don’t come here, we have been paying for eight years but no one comes. This concerns the residents and should be analysed because the bill steadily rises. Before it was 12 dollars for a metric ton and then it went up to 17 dollars. Now they are talking of 39 dollars for a service that isn’t fully provided in most districts. It’s too expensive.”

The president of Rio Extranca continues:

“The contract for the city's garbage disposal is currently being discussed by the municipal government and executives of the FEJUVE in a private meeting outside of El Alto. We are demanding that an open meeting should be held in the city, with the presence of all social organizations. The current company TREBOL, is about to prolong their contract for a 10-year period and wants the meeting to be held behind closed doors so they can bribe themselves to the contract. How can we expect our leaders to practice social control if they're getting bribes from the same company they are suppose to control. That's why District 4 is asking to manage their own garbage. The head of the FEJUVE has asked them not to sign any contracts before we can demand they lower the price. Corruption is unfortunately widespread and impossible to control when contracts are given to garbage companies, the same as with construction firms...so the only way to benefit is to demand cheaper services.”

**Evaluation of Informal Social Control in District 5**

Transparency is vital to the process of informal social control as executives of the FEJUVE and other highly positioned members of social organizations are involved in the process of demanding better services in direct negotiation with public and private officials. The Gas War and similar events have shown that unless there is pressure from below that radicalizes the position of directory they easily become co-opted. The current directory of the FEJUVE was rumoured to have various

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186 Interview: Urbanizacion Mercurio plan 400.
187 Interview: 3 de Mayo
188 Interview: Rio extranca.
arrangements under the table with the mayor and consequently unable to meet grass roots’ demands. This situation was particularly evident in District 5 as the head of the FEJUVE was a well known junta president from the district. President of Huayna Potosi 1:a sección explains:

“He has done almost nothing for El Alto and particularly the district despite our struggles as the vanguard of the Gas War. The FEJUVE has lost its leading role of before. Even though he represents our district he hasn’t attended to our demands and we are all dissatisfied.”

This was the general opinion and no junta president was shy about it even if they also were executives in the directory of the FEJUVE. They all expressed dissatisfaction with the current leadership when compared with the earlier and more efficient leaderships of 2003/2005 and 2005/2007. Picture 5 in Appendix 4 shows the offices of the FEJUVE in La Ceja, with graffiti on the wall expressing this dissatisfaction.

Maximized Social Control

“In the former terms of 2003 and 2005 all residents participated not only the FEJUVE. The whole population went out voluntarily to recover the gas reserves…the FEJUVE was the protagonist in the beginning but with time residents participated directly.”

The period from 2003 to 2006 with the Gas War and the ousting of Aguas del Illimani, shows examples of direct participation from residents in open general assemblies, which is according to Rojas, maximized social control. “Not delegated through the VC and behind closed doors like the current administration of the FEJUVE”. Open assemblies were at that time demanded by the residents so that there was open negotiation with central government for everyone to see and participate in. Making decision transparent and democratic. If leaders intended to have internal negotiations the grass roots immediately reacted, censuring the leadership and making it impossible for them to proceed. The residents even formed negotiating committees to control the negotiations. There was constant mediation with the grass roots that the directories were forced to concede to. The ideal form of social control is, according to Rojas, open assemblies appointed in the legal system as the highest instance of decision where both residents and the junta president contribute. The current delegated system does not result in changes that improve the living conditions of the population. In the same way, the FEJUVE should show complete transparency with all decisions. Not like the current directory that is biased in the garbage disposal issue, for example, and totally engaged with the rise of prices against the interests of the people.

189 Interview: Huayna Potosi 1:a sección
190 Interview: Rojas (March 24, 2008).
191 Headed by the FEJUVE and similar to the Water war of Cochabamba
192 Interview: Rojas (March 24, 2008).
Picture 9 in Appendix 4 shows how the VCD and residents of District 4 demand the Mayor of El Alto and representatives of the contracted firm to finish the road on time. An example of an open meeting held in the zone for everybody to participate in.

**Grass roots’ Accountability**

Carmiña Moscoso, freelance reporter in El Alto describes informal social control as the potential of the grass roots to oust their leaders if they do not behave according to the collective interests. Junta presidents and other social organization authorities in El Alto are aware of the pressure from below and know they can be easily substituted if they behave too greedily or do not deliver. An example is the former head of the FEJUVE Abel Mamani who ran a successful election campaign, but when he became a minister for the central government he was not well received in El Alto because they saw that he used his position in the FEJUVE to aspire for a political career.

As demands for basic services like a water supply, electricity and garbage disposal are determined by the municipality and dealt with outside of the jurisdiction of the POA, the juntas have become more and more political and begun to pressure authorities higher up in the governing hierarchies to listen to the grass roots' demands. The Gas War is a perfect example of how a symbolic issue concerning all Bolivians was advanced as a demand and propelled by the grass roots. This transformed the juntas into a radical political force similar to other social movements in the country that contested the neoliberal system. Furthermore it was the northern most impoverished sectors of the population that led the political struggle not the more educated middle-class sectors as one could expect. The demands were therefore not strategically planned with political goals aiming for a new government with viable alternatives. It was later on when the struggle spread to the rest of the country that the October agenda came into being, demanding the resignation of the president, no sales of gas and the constitutive assembly. The FEJUVE was forced to respond to the push from below. To the point of loosing control over the juntas when the situation became more intense. A lot of junta presidents were afraid to go out, and were forced to participate as the residents dragged them out on the street. If they did not assume their positions as leaders they would be expelled from El Alto. A telling figure is that among all the victims of the Gas War - over 70 - nobody was a president or part of a junta directory authority. This led to the residents not fearing repression. Those who were afraid were the ones that had something to loose. The authorities of the juntas, the FEJUVE and other social organizations in El Alto. That is why there has not been an organizational change in the structure of the FEJUVE or the juntas in general. The sporadic leaderships that were

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193 Interview: Cuellar (March 13, 2008).
194 The resolution passed in the hight of the Gas war.
formed in the Gas War returned to their daily lives and the old presidents returned to their positions at the top. The most significant outcome of the Gas War was the emancipatory process that begun making the residents more confident in their potential to surpass the directories and show the whole country and governments that if the same thing occurred again El Alto was going to answer with the proven force.\textsuperscript{195}

**Concluding Comments**

To conclude this section I will quote President of Villa Esperanza, a Political Scholar who gives an appealing analysis of the institutionalization of social control.

“The LPP has two general results. It has been used effectively too benefit a few and it has helped to articulate the social forces orienting them to: Question the creators of the LPP; To understand their rights as citizens; To contribute to change and to strive for more participation in the governing spheres. Leading the practice of social control to include the control of central government. In these times of change the LPP is still valid but has adapted itself to these new conditions. Formal social control is limited to the vigilance and supervision of public works proposed in the POA. But the municipal government has ultimately the power to administrate and execute these public works. All we can do is to watch and protest.”\textsuperscript{196}

He continues:

“There is a chance to recover the capacities and conquests of the LPP in order to propose profound changes in the law that enables true participation. The period from 2003 onwards is not something that rose out of the moment, but a latent, permanent resistance that has been formed towards the State since the beginning of the juntas history. Although we lack the leadership to propel this movement to national power there is great potential for societal transformation among the residents. We have to be a significant part of this process of change to reconstruct and bring forth a fundamental transformation. If the current government takes this course we are willing to support it. But they also have to take constructive criticism and hear what we have to say. The VC has brought more corruption distributing the money from the POA’s to benefit their interests. We try to make a more equitable distribution so juntas with less resources can benefit.”\textsuperscript{197}

\textsuperscript{195} Interview: Moscoso (February 15, 2008).
\textsuperscript{196} Interview: Villa Esperanza
\textsuperscript{197} Ibid.
SUMMARY

The main finding of my case study on the Juntas Vecinales of El Alto is that their role in civil society as supervisors of public policies and private services has not changed with the institutionalization of social control. The efficiency and results of their work is still conditioned by the level of participation and influence of the residents over the directories to make them listen to grassroots demands.

The limited possibility within the legal framework to influence public policy has resulted in a weak form of formal social control merely concerned with the unjust and sometimes irrational supervision of the completion of public works that bring some infrastructural benefits like roads and street lighting, but do not address more important and urgent necessities like basic services. These limitations have within the formal sphere of social control resulted in a unanimous rejection of the Vigilance Committee as an institution of supervision and social control by all actors within my study. The incompetence and inefficacy of formal social control has therefore contributed to the juntas use of informal social control as the only way of responding to their grassroots demands. Pressure actions are therefore still the most common method of social control.

We have also seen that the interrelation of juntas in the district area is plagued with conflicts and struggles to gain political influence as local authorities, informal positions in the organizational structure of juntas that have benefited the most from the institutionalizations of social control as they have become the re-distributors of the district’s financial and material resources. Local authorities have even been able to form cliques that conduct activities outside the legal and normative framework of the municipal laws and the Statute of the juntas. These problems have resulted in a vertical relation between residents, presidents and local authorities.
The objective of this paper was to determine the role of the juntas as partly institutionalized civil society actors in the social and political context of Bolivia today. The actions that determine this role are, as we have seen throughout my study, marked by the formal and informal activities of social control, a repertoire of collective actions influenced by their historical role in El Alto and the legal functions attributed to them by the LPP. The accountability function of social control is crucial for any democratic system of governance, but the institutionalization of this function as the planning of public works and the supervision of them by the VC has, as my study shows, been completely inefficient and non participative. The informal methods of pressure actions tied to the traditional collective action repertoire of the juntas have therefore prevailed as the most competent way of defending the best interests of the residents of El Alto.

These findings can be interpreted according to my theoretical approach and the contextual background of my study in the following way.

The process of societal change in Bolivia today can be seen as a re-foundation of this Andean nation. The indigenous majority has for the first time in history gained political power through their own grassroots movements propelling a democratic revolution that is creating a new society with new actors and a new political agenda. A significant factor driving this new political process is the collective identity the poor majority share in various levels of culture, ethnicity and social class. El Alto and the juntas portray a telling example of this factor that can be interpreted as one of Tarrow’s prerequisites for social movements, the deeply rooted consensus among its members. The other prerequisites have also relevance in the juntas as they have informal social control as collective challenges, a common purpose in their demands and sustaining collective action from their historical role in El Alto. According to my theoretical approach, social movements are part of a continuing political process of demand-making in the dynamic interaction between civil society and the state. This political process is in the case of the juntas illustrated by the informal methods of social control, apparent in the Gas War and by their continuous pressure actions against local public service providers and the municipal government. The reason for this is that demands of the juntas have become more and more political because of the limitations of the formal methods of participation and political influence. The demands have changed from material (improving public services) to political or legal, as they now claim political inclusiveness and citizenship rights in order to attend the necessities of the residents.
The formal branch of social control concerned with the material demands is a product of neoliberal inspired decentralization reforms that have failed to empower the OTB's in order for them to plan and control their own development. The juntas have no say in matters concerned with basic services and other necessities in their zones. They are limited to the planning of public works and their supervision by a weak and inefficient VC that doesn't bring any results. The traditional informal methods of social control have therefore existed beside the legal rights and obligations of the junta's enabling them to pressure for their material demands as well as their political demands. The grassroots of the juntas are strongly identified with the political struggle of other social movements opposing neoliberal policies and have consequently pressured their own leadership to take more radical political positions. The juntas are because of their organizational structure and number ideal for political mobilization as the Gas War illustrates, transforming them into territorial micro-governments with a political force strong enough to bring down governments.

Within the decentralization discourse, the concepts of Social- and Downward Accountability relate to the junta's social control in many aspects, but pre-consider that the leaders of social organizations are accountable to the demands of the members, neglecting the internal dynamics of these organizations and the social and political context they function in. My case study clearly shows the complex dynamics of the sometimes conflicting interests of the grassroots and the leaderships. This is evident in all three spaces of social control activity. I believe that this outcome has been influenced by the numerous flaws and incompetence of the decentralization reforms that haven't provided the right legal tools for a real participatory process that would enable an effective control over public policies. The LPP was designed by technocrats in accordance with the decentralization discourse of the time and worked great in theory as part of a functionalist development of the neoliberal system in tune with the modern/traditional dichotomy I described earlier. However, it was not designed with the intentions of challenging the existing power structures within Bolivian society that uphold the historical conditions of inequality and injustice between the rich elite and the poor majority. It was also implemented “from above” without grassroots support and previous work with the organizations that were going to be the protagonists of this participatory process. Many actors within civil society saw it as a political strategy too divide and conquer the existing popular forces that were the strongest opponents to the neoliberal agenda. This has direct relevance with my case study as the consolidation of the VC as the only actor of formal social control has weakened the strength of the juntas and thus the possibilities of the residents to participate and supervise public policies. The LPP has therefore fomented the previous clientelistic relation between the top of the juntas and the municipal governments continuing the verticalization of the organizational structure.
of the juntas and the political status quo in the municipality. This has left the residents no choice but to continue pressuring through informal means, demanding political rights. Not solely to improve the mechanisms of accountability and participation, but to gain levels of empowerment that can bring forth societal change. An objective that has always been part of the indigenous community’s process of emancipation. This political standpoint has furthermore shown the potential of the junta’s collective and transparent ways of making decisions that enables direct participation of the residents, maximizing social control.

My case study on the juntas of District 5 presents a lot of interesting findings that can be generalized to represent all juntas of El Alto. Specific problems in the zone and the district will obviously differ as well as the organizational structures and the levels of resident participation. The conditions are however practically the same regarding formal social control. And the failure of the VC affects the whole municipality. The common factor among all juntas is the collective efforts and dynamic social relations that they portray. A conclusion may be that there is no distinct role to fill. All three spaces of social control activity illustrate struggles of interests between the leadership and the grassroots. They show more participation and a horizontal structure in times of political struggle and the opposite in times of municipal elections. In between, conflicts arise among residents or junta presidents or local authorities or the FEJUVE executives. There is a continuing dynamic struggle determined by their legal and their traditional obligations as well as the nature of the social networks of camaraderie that exists among alteños and the collective identity they share. As an intrinsic part of the formation of El Alto they represent the migrants need to organize in order to develop a functioning community in the harsh conditions of a massive urbanization process caused by neoliberal macro economic policies. They also represent the communal traditions of their indigenous culture that stands in strong contrast to a neoliberal agenda that promotes individualism and the accumulation of capital as the only means to happiness and well being. The juntas have furthermore been institutionalized as OTB’s in the attempt of promoting participation and empowerment through legislation within the neoliberal paradigm. A process of decentralization that has continued the fomentation of a culture of clientelism between the junta leadership and the politicians in power widening the gap between the grassroots and their leaders. My case study shows that the limitations of formal social control and the incompetence of the VC has contributed to the use of pressure actions to attend the necessities of the residents. The juntas role consists therefore of both formal and informal functions depending on the demands of the grassroots. As the political climate in Bolivia has changed, so has the demands of the juntas. Pressuring their leaders to take more radical positions in issues concerning the national politics. The deterioration of the
political establishment of elites and the political force of the social movements culminated in 2003 with the Gas War effectively ending neoliberal government rule. A bitter irony for the propagators of the neoliberal inspired decentralization reforms that in a way helped this historical process to reach for much more than they expected. A re-foundation of Bolivia is now on the way. Re-defining the political agenda and transforming the social relations between ethnic groups and social classes. The instalment of Evo Morales second term as president in January of 2010 after winning the elections by 64 %, shows that the project of creating a a new pluri-national state is supported and driven by grassroots movements that genuinely represent the population and strive for a democratic process of de-colonization to create a just and equal Bolivia.
APPENDICES
APPENDIX 1: Interview subjects.

Junta presidents of the following zones in District 5 where interviewed between March 24 and April 6, 2008:

3 de Mayo
8 de Septiembre
Complemento German Busch
Complemento Mercurio
German Busch
Huayna Potosi
Huayna Potosi 1:a sección
Huayna Potosi 2:a sección
Nueva Asuncion U-V – 3
Puerto Mijillones
Rio Seco Extranca
Tupac Katari
Urbanizacion Mercurio plan 400
Villa Esperanza
Villa Ingavi
Villa Tahuantinsuyo
Villa Ingenio 1:a sección
Villa Ingenio 4:a sección

Quispe, Richard Flores - President of the Vigilance Committee of El Alto.
Mamani, Julio – Freelance reporter
Moscoso, Carmiña - Freelance reporter and journalist
Rojas, Carlos - Former executive of the Federation of Juntas Vecinales of El Alto
Cuellar, Elisabeth – Former executive of the Federation of Juntas Vecinales of El Alto
3 anonymous residents of the zone Huayna Potosi 2:da sección
¿Cuales son las necesidades mas urgentes de resolver en la zona?
What are the most urgent necessities in your zone?
¿Que problemas tienen, como OTBs, en resolver estas necesidades?
How can you as OTB´s resolve these necessities?
¿Como ha funcionado la elaboración, aprobación y el seguimiento de los proyectos inscritos en la POA?
How have the public works inscribed in the POA budget been elaborated, approved and supervised?
¿Como evalúan el trabajo del Comité de vigilancia en la zona y en el distrito?
How do you evaluate the work of the Vigilance Committee in your zone and the district?
¿Como evalúan el trabajo del sub alcalde en la zona y en el distrito?
How do you evaluate the work of the Sub Mayor in your zone and the district?
¿Como funciona la relación con el Comité de vigilancia? En términos de:
Communication. Informes de ambas partes como otorga la ley.
Tareas y acciones propuestas por el Comité de vigilancia.
Resultados obtenidos. Si no hay, ¿porque?
How does your relation with the Vigilance Committee work regarding:
Communication. Reports from both party’s, like the law prescribes.
Tasks and actions proposed by the Vigilance Committee.
Obtained results. If there are none, why do you think this is?
¿Como funciona la relación con la Fejuve de EL Alto? En términos de:
Planificación y supervisión de las tareas propuestas por el Comité de vigilancia.
Comunicación. Informes de ambas partes.
Resultados.
How does your relation with the FEJUVE work regarding:
Planning and supervision of asks and actions proposed by the Vigilance Committee.
Communication. Reports from both party’s.
Results. If there are none, why do you think this is?
¿Como se difunde la información del Comité de vigilancia a las bases?
How do you spread the Vigilance Committee’s information to the grassroots?
¿Cual es el nivel de conocimiento de los vecinos, sobre sus derechos y deberes en el tema de control social?
What level do you consider the resident’s of your zone have regarding their knowledge of thier rights and duties regarding social control?
¿Como ejercen estos derechos?
How do they practice these rights?
¿En que formas se manifiesta el control social de los vecinos al directorio de la junta vecinal?
In what way do the resident’s practice social control on their directories?
¿En que circunstancias se ejerce medidas de presión para obtener resultados de control social?
In what circumstances do you practice means of pressure to obtain results regarding social control?
¿Como evalúan el proceso de medidas de presión efectuadas por Fejuve El Alto para ejercer el control social?
How do you evaluate the process of pressure actions effectuated by the FEJUVE?

¿Como evalúan la gestión actual de la Fejuve El Alto comparando con las anteriores? En términos de cómo se ha atendido los problemas que afectan a todo el distrito y la ciudad de El Alto. Ejemplos: Servicios básicos and la basura.

How do you evaluate the current leadership of the FEJUVE compared with past ones, regarding for example: Basic services and garbage disposal.

¿Que gestión de Fejuve El Alto consideran haber obtenido mejores resultados en control social desde el 2003-2008? ¿Porque?

What FEJUVE leadership do you consider has obtained best results regarding social control from 2003 until today? Why?
### APPENDIX 3: Abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>COB</td>
<td>Central Obrera Boliviana – National Union Organization.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COR</td>
<td>Central Obrera Regional – Regional Chapter of National Union Organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSUTCB</td>
<td>Confederación Sindical Única de Trabajadores Campesinos de Bolivia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FEJUVE</td>
<td>Federacion de Juntas Vecinales - Federation of Neighbourhood Committees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HIPIC</td>
<td>Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IDH</td>
<td>Direct tax on hydrocarbons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junta</td>
<td>Junta Vecinal – Neighbourhood Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LAD</td>
<td>Ley de Decentralización Administrativa – Law on Decentralized Administration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LM</td>
<td>Ley de Municipalidades – Municipal Law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LPP</td>
<td>Ley de Participación Popular – Law on Popular Participation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MAS</td>
<td>Movimiento al Socialismo – Movement towards socialism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MNR</td>
<td>Movimiento Nacionalista Revolucionario</td>
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<tr>
<td>NSM</td>
<td>New Social Movement Theory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEP</td>
<td>Nueva Politica Economica</td>
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<tr>
<td>OTB</td>
<td>Organizacion Territorial de Base – Territorial grassroots organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>POA</td>
<td>Programa Operativo Anual – Annual Operative program</td>
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<tr>
<td>RM</td>
<td>Resource Mobilization Theory</td>
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<tr>
<td>SMT</td>
<td>Social Movement Theory</td>
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<tr>
<td>VC</td>
<td>Vigilance Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VCD</td>
<td>Vigilance Committee Delegate</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX 4: Pictures of El Alto

Picture 1. Rio Seco in District 5.

Picture 2. Main street in central zone Villa Ingenio, District 5.
Picture 3. City center of El Alto.

Picture 4. La Ceja, El Alto
Picture 5. FEJUVE office building in La Ceja, El Alto

Picture 6. Sub Mayor's office in District 5
Picture 7. President and vice-president of Villa Ingenio at the junta office.

Picture 8. President of 8 de Septiembre with family on a lunch break.
Picture 9. Meeting held on an unfinished public work: The VC and residents of District 4 demand the Mayor of El Alto and representatives of the contracted firm to finish the road on time.

Picture 10. Massive march with all juntas in La Ceja, El Alto.
Picture 11. View from El Alto down to the capital, La Paz.

Picture 12. Road in mariginal semi-rural zone 3 de Mayo.
APPENDIX 5: Maps of El Alto

Map 1: The urbanization of El Alto and La Paz from 1912 to 2003.

Dirección Ordenamiento Territorial y Administración Urbana GMEA (2002).
Map 2. El Alto: A. District 5; B. La Ceja; C. Airport; D. La Paz.
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