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Thinking De-coloniality:

Challenges and questions from Bolivia

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Abstract:

Thinking De-coloniality: Challenges and Questions from Bolivia takes the recent Indigenous protest in Bolivia as a starting point to think about the challenges and difficulties inherent to the process of *de-coloniality*. Asking why in Bolivia – regardless of the recent constitutional, political and economical reforms – Indigenous organisations continue to protest against the violation of their ancestral territories and the violation of their rights by the state. Analysing the recently published work of Alvaro García Linera this dissertation explores how the underlying assumptions made in his work are related and influence his and the governments position against the Indigenous protests. This dissertation argues that that Linera's analysis, and political opinions are based on a number of underlying assumptions that are making him reproduce those very colonial boundaries, and logics of domination and marginalisation, he says to be trying to overcome. The second part of this text, follows the question of how and why *coloniality* reproduces and perpetuates itself so easily in our thinking, our practices, as well as in our politics. Through the analysis of concepts developed by the literature associated with the *decolonial turn,* this text discusses how modernity and *coloniality* are related, and the implication this has when we thinking about *de-coloniality.* By embracing with the challenges of the Indigenous peoples, and the discussion on the coloniality of modernity, this dissertation explores in the third chapter possible ways of thinking and becoming that emerges out of the experience of coloniality. Ways of a thinking and becoming de-colonial, without reproducing the boundaries and practices of coloniality.

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Introduction

> The Journey is a living commitment to meaningful change in our lives and to transforming society by recreating our existences, regenerating our cultures, and surging against the forces that keep us bound to our colonial past. It is the path of struggle laid out by those who have come before us; now it is our turn, we who choose to turn away from the legacies of colonialism and take on the challenge of creating a new reality for ourselves and our people.
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> Taiaiake Alfred (2009: 19)

Taiaiake Alfred, in his book *Wasáse: Indigenous pathways of action and freedom* (2009) set out the difficult task to unravel and show the difficulties, and more importantly the possibilities, of resistance and action against domination and exploitation of the Indigenous peoples[1]. Although he is writing out of a very specific experience of the Indigenous peoples in Canada and British Columbia, his analysis of the problems and situations of the Indigenous struggle can be related to the problems currently faced by the Indigenous peoples in Bolivia.

This might be a surprising statement since, in the election of 2005, Bolivia elected Evo Morales Ayma the first Indigenous president of Latin America. Also, since 2009 Bolivia has had a new constitution, in which for the first time all sectors of the society, including the Indigenous populations have been given the possibility to

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[1] The United Nation Working definition of the Indigenous people, quoted in Shaw (2008: 13) helps to illustrate my conceptualisation of the Indigenous peoples. "Indigenous populations are composed of the existing descendants of peoples who inhabited the present territory of a country wholly or partially at the time when persons of a different culture or ethnic origin arrived there from other parts of the world, overcame them, and by conquest, settlement or other means, reduced them to a non-dominant or colonial situation; who today live more in conformity with their particular social, economic and cultural customs and traditions than with the institutions of the country of which they now form a part, under a State structure which incorporates mainly the national, social and cultural characteristics of other segments of the population which are predominant."
The capitalisation of the term *Indigenous*, comes out respect, because I use the concept in a similar manner to the concept of *European*.

participate in its redaction. Bolivia is now a self-declared Plurinational State, a state of many nations, cultures and languages. This constitution includes into the structure of the state the possibility of recognising Indigenous ways of doing politics, or justice. It also recognises the injustices committed to the Indigenous peoples, for example by recognising their historical rights over their territories (linked to this the increased efforts to relaunch the land reform that started in 1952). Other areas that have experienced changes as the result of the decolonisation process include a series of reforms of the military and the bureaucratic apparatuses. The reforms have ultimately enhanced and promoted the participation as well as the relation to the Indigenous population and Indigenous movements within both apparatuses. Perhaps one of the most important aspects of the decolonisation performed by the state are the 'attempts' to reform the educational system by committing schools and universities to recognise and promote Indigenous forms of knowing.

And yet there is a continuous mobilisation of Indigenous movements, fighting for their rights, territories, for how their autonomy should look like as well as their role in the decision making process. Their continuing protest reveals that although the constitution sets the Indigenous views equal to the all other, an asymmetry of power still remains. In this sense, I argue that rather than presenting new problems, or contextual problems, that arise from a struggle of power from some groups against others, as it seems to be suggested by Alvaro Garcia Linera (2011a,b), the problem lies elsewhere. This will be done by analysing the challenges, that the present protests and

marches led by the CIDOB[2] pose to the government. My interest lies not so much in the textuality and narratives of the discussion – or the founding structures that hold the position of the government – but in the conditions of possibility which led to the need for continual protests. Thus the focus of this dissertation is a theoretical one. It is in this sense that I will analyse Alvaro Garcia Linera's works. His work is revealing for different reasons, but mainly because as Vice-president he is in the middle of the government and decision making processes. A second reason is because he is one of the main theorists writing on the process of change in Bolivia.

By doing so, I am interested in revealing how the theoretical framework employed makes sense, and how it guides the position of the government, thus narrowing down possible options and conditioning the possible outcomes. This will allow me to analyse, in the second step of the dissertation, how to overcome this problem. In order to do so I will discuss how colonialism works, and how it maintained itself over time and space.

More precisely, the first chapter of this dissertation demonstrates the kinds of assumptions that Linera's analysis is built on, and how these assumptions are inherently colonial. While this leads him to a limited understanding of the Indigenous challenges, this understanding also limits the policy options he perceives. By going back to the current situation I will try to show how the responses today are linked to the theoretical conception of Linera, and how the responses can be seen as the logical steps out of Linera's point of view.

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[2] The acronym stands literally for *Central de pueblos y comunidades indígenas del Oriente Boliviano* (Center of the Indigenous peoples of Eastern Bolivia) founded in 1982. Now refers to the Confederation of Indigenous Peoples of Bolivia, an organisation representing 34 different peoples.

The second chapter follows the question raised by Karena Shaw (2008: 19); "how it is that these limitations [ethnocentrism, imperialism, orientalism etc.] that now seem so obviously objectionable to us can have been so easily reproduced in the conventions and institutions of modern political life." Following the critique by authors like Walter Mignolo, Anibal Quijano or Nelson Maldonado-Torres explores how colonial narratives and practices get reproduced. Questioning the utility of the concept of *colonialism* I introduce the concepts of *coloniality*, *coloniality of power*, *coloniality of knowledge* and *coloniality of being,* developed by the above mentioned authors, I argue that colonialism only designates the political and juridical domination of Western empires such as Spain, Great Britain or France over territories and people in Africa, Asia or the Americas. And therefore *colonialism* is insufficient to deal with the underlying assumptions, and logics that governed, or normalised the colonial regimes of power/knowledge. "Coloniality assumes, first that coloniality constitutes modernity. As a consequence, we are still living under the same regime. Today coloniality could be seen as the hidden side of postmodernity" (Mignolo 2008: 248).

By discussing these concepts I want to find spaces and ways of how we can think and write about the colonial experience and more importantly *de-colonial* experiences, without, or at least being aware of, the risks of re-inscribing the colonial divides as well as structures in our thinking, writing, but also in our every day practices.

In the third and concluding chapter, I analyse possible ways of thinking decoloniality, by exploring Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's concept of *becoming* and Mignolo's notion of *colonial difference*, thereby following Deleuze and Guattari's "more general thesis that the existence of an outside of Eurocentrism has subsisted and

could form the basis for a different form of being in the world." (Robinson and Tormey 2010: 34)

It seems important to mention before I continue that the work of Michel Foucault and also Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari are not always explicitly quoted, even though their work, their way of thinking resonates throughout this text in my own writing; they, in a way, take the role of the 'hidden heroes' of this text. Following Deleuze and Guattari's project laid out in *Anti-Oedipus* and *A Thousand Plateaus,* this text has to be read as a mapping, thus "it is itself a part of the rhizome. The map is open and connectable in all of its dimensions; it is detachable, reversible, susceptible to constant modification." (Deleuze and Guattari 2004: 13) The ideas exposed here have been changing and adapting all along the writing process. This dissertation is about exploring different becomings, becoming decolonial, becoming indigenous.

Chapter One

Continuing challenges and resistance in Bolivia

On the 15th of August of 2011 the Indigenous people of Eastern Bolivia, of the Amazon region, headed by the CIDOB started the Eighth Great Indigenous March[3]. The CIDOB (2011) had called almost a month earlier to rally for the march as a result of the failing dialogue with the government concerning the construction of a highway through the TIPNIS (Indigenous Territory Nacional Park Isiboro Secure) in the Amazonas as well as several Indigenous autonomous territories, thus violating what their autonomy rights granted by the constitution. This is the latest of many public manifestations of the Indigenous movements and people against the decisions the Bolivian government has been taking. This march begins the same day and follows the same path as the historical and first great indigenous March for the Territory and Dignity[4] of 1990. 21 years after what is often remembered as the beginning of the current transformations which Bolivia is currently going through, the Indigenous movements have called once again to march in defence of their territory, dignity and their rights.

In August 1990 a small group of Indigenous people from same region from started to walk from their villages to the government headquarters in La Paz. For 34 days they marched for more than 500 km. They started on the 15th of August after yet another contract was signed by the government ignoring their demands for the territory the Indigenous consider theirs, in favour of a timber company to exploit their resources.

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[3] VII Great Indigenous March in Defence of the TIPNIS, for the Territories, Life, Dignity, and the Rights of the Indigenous Peoples. *My translation*
[4] *Marcha por el Territorio y la Dignidad*

Their demands being ignored by local and national government, the concerned communities decided to march as a last resort. Beginning with no more than a few dozen people, the march rapidly grew into a nationwide movement with an increasing number of people and organisations supporting and joining the march and their cause, creating nationwide networks of support. Reaching the mountain range, a historic alliance was forged and celebrated between the Indigenous people from the highlands and the lowlands. Together they entered La Paz under the eyes of the city's inhabitants who had gone out to see and support the marchers enter the city (Contreras 1991).

The march, and the cause of the Indigenous of the Amazon had gathered so much support among all sectors of society all over the country that government of the time could no longer ignore the demands that were put forward by the Indigenous peoples. Thus the success and the public attention instituted a new tool of protest, namely the march, but also a series of reforms led by the government in the hope to 'tame' the Indigenous populations and their newly discovered strength. Never before had an Indigenous mobilisation attracted so much attention and such a broad support. Presenting the Indigenous movements as a political and social force which eventually would within 20 years; overthrow presidents, lead Evo Morales Ayma to the presidency and push for the adoption of a new constitution. Nevertheless 21 years later, the Indigenous communities from the Bolivian orient are once more walking for their rights, their territories, their dignity.

With the election of Evo Morales Ayma in 2005 and later with the drafting of the new constitution, involving for the first time in Bolivia's history the active participation of the indigenous populations; the situation was perceived by many as the beginning of a new, better era not only for the Indigenous populations but for all sectors

of Bolivian society (de Sousa Santos 2010; Linera 2011a). A decolonized or postcolonial Bolivia, where the government did not just include Indigenous and Social movements, as Catherine Walsh (2006) analysing Evo Morales inauguration speech describes it, the government was seen as being built upon the different social and Indigenous movements. With the adoption of the new state constitution in 2009 this idea was strengthened. The decolonisation process was said to have taken one of its most important steps, with the takeover of the state by the social and Indigenous movements. Also the fact that for the first time in any constitution of the continent all indigenous traditions, ways of knowing, of taking decisions, as well as forms of judging were included as equal to liberal and 'classical' forms and institutions thus granting never seen autonomy to the indigenous communities (Bolivia 2009).

Slowly, however, and as the above mentioned events demonstrate, it seems that the euphoria of adopting the most 'progressive' constitution of the world as some commentators referred to it, is fading out and the 'reality' of poverty and that the existing inequality, the dependency, and the deep-seated colonial structures have not been solved. Today it is becoming evident that the government is failing to deliver its promises. The fact that we continue to see similar demands in their form and structure by the Indigenous movements as in the 1990 raises a number of interesting and important questions. The question is why are the marches and protests happening (again)?

State centred decolonization?

In order to answer the question above, turning to the analysis of the latest work of Alvaro Garcia Linera, – one of the most exposed, and publicly present figures of the government of Evo Morales – is key to understanding the apparent mismatch between the aims of the so called "process of change" and the demands of the Indigenous peoples of the Bolivian lowlands. Linera's latest work is particularly interesting because of his important contribution (regardless of whether or not one agrees with him) to the current political process from the practice (but especially for his contribution to the difficult task of abstracting) systematising and theorising the key concepts of the current turbulent social and political life in Bolivia. In this case especially his conceptualisation of decolonisation in Bolivia.

His text is one of the dominant lines of analysis of the current events, upon which decisions are made. His work also often serves to give the theoretical framework and justification for specific policies promoted by the government. In the following part, I seek to reveal how specific assumptions about the functioning of society and the state, sovereignty, delimits his analysis and how these assumptions narrow down what he understands as problems as well as its possible outcomes and solutions. In other words, I am interested in how Linera's work for example in the case of the CIDOB, subaltern[5] Indigenous and non-Indigenous through his theoretical and conceptual framework.

Linera (re)presents and traces the changes and processes which Bolivia, and the Bolivian society are going through, as the result of struggle for power of two major,

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[5] I use the concept of *subaltern,* as it is discussed by Gayatri C. Spivak (1988) in 'Can the Subaltern Speak?'

antagonistic, sectors of society. These two forces seek the control of the state and its institutions for different reasons; the dominant force in order to maintain their privilege and dominant position, the emerging force in order to transform the state to an instrument for the poor, and marginalised. Thus Linera establishes the framework, as well as setting the scene and outlines the actors of the struggle for power, for the state (Linera 2010b, 2011a). As will be discussed, this framework then becomes problematic when using it to analyse the uprising of the Indigenous peoples. But let us go step by step.

Linera (2010b: 13; 2011a) describes the process by which a state crisis – Bolivia went through since 2000 – is played out in its society and state institutions. According to him, this process consists of five stages. These five stages, he asserts are not unique to Bolivia, but are inherent to most state crises of the twentieth and the twenty-first century all over the world.

The first stage is *the moment when the state crisis is revealed*. He argues that this stage is reached when the antagonistic relationship between two sectors (dominant and dominated) are crystallised; that is, when the dominated sectors consolidate into a unified force, capable of opposing and challenging the dominant narratives, practices and policies. This first stage represents the timespan starting from the Water War in Cochabamba in 2000 until 2003 and the overthrow of former president Hugo Banzer Suarez in what was to be known as the Gas War.

The second stage is what Linera calls the *catastrophic draw;* it refers to the time between 2003-2008. It designates a time when the two sides are unable to impose their

ideas on each other (hence catastrophic draw). The result is a deadlock situation in which nothing really works.

Overlapping with the third stage, the *substitution of the political elites,* we can see the consolidation of a coherent alternative (antagonistic) state project but also the means to impose such project. In other words, the establishment by the popular movement with help of the government of Evo Morales to develop and push forward a state project which is capable of replacing the dominant system, with the goal of implementing the demands, and consolidating the social project through the resources of the state.

The fourth stage described by Linera (Linera 2011a: 18) is the *point of bifurcation.* Here, he refers to those moments of civil and social unrest where either the new political system is confirmed or the old is re-established. In the case of Bolivia, Linera (26) argues that the point of bifurcation was in 2008. It was the pivotal moment of confrontation between the two antagonistic groups, with the massacre of Indigenous people in Pando, and the takeover of different governmental buildings in the east of the country, the economical and former political elites. With the adoption of the new constitution in January of 2009 the loss of the dominant economical and (former) political elites is sealed. Linera then argues that Bolivia entered a new era with when Evo Morales came into power and consolidated the numerous existing forces into one dominant political project. For Linera this crucial moment is not decided by the convincing force of the different arguments, rather it is the result of confrontation where the 'true' material strength of both sides is revealed. One side will emerge uncontested from this confrontation and will go on to solidify its dominant position (23-27). The

victory of one side does not mean that there will be no more contradiction or conflicts, but rather that one of the antagonistic projects goes on to become hegemonic.

This leads us to the current stage, the fifth stage, *the emergence of creative contradiction.* This situation, according to Linera, differs from the situation in the first four stages, where two competing (irreconcilable) projects were fighting against each other. The conflicts that are present today must be understood as internal contradictions to the Plurinational State project (Linera 2011a: 28). Hence they are problems that can and must be resolved within the framework set by the new constitution, which is meant to be the back bone of the Plurinational State project.

This theoretical representation of the events allows to organise and present the events of the past ten years in an organised manner, but it also depicts a certain newly acquired stability, and a 'solid' (appearing as evident) foundation to deal with newly emerging contradictions and confrontations. In so doing, it also influences the perception of potential threats as well as possible solutions to future tensions and problems of the Plurinational State. At this point, one might wonder how this might be linked to the current mobilisation of the Indigenous people and the apparent conflicts and difficulties of the government in responding to the demands posed by them. In order to answer this question we need to further deconstruct Linera's argumentation.

As we can see, Linera (2010b; 2011a) identifies the hegemonic force as the 'traditional' (white) economical and political elite, that has been consistently governing Bolivia since its independence. He acknowledges that there have been changes, yet the essence and the logic of governance has been based on a racial differentiation of society. Bolivia has always been governed by a white elite, keen to solidify their

dominant position, through all the means possible adopting different ideologies through time.

For Linera (2011a) the success of the current *process of change* is the organisation and resistance of this latter 'groups.' For him the struggle starts, as mentioned above in 2000 in Cochabamba, with the 'Water War' as the 'people,' (different sectors and movements from the region, from peasants, manufacturers, students to neighbourhood organisations) went together to the streets to fight against the privatisation of water rights. In an unseen turnout the 'people' from Cochabamba fought and managed to expulse the transnational enterprises involved in the deal. For Linera, this event meant the beginning, the birth of a new political force in the equation of power, a new antagonist force (after the decline of the unions and communist movements in the 1980s and 90s) capable of challenging the dominant elites. A new force, led by the Indigenous and peasant movements, emerged out of the recognition that it is not enough to reform the rules of the game, but what is needed is the rewriting of the rules. Opposed to the opposition from the left, this movement came with a radical new state project, a decolonial state, based on a new constitution, by the people, for the people.

This definition of the actors responsible for the changes makes clear where the place of the struggle lies in Linera's framework: the state, the parliament, the courts of justice and so on, are the sites of confrontation, but also the space that enables the confrontation. The transformation of the state is therefore seen as the final point of the fight, thereby revealing the centrality of the state in the assumptions present within his theoretical framework. By this I mean that Linera fails to directly question the

conditions which lead to the creation of the state and therefore does not question the legitimacy of its sovereignty in the first place. Instead, he ignores these questions and, at the same time, enables the acceptance and normalisation of the states' constitutive violence. Starting from a highly state-centrist position, he thus arrives at a number of conclusions which, uncannily, resemble the thought of liberal thinkers such as Tocqueville[6].

As I will be discussing in the following section Linera's position forces the Indigenous movements and population into an old colonial situation of impossibility, by giving them two impossible choices. Either become part of the system-state or be its enemy and loose.

In Linera's (2011a) thought, the state its institutions, practices and narratives appear as separated from the colonial experience. In other words, here the state is almost seen as detached, separate from colonialism, he is almost neutral and transparent. Colonialism is therefore only attributed to the ruling elite and their state policies, and discourses. Change, in this case decolonisation, in his framework therefore must first aim to replace the ruling colonial elite, in order to later replace their narratives and practices within the state. It is here that he locates the success and strength of the Indigenous and peasant movements that have emerged over the last 20 years. These, he argues, were particularly adept – because of their history of resistance, and their different world view – to challenge, and resist the dominant and hegemonic elites .Decolonisation here means to transform the state (and therefore maintaining its

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[6] For an extensive analysis of Tocqueville's position of the Indigenous people see Karena Shaw's book *Indigeneity and Political Theory: Sovereignty and the limits of the political,* specially chapter 3.

founding assumptions) in favour those who were the victims and lived at the margins of the colonial state.

If we summarise this position we can conclude that for Linera the decolonized state is a state that looks after its citizen regardless of their social and ethnical origins, a state that helps especially the subaltern. Within this conception of decolonisation Linera is able to identify a clear goal for the movement as well as reasserting the two major actors as well as the state as the scene of the struggle. Decolonisation becomes something that can only be achieved by arriving to state power and staying there. This is de-problematised by arguing that it is not the state *per se* that is colonial, but rather that it is the ruling elites who are responsible for the establishment as well as perpetuation of colonial practices.

The dialectical representation of the process of change is also revealing of the limitations and bias that are inherent in Linera's framework. In this dialectical scheme, progress or transformation is achieved through antagonistic relationships between two different groups as well as within the groups. "Tensions and contradictions are therefore the mechanisms by which changes are achieved and encourages the advancement of society and form an inseparable part of the ongoing democratic and revolutionary of the people." (Linera 2011a: 25 my translation) After having overcome the structural antagonism in the fourth stage, today we face internal contradiction, which can be antagonistic but its resolution does not imply structural change. Rather there are said to be two sides advocating two paths within the one and same state project.

Linera (2011a: 28-72) identifies such an internal contradiction in the relationship between the Indigenous movements and the newly created Plurinational State. If we push his analysis to its extreme it would seem as if the Bolivian State, as governed by colonial elites, since its creation in the 19th century based on colonial practices and narratives, purposely neglected, ignored and marginalised Indigenous communities, their problems and demands.

> We refer to the appropriation of the state by the union-ayllu in regard to their organisational and management functions, that is to say, the socialisation and growing communitarisation of power as part of a profound political revolutions of society. Although doing so, that is, changing the state's social content, building social-protective function stemming from the same initiative and revolutionary program of the indigenous-peasant unions, paradoxically means also to lose the territorial power of the union that is now beginning to give up its protective duties (health, education, roads, communication, disaster support, internal cohesion), which now pass to be executed by the state.
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> It is so that the struggles of decolonization and the appropriation of the state by the union-ayllu is resulting in a retreat/retraction their own power as micro-state. (33)
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> It results that the appropriation of the state by the union is also an appropriation of the union by the state, which can lead to a weakening of the same union-ayllu, their power of governance and cohesion. (Linera 2011a: 34 my translation)

It becomes apparent that according to Linera, the Indigenous communities and organisation as a reaction to the lack of state, had to self-organise themselves, and had to come up for everything a state did not provide; indeed they had to replace the state. This necessity to substitute for basic state functions in order to survive led to ever larger organisations and movements. In this logic, the necessity of the state is assumed, as preexistent to the self organisation of the Indigenous communities. Thus he can conclude that, with the newly 'de-colonial' state such organisations necessarily have to change their reason for existence. The state and the Indigenous movements enter into conflicting relationship of who renders which services. In other words, Linera is arguing

that with the decolonisation process we end with the necessary but regrettable transformation (if not dissolution if they fail to readjust) of the Indigenous movements and organisations, of the very same movements responsible for decolonisation.

Following this argument, the decolonisation would then imply the integration into the state of 'traditional' forms of organisation – forms that have been maintained and reproduced since the time before the colonial encounter. The assumption that is made here is that by including the 'native, traditional' forms of organisation into the system they will be preserved and integrated. The state is then seen as assuming role of the Indigenous movements, as defenders of the Indigenous legacy, and transforming them into institutions whose only task is the defence of the interests of those who it is supposed to represent, the different Indigenous populations.

This assumption is problematic because it asserts that the Indigenous organisations emerged due to a lack of engagement and interest by past governments, thus understanding the emergence of the Indigenous organisations as a response to the actions or non-actions of the government. This assumption is tied to the centrality of the state as pre-existing Indigenous movements and organisations. This means that ultimately, Linera is arguing that the maintenance of 'native' forms of organisation, culture etc. were maintained because the state and colonial governments failed or refused to fulfil their responsibilities in the communities. Following from this, one could argue that had the state reacted to the demands and needs of the communities, the Indigenous peoples would not have had the need to maintain their traditions and native forms of organisation (through the Indigenous organisations). Reproducing the colonial idea that the Indigenous people do not have agency, rather, only respond to the agency of the citizen, the colonisers.

Such a position, however, is untenable, if we make the assumption that the determination to save and maintain Indigenous traditions, languages, forms of knowing and organisation does not come from the lack of attention by the state and its institutions, but comes from the will, the agency of the different Indigenous cultures themselves and, subsequently, as independent from the state, its policies, or its ideology. This would mean that regardless of the policies of the state, the attempts of the communities to preserve their cultures, organisation, knowledges, and languages are self-motivated and can be supported but not overtaken by the state. If we question as Alfred (2009) does, the neutrality of the 'modern' state even the idea of state support becomes uncertain. In this perspective the state remains an external force, even if it recognises, adopts and integrates traditional and native forms of organisation, it remains a European (colonial) invention. This argument is based on the understanding of the state as requiring a specific (sovereign) subject (the citizen), organisation of space (division of territories in different state[7]) and time (progressive and traceable), thus conditioning the space where politics are possible, and what politics are (Shaw 2008). In this sense the extent to which the state (in its abstract as well as material existence) can adopt alternative and alien conceptions of politics and modes of organisation is highly debatable. Instead, it seems state to assume that in order to be recognised, Indigenous forms of governing and of politics will have to be adopted and transformed in order to fit into the state.

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[7] See to this point Barry Hindess (1998) in 'Rule and Devide: The International Character of Modern Citizenship.'

It becomes clear that Linera's framework has difficulties of rendering intelligible demands, and practices that are based on logics other than the state and its founding assumptions. These limitations become even more visible if we analyse the implications of the dialectical depiction of the process of change in Bolivia. Linera's dialectical approach thus leads to (only) framing those projects, which are politically and socially feasible within the two antagonistic positions. Indeed, dialectics are always a simplification of social processes and relations[8]. In the texts analysed of Linera (2010a,b; 2011a,b) the dialectical perspective reveals two extreme positions, two boundaries within which many outcomes are possible. But it also limits the option to only those possibilities between the two antagonistic positions, thus closing the system.

Both positions, though opposite, are set within the same system, opposed to what Linera argues. Both find their conditions of possibility within the same assumptions, practices and narratives, and consequently are incapable of overcoming these. Rather, they need each other to perpetuate the assumptions, to normalise them in order to succeed. Both positions fight for the control of the state. As a consequence both antagonistic positions are incapable of understanding let alone to speaking to/of/with proposals and positions that do not have the same assumptions (and goals), which in other words are not based on the same forms of politics (in this case of representation). Therefore, any position that challenges the founding assumptions and practices solely because it comes from an outside (though not the exterior[9]) of its borders is subaltern. Any other challenge is thus either neglected, forgotten or is read as following the same

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[8] For a critique of dialectics see Deleuze and Guattari's (2004) critique in *Thousand Plateaus*. A different critique is provided in *Mikhail Bakhtin: The word in the World* by Graham Pechey (2007) or Mikhail Bakhtin (1986) himself in *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays.*
[9] Mignolo 2008 differentiates between exterior, which refers to what is seen constructed as outside by the inside,

logic as them, seeking the same thing. In other words it is translated into the system of representation of the state.

The case of the CIDOB reveals the difficulties the government has responding to challenges that are based on a logic other then its own. Blaming the former elites, NGO's, the U.S. government (Europa Press 2011a), or internal struggles for power in the CIDOB, the government is refusing to enter in dialogue with the Indigenous peoples (Europa Press 2011b). To do so, would mean to deal with questions of autonomy, of use of land, of 'national' interest against local interests, thus opening the possibility for them to recognise that the government or in this case the state-system is at the source of the problem. Such a recognition would severally undermine the governments role in the process of decolonisation as constituting a problem instead of the believed solution.

Although sympathetic towards the Indigenous movement and committed to its causes, as suggested by Linera's condemnation of the old colonial ways of governing, his perspective on the decolonisation nevertheless is one of elites governing top down. This means paradoxically the creation of a new colonial circle for the Indigenous and Afro-Bolivian communities. This leaves the Indigenous movements with two options, either to accept and be absorbed by the system, or to resist, hence to appear as the enemy of the process of change lead by the current government. Consequently, this would lead to the de-legitimation or penalisation of organisations trying to protect Indigenous forms of organising, indeed all forms of governance outside of the forms established by the government. We are therefore left with a situation, which in its essence is very similar to Tocqueville's problematisation of the Indigenous people in the United States of the 19th century. This meant that either they adapt, assimilate and

become members of the emergent society, or they are doomed to being considered enemies of the state with all consequences that this entails.

This resemblance is not a coincidence, rather it is an inherent problem which has to do with the fact that by not problematising the state and the founding assumptions that create the conditions of possibility for its existence, we render them invisible and outside of the range of discussion. As I have demonstrated, this results in the founding exclusion and marginalisation of the indigenous on a material, intellectual and conceptual level. The indigenous are rendered invisible from the emergence of the state. The state then becomes a neutral form of organisation of space and population as it can be (re)formatted in order to protect those who were marginalised and neglected from its beginning.

As the experiences of the Indigenous communities in Bolivia and all over the world show, the detachment of the state from its foundational violence and its colonial origins is highly problematic because of the analytical bias it produces. The problem is, I argue, that the demands and the challenges posed by the Indigenous populations are unintelligible because they do not fit into the state-system. They are founded on a different set of beliefs, and assumptions and thus necessitate different forms of subject and knowledge production as these are imbedded in a different organisation of space and time. As a result, by not critically engaging with limitation set by the underlying assumptions of sovereignty and state formation, it is difficult to recognise what is excluded and marginalised from framework in order for it to function. The limitations are then normalised, hence projected into a pre-political moment, outside of possible discussion and negotiation. This limits the analysis of a current situation or event, and

narrowing down the number of possible outcomes visible for the parties involved, thus rendering subaltern, and delegitimising forms of resistance other than the ones permitted by the system.

We can conclude that, in the analytical framework of Linera, where politics is based on representation, a position such as the one taken by the CIDOB by refusing to send a delegation to negotiate with the government does not only challenge the authority of the government but more importantly it challenges the idea of representation as the only way of politics. Within the modern-state system politics is built on the notion of representation and sovereignty, and thus the refusal of representation-model can only be understood as the refusal of politics. Hence such acts (especially when dealing with Indigenous movements) are judged as illegitimate and irrational, with the result being these instrumentalisation of third parties. This incapacity to understand the Indigenous movements within their own political understandings, combined with an asymmetry of power between the Indigenous movement and the state will likely end with the state, once again, imposing, and attempting to make Indigenous forms of organisation and governance, hence also of Indigenous ways of knowing and being compatible. The risk is that the government of Evo Morales will end up (re)creating a state of domination, subjugation and subordination as well as a continuing exploitation by the new elites towards new and old victims.

I propose an alternative reading of the refusal of the CIDOB: The refusal should be understood as an attempt to disrupt and challenge those very conditions that allow for their marginalisation and victimisation. By refusing to accept the framework of negotiation proposed by the government and trying to impose their own framework, they are attempting to create a space, a decolonial space where its conditions of

possibility are not based on the exclusion of and violence perpetrated upon the Indigenous. This would be a space in which their forms of organisation and knowing are not just accepted but inherent to politics and possibility.

As this section has demonstrated, writing about the Indigenous raises a number of issues and questions. The current responses to the VIII Indigenous March − the accusations of sectarianism, 'sellout', co-optation, of being instrumentalised by foreign governments − cannot just be attributed to contextual or personal comments, rather they are the expressions of colonial assumptions that govern the opinion-making process. As the analysis of Linera's work has suggested, the responses found their origin in structures of thought that remain hidden and unchallenged, limiting the perspectives of the Indigenous and the possibilities available to them. As a result the CIDOB are unintelligible from the very beginning; the exclusion of alternatives thus becomes unavoidable. If this is the case with Linera, who is very close to the Indigenous movements and the Indigenous cause, it remains even more so for thinkers and politicians on the political right. The fact that 'even' Linera's analysis and decolonisation project is based on the same assumptions of subjectivity, space and time, that led to the marginalisation of the Indigenous in the first place, is intriguing. Above all, it reveals how ideas and structures that emerged during the colonization continue to determine our lives, our understanding of who we are, or how we think about the world. A first question then is; why do we so easily reproduce colonial narratives and practices? How can thinking on Indigenous challenges be written without perpetuating the violences and marginalisation responsible for their situation? How can we write and think about decolonisation?

The following chapter is an attempt to find answers by exploring on an abstract level how colonial structures, narratives and practices have prevailed over time, in our understanding of politics, economy, and in our thinking. It is a journey into the existing critical literature on Latin America, searching for answers but also new questions, that need to be asked on the way.

Chapter Two

As has been shown above, one the difficulty associated with thinking and writing about decolonisation is that one can easily end up reproducing and thus perpetuating and normalising frameworks and assumptions, which are essentially colonial. The first problem we encounter, as Frantz Fanon has asserted in his influential book *Black Skin, White Mask* (2008: 8), is that: "To speak means to be in a position to use a certain syntax, to grasp the morphology of this or that language, but it means above all to assume a culture, to support the weight of a civilization." Similarly, Graham Pechey (2007: 13-14) argues that for Mikhail Bakhtin language "takes place not in the neutral space of 'communication' but in a charged and irreducibly sociopolitical space of its own endless making and remaking." If this is the case for language, understanding the theoretical, any kind of theory as neutral would be misleading. Again Pechey (15) asserts that for Bakhtin "the theoretical is inescapably the political". Hence we can state that the use of language as well as any theory is an inherently political exercises, thus any attempt to deny this link renders invisible the boundaries and limitation inherent to language and theories. In the context of colonialism then by asserting, or by failing to problematise the supposed neutrality of one's own theoretical approach one risks reproducing the same regimes of power one wants to challenge. In other words, by leaving unquestioned the colonial preconceptions of the current analytical frameworks of political and social structures, practices as well as narratives, we run the risk of remaining in the same structures, reproducing the same or similar boundaries, limitation and violences that we are trying to overcome. Writing, then, must attempt to reveal its own regimes of power; the task is to write the self back

into the text, in order to open the possibilities of criticism. Before we can ask what decolonisation is, we have to ask what is understood under colonisation, and how it works.

Colonialism and Coloniality

In this following part I will explore – problematising the concept of colonialism and the continuing coloniality of everyday life – how different understandings of colonialism and coloniality restrain our conceptions of politics , the production of knowledge and our very conception of being, generally of what we see possible or not. Doing so reveals how dominant conceptions of modernity are co-constituted with capitalism and colonialism and how they are based upon a precise understanding of time, organisation of space and construction of a specific subject. This, we shall see, means allowing for a continuation and perpetuation of colonial practices and narratives. In this sense, I will be working with the contribution of an emerging scholarship that is associated with the decolonial turn (Castro-Gómez and Grosfoguel 2007: 9-10).

The main argument of the scholars of the decolonial turn emerges out of a dissatisfaction with the 'everyday' understanding(s) of *colonialism*, depicting it as having found closure with the independence of the colonial territories. The assumption of temporality made in that understanding of colonialism, is one that sees time as a succession of epochs that are connected through a red line guiding toward the now, or a postcolonial present. Colonialism, because of this, is more a descriptive concept, one that depicts a specific time and moment in history, though not always necessarily implying a continuity, or progress, but a specific event whose consequences are still

lived today. Because of these strong temporal connotations in every-day understandings of the term colonialism as an analytical concept limits and restrains the spaces from where resistance against colonial practices and narratives and its continuity can emerge. Colonialism, then, it is argued by Mignolo (2005; 2007; 2008), is perhaps best used as a descriptive temporal and spatial limited concept. This opens up the possibility to introduce the concept of *coloniality* not to substitute colonialism, but to overcome its limitations.

Coloniality is thus *"a term that encompasses the trans-historic expansion of colonial domination and the perpetuation of its effects in contemporary times"* (Moraña, Dussel, Jáuregui 2008: 2). It refers to the social, economical, and political subjugations and marginalisations, due to the continuity of colonial conditions of everyday life. This is in contrast to neo-colonialism, which implies a notion of newness, or reinstitution of colonialism. On the other side postcolonialism, although being an object of an extensive discussion, has due to its prefix, the strong connotation of coming after colonialism, or as transcending colonialism[10]. Opposed to neo- or postcolonialism these authors argue that coloniality as a concept refers to the ongoingness of colonialism beyond political and juridical independence. Coloniality does not imply a break or an after colonialism, it is set to reveal the complicity of colonialism in the invention, creation and perpetuation of modernity and capitalism.

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[10] For an extensive discussion on the concept of neo- and postcolonialism see Ania Loomba's book *Colonialism/Postcolonialism* (2005) or Robert Young's *Postcolonialism: An Historical Introduction* (2001). Further reading on the temporality of postcolonial(ism) can be found in Rita Abrahamsen's article 'African studies and the postcolonial challenge' (2003).

The underlying assumption that is made by employing the term of coloniality is that colonial regimes of power as well as practices and narratives, did not end with the independence and decolonisation movements of the 18th, 19th in the Americas and the second half of the 20th century in Asia and Africa. Castro-Gómez and Grosfoguel (2007: 7) refer to the success of these movements as incomplete, and only gaining a certain degree of political and juridical independence, but leaving colonial forms of being, practices of knowing, and of governing as well as colonial narratives and structures untouched. What this means is tha, if we continue with the example of Bolivia, the independence in 1825 achieved by Simón Bolivar failed to replace the hierarchies and regimes of power of the country, leaving the elites in charge of the newly established state. More radically, we can say that the independence movement led by Bolivar was unwilling to challenge European foundations of autonomy, sovereignty, politics or economics.

What this meant was that within the newly created states the repartition of labour and resources remained equal to those under colonial power. Especially important was that the means of production as well as the hegemonic positions of society remained the same. These elites maintained a colonial/racial hierarchy in the new states, i.e. they were provided a privileged access to education, university degrees, to live in the city, – all of what the Indigenous or the poor classes could not aspire to. Instead of renegotiating the position of the Indigenous in the newly established republics, the Indigenous was constructed as the other for the newly established Latin American citizen, perpetuating even further the Indigenous and the Afro-Americans as a 'minority,' as marginal; this sometimes meant that the situation of the Indigenous and the Afro-Americans was even worse than under Spanish rule (Bonfil 1981). This was

integral to their hold on dominant position within Bolivian politics and society. The white or 'criollos' elites thus appeared as the logical, natural rulers. On the other hand, being peasant, not being able to speak or write Spanish, the poor, the 'Indios', as well as the Afro-Bolivians were presented as the ones to be ruled over (Castro-Gómez 2000). The consequence of this was that the ruling elites had no problem in maintaining the economical system in place, thus perpetuating even further the racial organisation of society with the white man on top. This allowed the rulers of the new state to perpetuate and normalise their dominant position even further than under Spanish rule.

That the independence from colonial Spain did not lead to an emancipation or an appreciation of the Indigenous peoples does not mean that there were no attempts, or people struggling for an Indigenous 'cause' rather, it means that these struggles lost against the local colonial elites who managed to get hold of the movement and perpetuated practices and narratives that assured their supremacy and their dominant position[11]. The first constitutions, although heavily influenced by a liberal agenda, introducing notions such as democracy, public education and so on, resulted in naturalising the boundaries even further by for example designing the access to political participation so as to marginalise the Indigenous populations (Irurozqui 1999).

This had severe consequences because it presented the access to the decision making process as objective and neutral, thus rendering very difficult any form of resistance. Thus the constitution helped to reassure the marginal and excluded position of the Indigenous. But it would be wrong to argue that the new constitutions created a

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[11] An good example of how Indigenous struggles were militarily and historically suppressed can be found in Sinclair Thomson's (2002) book *We Alone Will Rule: Native Andean Politics in the Age of Insurgency.*

new discrimination; instead, the exclusion and marginalisation were a reflection of racist conceptions, practices, narratives and structures that have governed the colony since the arrival of Columbus. Yet we can say that the new republic introduced more subtle forms to perpetuate a specific image of the Indigenous as the other, marginal, pre-modern, as remains from a dark past, that needed to be overcome (progress) through the guidance of the white man of Spanish decent (Bonfil 1981).

To return to the discussion on coloniality we can now state that the "present configuration of power began to take a global form more than five hundred years ago." (Maldonado-Torres 2008: 3) Inherent to our modern conceptions of power is the colonial experience. In other words, the modern understanding of power reflects the coloniality of its emergence, or the *coloniality of power.*

Coloniality of power

Coloniality in other words must be understood as the dark side of modernity, as simultaneously emerging and co-constitutive of modernity and of capitalism.

> We have to understand capitalism is not just an economical system (a paradigm of political economy), neither is it a cultural system (paradigm of the cultural/postcolonial in their *anglo*-saxon version), rather it is a global net of power, integrated by economical, political and cultural processes, which sum maintain the whole system. (Castro-Gómez, Grosfoguel 2007: 17 my translation)

Coloniality is a specific mode of power which continues to govern our current modern/colonial world-system.

> Two historical processes associated in the production of that space/time converged and established the two fundamental axes of the new model of power. One was the codification of the differences between conquerors and

> conquered in the idea of "race," a supposedly different biological structure that placed some in a natural situation of inferiority to the others. […] The second process involved the constitution of a new structure of control of labor and its resources and products. This new structure was an articulation of all historically known previous structures of control of labor–slavery, serfdom, small independent commodity production and reciprocity–around and on the basis of capital and the world market. (Quijano 2008: 182)

Coloniality of power does not describe one specific or fix articulation of power configuration or strategy. Coloniality of power as described by Quijano, refers to an underlying logic of governance and administration of people and goods, that emerged with coloniality and the conception of modernity. A new form of organisation based on the

> idea of race in the new global structure of the control of labor were associated with social roles and geohistorical locations. In this way, both race and the division of labor remained structurally linked and mutually reinforcing, in spite of the fact that neither of them were necessarily dependent on the other in order to exist or change. (Quijano 2008: 184)

Nelson Maldonado-Torres (2007: 187) expands the notion of coloniality as referring to a pattern of power that emerged with 'modern' colonialism and governs forms of production and work (coloniality of power), ways of knowing (coloniality of knowledge), authority, as well as intersubjective relations (coloniality of being) through the global markets and the idea of race. The coloniality of power thus depicts a specific regime of power that emerged during with colonialism. The concept is set to reveal that the current regimes of power are far from being arbitrary, or due to personal effort – as liberal theory would have us believe.

Power relations today are governed by patterns of domination which, if not necessarily having emerged during colonisation, were certainly solidified during colonialism. This means that the condition of marginality and poverty that, for example, Indigenous communities find themselves in, cannot be attributed to their failure, lack of commitment, or laziness. Their condition then cannot be overcome through personal

effort, rather must be seen as the result of social and historical context, the organisation of the economy which favours certain modes of production over others, certain forms of knowledge over others. Inferiority and marginalisation exists not just on the level of the distribution of wealth (although this might be the most visible) but also in the exclusion and denial of different ways of living in and knowing the world.

Coloniality of power turns our attention to the fact that contemporary forms of domination, as well as the distribution of wealth and knowledge in Bolivia, but also all over the world are based and developed out of the injustice, inequality and exploitation of the colonial experience. By basing our thinking and theories on the assumption of equality of power and means of production we end up perpetuating and rendering invisible the necessary inequalities and violences that created the conditions of possibility for capitalism and modernity. Here, power must be understood as inherently productive. As Spivak (1993: 35) argues "[r]epression is then seen as a species of production. There is no need to valorise repression as negative and production as positive." This conception of power is rendered visible through its connection with knowledge. Power/knowledge in other words renders power intelligible as "lines of knowing constituting ways of doing and not doing" (37). The coloniality of power/knowledge reveals the how both power and knowledge simultaneously work to perpetuate and normalise each other. Coloniality was not established and maintained just over the regulation and governance of resources and population; it cannot be dissociated from the knowledge production. Coloniality of power allows for/necessitates the creation of a certain specific from of knowledge, or episteme.

Coloniality of knowledge

As the challenges posed by the CIDOB show, even when we think of fighting for emancipation and decolonisation we risk ignoring or even to remaining within the structures and logics that we are fighting. To rethink modernity as connected and co-constitutive of coloniality, becomes particularly important when we analyse the geopolitics of knowledge. Failing to do so means that we fail to understand the problematic assumptions of the political systems we live in.

With coloniality of knowledge the aim is to disrupt the idea of modernity put forward since the Enlightenment period, as the result of a revolution within Europe guided only through reason. Tvetzan Todorov (1999) has shown in his book *The Conquest of America: the question of the other*, that modernity as well as European identity (or conceptions of the self) have been constructed and made possible through the colonial encounter after 1492. "Europe's hegemony over the new model of global power concentrated all forms of the control of subjectivity, culture, and especially knowledge and the production of knowledge under its hegemony." (Quijano 2008: 189) This meant that the whole world started revolving around – or at least was conceived as – revolving around Western and European hegemony.

It is a very widespread critique among postcolonial scholars to argue that European identity, as rulers of the world and as the point of reference for human and social development constructed the colonized and Indigenous as its other, as the ones who are not (yet) civilised, as premodern, or on the way to developing: as lacking something (writing, religion, humanity, civilisation) (Escobar 1995; Krishna 2009; Young 2001).

This constitutive marginalisation of the colonised, and specifically the Indigenous, was rendered invisible, setting the Indigenous 'condition' of marginality and inferiority into a pre-political space and moment, into the necessity of becoming civilised (European), of overcoming the lack or else disappearing in the museums of archaeology and ethnology of the European metropolis. Situating the colonised as the pre-political meant that she/he was seen as being without history, or even as being before history. History starts once the 'white' male comes, once development and the linearity of time can be traced. But the lack (or that what is judged missing) is not so easily filled, or erased, rather because it is not an endogenous lack but rather an exogenous, imposed lack. The colonized are perpetuated into the outside, into a non-time (a time before time begins), where no matter what they do, they can never escape the erasure their agency in world history. This leads to their constant projection as outsiders, exterior to society, as helpless victims of past injustice for which nobody seems really responsible because we have evolved into our (post)modernity.

This conception was reinforced with the second wave of colonisation during the 19th century and perpetuated the image of the modern white Man as being the centre of the world and the natural (the obliged) conqueror of the world (in order to save the 'less well-off' from their eternal misery). The discovery of the Americas, perhaps, had a bigger impact then following colonisations. As Todorov (1999) argues, the impact of the encounter did not only change the lives of the Indigenous populations for ever, but also those of the Europeans. The encounter was significant, because it meant to face completely alien cultures and civilisations. This resulted in a highly problematic relationship, because the colonisers were, according to Todorov, completely incapable of understanding the position and logic of the Incas, for example. This incapacity to

render the Indigenous discourses, and practices intelligible was dealt with by depicting them as inferior, barbarians and animals that had to be colonised.

In order to better understand this reaction Deleuze and Guattari (2004: 473-476) make an interesting point when they argue that only 'things' that have been anticipated by a society can be understood/made intelligible. This would help us understand the incapacity of the Spaniards in particular, but also more generally of the Europeans to understand the 'newly' discovered societies in the Americas. There was from the side of the Europeans no space where interaction or communication could have taken place. Therefore, in order for the Indigenous to be intelligible, in order to establish a relationship, they had to be forced into known structures, narratives and practices, these then had to be reinforced and perpetuated.

> A *new world,* one that encompassed both metropolitan and colonial territories, appeared on the horizon of European imaginaries. The "people without history" who, according to G. W. F. Hegel, would constitute the new frontier of European civilization were conceptualized as the tabula rasa on which the principles and accomplishments of Western rationality (religious beliefs, scientific advances, and humanistic paradigms) could and should be inscribed. (Moraña, Dussel, and Jáuregui 2008: 7)

But the necessity of linking coloniality with modernity, and as the two being co-constitutive, lies within its negation, and the marginalisation of alternative and competing ways of thinking and knowing. As Shaw (2008) argues, coloniality is a lived experience, that is, rendered invisible, or forgotten. The characteristic of this new form of legitimation is based upon a specific organisation and hierarchy of humanity based on race, by organising time as a 'universal' linear or at least progressive and dialectical, and, last but not least, by territorialising sovereignty.

With this structure the 'West' had come up with a system of knowledge and of governance, which set its assumptions as well as its constitutive violences into pre-historical/political time/space, rendering them and the following violences and marginalisations at best regrettable necessities. Knowledge, as Shaw (2008) and Mignolo (2005; 2007) among others have argued, is constructed upon a certain number of assumptions and norms (science *versus* dogma), defining what is knowledgeable and what not (rational *versus* belief), and how this is knowledgeable. These norms have served to legitimise certain assumptions (for example the Cartesian subject) and to prioritise certain forms of knowledge (science, quantitative) over others (indigenous, symbolic, qualitative), as well as to legitimise and perpetuate certain practice and structures. As Maldonado-Torres (2007) asserts that European-coloniser was made modern through colonisation and the resulting racial and gendered hierarchisation of humanity.

As we can see, it is very difficult to establish a clear boundary between coloniality of power and coloniality of knowledge as both simultaneously construct, reinforce, and normalise each other. Nevertheless a differentiation is necessary since both tackle two different aspects of coloniality, or rather both allow us to understand coloniality from two different perspectives, each one shedding light to each other and to coloniality.

Until now I have broadly depicted how coloniality of power and knowledge work. But I think it is also important to ask why coloniality works so successfully over time. In order to make sense of it, we have to understand how 'Western' knowledge and ways of knowing are determined and governed by assumptions of the subject, time, space and sovereignty that hold the whole structure together (Shaw 2008: 17-38). These

basic assumptions and practices are set into a pre-political, historical moment and space where they remain out of the realms of negotiation, rendering certain exclusion and marginalisation necessary and logical.

In other words, the assumption of the Cartesian subject for instance is set as a given, as true; it is projected as exterior to its consequences and implications and thus outside possible negotiation. As a consequence they cannot be challenged, and ensuing conclusions serve to reinforce and perpetuate these underlying assumptions. By excluding the founding assumption from the realm of discussion, the only possible changes or negotiation can be made within these specific system of thought. This facilitates a claim to objectivity, and prioritises knowledge and thought that presents itself as objective representation of an assumed reality. Whereas, for example, a symbolic form of knowledge is not based on representation but is always already the world itself, which it presents, representation in this system of thought becomes difficult if not impossible (Estermann 2004). The problem is, as Robert Bernasconi (1997: 188) argues, that, 'Western' philosophy traps any competing form of philosophy in a double bind: either they were so similar that any distinction practically disappears, or they are so distinct that they are dismissed as being philosophy. Through these mechanisms and strategies the West, the coloniser, has successfully managed to either disqualify or internalise opposing and alternative ways of knowing into their meta-narratives and, in doing so, to reinforce and perpetuate their dominance.

The system presents itself as closed, whatever happens inside is explained as a logical unfolding of events. Every other form is, from the beginning, excluded and delegitimised. As a consequence any critique must be formulated in such a way as to fit within the established norms or else it will not be recognised or considered pertinent. It

thus disables and renders subaltern any challenge that questions the underlying assumptions, for example a politics that is not based on representation but on symbols and rituals such as Andean philosophy (Estermann 2006). Politics and transformations are restricted to taking place within the system, only allowing forms of critique that adhere to the rules, conserving basic structures, and merely transforming appearances or superficial characteristics.

The implication of this form of power/knowledge, as we can see, went far beyond affecting forms of production and administration of resources; the connection between knowledge creation, and governance of resources and population were critical for the perpetuation and normalisation of coloniality over time and space.

Colonialism has disrupted and changed any conception of history, development or progress that might have existed in the colonised world and imposed colonialism as a turning point, or a before and after. It is a rationale which explains everything before colonialism as building up to the moment of colonialisation and western dominance, and everything since as a continuation or result of the colonialisation process. Any other accounts have been dismissed, any other perspectives erased. Within an Indigenous perspective we might argue that, yes, colonialism was a pivotal moment in their lives and worlds, which led to suffering, violence, and oblivion, but one, I would argue, that must not be seen as its only referent. Their own history as is being revealed today, continues; colonialism thus is just one more experience, one amongst a host of other important events.

Coloniality of being

As I have tried to show through the discussion of the concepts of coloniality of power and knowledge, coloniality has emerged and persisted in time and space, governing modes of production populations. Yet there is one dimension that has been left disregarded until now, but one that is important because it is a cross section of coloniality of power and knowledge. As Mignolo asserts, to speak about decoloniality means to start, not from being but from the coloniality of being. "Decolonial thought always presupposes *colonial difference* […]. This is the exteriority in the sense of outside (barbarian, colonial) constructed by the inside (civilised, imperial)" (Mignolo 2007: 29 my translation, my emphasis). Out of the three discussed concepts, coloniality of power/knowledge, coloniality of being seems to be the most difficult to grasp. This might be because, perhaps, it is least developed in the literature, but more importantly I think, because it touches upon one of the most important and widely discussed issues of 'Western' Philosophy, namely the question of being as such.[12] Maldonado-Torres (2007) offers us an extensive and in depth analysis of the construction as well as the implication of the coloniality of being.

> And if coloniality of power refers to the interrelation between modern forms of exploitation and domination, and coloniality of knowledge deals with importance/role of epistemology and the general function of the production of knowledge in the reproduction of colonial regimes of knowledge, coloniality of being, then, refers to the lived experience of colonisation and its impact to language. (129-130)

Following the lead of Mignolo and Quijano he sets out to show how the modern conceptions of being have simultaneously emerged within the colonial encounter and

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[12] In this sense, in this work, I wont discuss in depth the concept due to the limitation of time and space available. Nevertheless it seems to be necessary to at least give an overview of the discussion on this concept, since it helps us to open up doors and spaces to think about decoloniality.

the repercussions this event had on the academical and philosophical inquires. He also

addresses how the discussions on being have been rendered it useless for the colonised

and marginalised. He reveals how colonial power as well as knowledge were imprinted

on and affected the life experience of the (colonial) subject. For him

> A Heidegger failed to examine the 'dark side' of the cartesian formulation.
> His ontological turn ignores the coloniality of knowledge and being as
> foundations of modern thinking. So that the cartesian epistemology as well
> as the heideggerian ontology presuppose in their foundations the coloniality
> of knowledge and the coloniality of being. In what was presupposed in the
> cartesian subject, but not made explicit we find the fundamental connection
> between the coloniality of knowledge and the coloniality of being. The
> absence of rationality is in modernity linked to the idea of absence of 'being'
> in racialised subjects. (Maldonado-Torres 2007: 145 my translation)

In this sense he argues the formulation of 'I think therefore I am' should be

reformulated to 'I think (others do not think) therefore I am (others are not).'

(*ibidem.*144). Again here Maldonado-Torres's point is not one of the denial of

Heidegger's ontology *per se*, rather he is making an argument for questioning the

existing and dominant assumptions, the epistemologies as well the ontologies of being.

By reinserting the constitution of 'being' into its historical and political context of

colonialism, he is interested in disrupting the system I have described this in the

previous sections. By questioning the founding assumptions of being, of what it means

to be, he is trying to break out of apparent inescapable perpetuation and legitimisation

of colonial violences. Coloniality of being then wants to open spaces from where other

forms of beings, colonised beings, speak out of the colonial difference, out of the

colonial encounter and experience. By revealing the founding violence as not being

naturally given, but rather the result of specific power relations, and the imposition a

specific hegemonic forms of thinking and knowing, he is opening the possibility for

discussion and critique, a space where the founding assumptions can be renegotiated.

Coloniality of being reflects on the lived experience of coloniality as well as the construction of the colonial subject, but simultaneously transcends the coloniser-colonised binomial, revealing the co-constitutions of the subaltern, the colonised almost non-being, or not yet being and the coloniser, civilised, being.

> Coloniality of Being, then, does not merely refer, to a reduction from the particular to the generality of the concept or a specific horizon of meaning, but to the violation of human sense of alterity, to the point where the alter-ego become a sub-alter. This actually happens with regularity in war, is transformed into an ordinary matter through the idea of race, which plays a crucial role in the naturalisation of the non-ethics of war through practices of colonialism and racial slavery. (Maldonado-Torres 2007: 150)

There is one dimension which Maldonado-Torreses's analysis of the coloniality of being which he does not discuss sufficiently. By this I mean the relational implication of coloniality of being. As discussed in previous sections, colonial discourses have often portrayed the colonised as living in the past, pre-modern, savages, thus erasing their histories, but also disrupting relations and forms of relations previous to the colonial encounter, thus denying relations that were outside of the colonial logics. In this sense the colonised were only allowed to have colonial relations among each other and with the colonisers, all other forms were forbidden.[13] If allowed the Indigenousness was relegated to the private sphere where it remained hidden. Coloniality of being means the atomisation of being as it strips being from *being with* if we use Jean-Luc Nancy's (2000) terminology; it is then a non-being. It cuts the colonial subject out of her relationality, of her socio-historical context, putting her into what we may call a 'non-relation' of colonialism, where the coloniser imposes its colonial relation upon the colonised. To paraphrase Deleuze and Guattari (2004), it is to cut all connection of a body that only exist, and survives through and on the outside, through its relationality

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[13] See for example the missionary missions as well as the bureaucratisation of the Caziques, in the Andes.

with the outside. A *being with* without the with. A body implanted and maintained alive through its connection (relation) to the coloniser and his world.

Thus coloniality of being is not just a perpetuation, legitimisation of violence based on racist organisation of economical and political power, it is also a deterritorialisation of the colonised (literally, through for example forced labour in the mines and metaphysically, in the sense of being denied their own historical accounts and religious practices) and reterritorialisation into a space where the colonised founds himself implicated in the process of becoming European, because all other becomings have being negated (see similar point made by Noyes 2010: 47). At the same time, you are constantly reminded that this is an impossible becoming, and your – for example – Indigenous identity is again and again performed on you. The impact of coloniality on the being and the subject, (and the colonial beings) played and still plays a crucial role in the constitution and maintenance, as well as perpetuation of modernity and capitalism as narratives (postcolonial literature) but also practices, and material experiences of everyday life.

As Karena Shaw argues the indigenous, the colonised are the angels that allowed for the emergence of the state and modernity. That is in order to resist within the state the Indigenous today has to be recognisable as Indigenous, has to perform as Indigenous (as the coloniser has identified the Indigenous), otherwise his legitimacy and authenticity is immediately questioned. Thus the Indigenous we might argue in order to be recognised is trapped in becoming Indigenous whereas at the same time as Fanon (2008) has shown he is in constant becoming like the coloniser. Coloniality of being is that situation of impossible becoming which is imposed upon the colonial being, a seemingly inescapable situation. Coloniality of being refers to this impossible situation

of having to play by the rules that are responsible for your destruction, where the only option is your disappearance either by attempting the impossible becoming European, or by getting crushed by attempting to withstand (becoming something different). The coloniality of being plays back on the coloniality of power, providing him with the subaltern who can be exploded, violated and killed, coloniality of knowledge assures that there is no escape, and perpetuates the situation, explaining the situation of the subaltern as lamentable but necessary and/or inescapable.

Coloniality of being as well as coloniality of power and knowledge is about enabling to speak out of what Mignolo calls colonial difference. Out of this colonial space of domination and violence, where as Maldonado-Torres (2007: 143) says "the encounter with death in one way or an other always comes too late, because death is always already as a continuos threat." Decoloniality implies to speak out of the coloniality of power, knowledge and being, to think and write out of the lived experience of colonialism. Coloniality of being as the point where coloniality of knowledge and coloniality of power meet, is the opening of the possibility of other-relations to emerge, different to the ones of domination and violence imposed by colonialism, where other-lives, other-economies, other-political theories are made possible. In other words decoloniality comes out of the colonial difference, the experience of colonialism, out of the coloniality of power, the coloniality of knowledge and the coloniality of being.

Chapter Three

De-coloniality

> The political and social institutions that govern us have been shaped and organized to serve white power and they conform to the interests of the states founded on that objective. These state and Settler-serving institutions are useless to the cause of our survival, and if we are to free ourselves from the grip of colonialism, we must reconfigure our politics and replace all of the strategies, institutions, and leaders in place today.
>
> Taiaiake Alfred (2009: 20)

In Taiaiake Alfred's book, different topics that have been discussed in the previous sections of this text remerge. Although Alfred writes for and about his own people , the current demonstrations in Bolivia by the Indigenous populations reveal similar problems with the state. It seems to be the case that even if the state is reformed, as it is in Bolivia, the decolonisation process is far from complete. Alfred raises an intriguing point, questioning the utility of the state and Settler serving institutions as tools for the struggle against coloniality, for survival, and freedom. The implication of these words is big, since it puts into question for instance the current strategy of the Indigenous movements in Bolivia. It is a strategy that has lead the changes, as Linera (2011a) has argued. Following Alfred's statement, we might reach to the conclusion that, even though the state is being reformed, that while political participation and the legal fights for land and autonomy, might lead to a better acceptance and integration of Indigenous communities, or to regaining parts of the ancestral territories, as well as to larger degrees of autonomy, these strategies and fights do not tackle the fundamental

structures. This would mean that these struggles do not change the conditions of possibility, which have lead to the exclusion and marginalisation in the first place.

Thus, failing to acknowledge this, we will always risk re-inscribing the colonial relations we wanted to overcome in the first place. As I have discussed through the concepts of coloniality, and coloniality of power, knowledge, and being, the re-inscriptions often already happen in the thinking processes, in the analysis of a situation. Then, the "colonial expansion was also the colonial expansion of forms of knowledge, even when such knowledges were critical to colonialism from within colonialism itself (like Bartolomé de las Casas) or to modernity from modernity itself (like Nietzsche)."(Mignolo 2008: 247)

Decolonisation is often used to describe a specific form of juridical and political (or even economical) independence of a state, or region, thereby limiting its use to a very specific set of events that mostly took place in the second half of the 20th century in Asia or Africa and after the first quarter of the 19th century in Latin America.

Until now, I have concentrated on colonialism and coloniality, their implication and continuity on our daily lives. This does not mean that colonial practices of domination did not meet resistance, that there were no oppositions against the imposition of colonial forms of knowledge and being. The history of coloniality, if we look closely and listen to the stories of the colonised (then much of it has been downplayed, ignored or forgotten) then we can see that since the beginning of the colonising project we find acts of resistance, peacefully as well as violent forms, some more successful than others. Names such as Tupac Katari, Sitting Bull, or the Zapatistas come to mind here, as well as the works of Waman Poma, or also Frantz Fanon, as part

of a non-exhaustive list of perfect examples of the attempts of resistance to coloniality, and searching for alternative futures. De-coloniality refers to a project or process of change seeking not just to reveal the coloniality of power, knowledge or being, but to change the dominant 'paradigms' and structures of power from the colonial difference (Mignolo 2008).

Thus I argue that coloniality is more than an aptitude or a form of governing. It imposes a form of thinking and being, it imposes boundaries and hierarchies, it means oppression and exploitation, it means to deny relationships by forcing new relationships. Thus the question becomes what can be done in order not to reproduce those colonial structures, over and over again. But coloniality is not just about repression and exploitation. Coloniality creates beings, relations, knowledge, history and forms of living – it is a constitutive power. It creates the conditions of possibility for modernity to take place, and be lived by us today.

> The scenario is simple: Western expansion was not only economic and political but also educational and intellectual. […] Quite simply the colonial difference was not considered in its epistemic dimension. The foundation of knowledge that was and still is offered by the history of Western civilization in its complex and wide range of possibilities provided the conceptualization (from the Right and the Left) and remained within the language frame of modernity and Western civilization." (Mignolo 2008: 231-232)

Yet it is as we have seen above a very restrictive power; it only allows for the creation of specific epistemologies, of specific strategies of resistance. As a result, by not questioning the founding assumptions we end up, as in the case of the Indigenous, involuntarily perpetuating and normalising the conditions that led us to the current situation. This does not mean that resistance is useless, or unnecessary. Neither does it mean that we have arrived to the end of history as Fukuyama asserted in the 1990s.

Perhaps we are best served by resuming some of the problems of the decolonisation process in Bolivia. In the current Bolivian context, decolonisation seems to be reduced to the changes that are going on in two places. The first is the state. In Bolivia, it is said that decolonisation took its biggest step with the adoption of the new constitution, and the declaration of the Plurinational State, composed equally by indigenous and mestizo members of society.

Second, decolonisation is seen as something exclusively for the Indigenous peoples. It is them who are seen as the main (only) beneficiaries of the reforms. It is them regaining their ancestral lands (as far as possible without compromising the national interest). It is about regaining, preserving and promoting Indigenous ways of living, of Indigenous cosmologies, knowledge. Decolonisation has become only about the Indigenous regaining a specific (lost?) authenticity because of the coloniality.

These two readings of decolonisation in Bolivia bear many problems. As I have discussed in the first part of this dissertation, by restricting decolonisation to a legislative and regulating problem, one therefore tends to delimit decolonisation as a juridical and political problem. Doing so ignores the ramifications that coloniality has on the present. It further reduces the concept of coloniality to a number of problems that appear solved through top down decisions by the government and parliament. In the second case by projecting decolonisation as an almost exclusive Indigenous issue, what seems to occur is a reaffirmation of the Indigenous as the helpless victim, unable to speak for himself. Rather than decolonize, these reforms therefore risk perpetuating colonial narratives and identities, because they are thought out of limited understandings of coloniality and colonialism.

Let us go back to Alfred's quote from the beginning of this section. After acknowledging the problems with the current state based strategy of juridical, and political acceptance and integration, he goes on to lay out a different path.

> "The transformation will begin inside each one of us as personal change, but decolonization will become a reality only when collectively both commit to a movement based on an *ethical* and *political* vision and consciously reject the colonial postures of weak submission, victimry, and raging violence."
> (Alfred 2009: 20 emphasis in the original)

Alfred touches an important dimension by stating that decolonisation is not just a collective struggle but also a personal one. It is about the personal becoming (decolonial). Yet as I have discussed under coloniality of being such becomings, or actually general becomings of the colonised, are difficult. She or he is always forced into a becoming white (Fanon 2008), thus reasserting the categories of Indigeneity, as well as the idea of progress (from Indigenous savage, to civilised 'white') created by the colonisers. The difficulty lies in the continuing coloniality of society in North America, Latin America, but also in Europe. The Indigenous, the colonised remain marginal, and victims of oppression and exploitation. As I have argued with the case of the Indigenous of the Bolivian Amazon, the problems of intelligibility remain an issue, if ways of thinking and knowing are not decolonized. As a consequence a becoming decolonized of the Indigenous or colonised, may not be understood from the hegemonic position, because this becoming means necessarily to move outside of the system of intelligibility of the coloniality of knowledge. The Indigenous thus remains subaltern. This leads to the conclusion that any attempts to decolonize must always also aim to decolonize the hegemon, the coloniser, all of society.The question is then not of opening up to the Indigenous, because opening does not imply a radical transformation of founding structures, rather just means inclusion, and as Alfred criticises this is not enough.

It is here that Deleuze and Guattari might offer us an interesting path that has to be explored. The decolonisation as discussed by Andrew Robinson, and Simon Tormey (2010: 34) in their Deleuzian critique of Spivak argue that "[t]he West is here to learn from the other, but not in the modality of Western thought – rather, in the form of its collapse, its return to 'provincial' status as one among many transversal becomings." This means that in the idea of becoming, the ('Western') thinker

> "becomes Indian, and never stops becoming so – perhaps "so that" the Indian who himself Indian becomes something else and tears himself away from his own agony. We become animal so that the animal also becomes something else. […] Becoming is always double, and it is this double becoming that constitutes the people to come and the new earth." (Deleuze and Guattari 1994: 109)

Becoming Indigenous is thus a disruption of coloniality of being, disrupts the idea of hierarchy, "stresses the possibility of advancing an outside, not only of Eurocentric ways of thinking, but also of Eurocentric 'statism'." (Robinson and Tormey 2010: 21) This 'becoming' opens up the possibility of relations other than the ones imposed by coloniality for the Indigenous, of new becomings without having to always first demonstrate their authenticity. "What is important is that the other speaks, not whether they speak 'truly' or not." (Robinson and Tormey 2010: 24)

This leaves us with the question from where does decolonisation come from? Already in Deleuze and Guattari the challenge comes from a possible outside of Eurocentrism. In this sense, Mignolo's critique of Eurocentrism by revealing the mechanisms through which the system perpetuates itself and appears inescapable, aims to expose possible sites where resistance exists, and can be thought. For Mignolo a critique as well as the resistance therefore must come out of what he calls the *colonial difference.*

> The limit of Western philosophy is the border where the colonial difference emerges, making visible the variety of local histories that Western thought, from the Right and the Left, hid and suppressed. Thus, there are historical experiences of marginalization no longer equivalent to the situation that engendered Greek philosophy and allowed its revamping in the Europe of nations, emerging together with the industrial revolution and the consolidation of capitalism. (Mignolo 2008: 234)

A critique must emerge out of the lived experience of coloniality, as otherwise the subaltern's voice remains excluded and oppressed. De-coloniality emerges out of the colonial difference, a liminal place where the violence is experienced and remembered, a space that emerged simultaneously with coloniality creating the possibility for the destruction of the latter. Decoloniality for Mignolo is the deconstruction and disruption of coloniality, it means to think the world from the liminal space of the colonial difference, in order to open up another life, another economy, another theory. To (re)construct out of the encounter of knowledges, for example of different Indigenous philosophies. This means to open up spaces where, as Deleuze and Guattari argue a becoming Indigenous of the European becomes possible, enabling the Indigenous to become *something else*[14].

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[14] In this sense it might be interesting to read the stories written by Subcomandante Marcos (1999; 2001) as a becoming Zletal (one of the major ethnic groups of the region), thus enabling them to become something else.

Conclusion

I have argued in this dissertation that coloniality and modernity have simultaneously emerged and can therefore not be treated separately. As I have shown in the first two chapters coloniality is present in our thinking and in our every day lives. De-coloniality is a complex concept referring to many processes, structures narratives and practices. It is a war for freedom that has to be fought on different fronts: from the personal to the collective fronts, from the fronts of the colonised (saving the Indigenous heritage) to the coloniser becoming Indigenous. In this sense, the efforts made by the Indigenous movements–all over the world–to include the colonial past into the local as well as meta-narratives, is not to receive pity, or for the West to feel bad and see them as helpless victims. Rather it is to fight back out of oblivion, to reveal the continuation of the colonial conditions in our daily lives, to open up spaces for future becomings.

From this perspective, Linera's reading about the process of change in Bolivia does not transcend the boundaries of coloniality, reaffirming the centrality and primordiality of the state (even if we are talking about the Plurinational State, a State nevertheless), renouncing to the challenge of opening up spaces to deconstruct coloniality in order to (re)construct a different reality (*something else*), more suitable to the life and expectations of Indigenous peoples, those "others", the outcast of the Colony and coloniality.

The case of the CIDOB helps to reveal: how colonial power violently continues to govern and marginalise the colonized; how it continues to exclude alternative accounts of the past, or discredits possible futures, how it creates universality where there is none; how it disguises oppression with democracy; how it normalises certain forms of

knowledge, and being; how it by hiding, and depoliticising its founding assumptions, it perpetuates itself within our current political, economical and social systems. Through this denunciation what is at stake for the Indigenous movements is the possibility of opening new paths (for them but also for everybody else) and ways of living together and experiencing life. To construct political and social projects not based on denial of the colonial experience but out of the lived colonial experience. Opting not for revenge and antagonism but for a new beginning based on new assumptions, assumptions based on their philosophies and cosmologies, based on their experience of the world. Thus they are already doing the first step, enabling us thinkers from the 'West' to become Indigenous.

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