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The case of MINKA movement in Bolivia and its aim to re-politicize indigenous peoples²

Since the dawn of the 21st century, indigenous identities and knowledge stand at the center of a scenario where new levers for social change are desperately sought for. In that scenario, indigenous knowledge and practices are taking on an increasingly important role in economic and social progress (Briggs 2005; Cleaver 1999). However, several authors argue that indigenous experiences and understandings have been idealized, leading to a process of de-politicization (Briggs 2005; Cleaver 1999; Zimmerer 2014). Their criticism is not based on the effectiveness of indigenous knowledge, but on its instrumentalization in order to support actions demanding social change (Cleaver 1999). These arguments made by Briggs, Cleaver and Zimmerer inevitably raise questions about the ways in which politics (and academia) produce knowledge about indigenous people and practices that reproduce de-contextualized representations.

The case of Bolivia is paradigmatic due to the contradictions observed in the current government of President Evo Morales' party MAS that had claimed as its main objective the decolonization of Bolivian society (Kohl et al. 2010). Evo Morales' election to office was based on broad support from indigenous social movements,

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who pinned their hopes on the promise of change for Bolivian society, where political structures of colonialism are still present (Canessa 2012). However, through its years in power, the MAS government lost support from a lot of those movements because its discourses were not reflected in practice (Gudynas 2010, Hoetmer 2007), and the agenda of the social movements was not fulfilled (Escobar 2014). Furthermore, “speaking like an indigenous state” (Zimmerer 2014) allowed the government to self-position in the electoral competition and also in the international arena whereas the promise of de-colonization is still a pending question (Canessa 2012).

It is against this background that we examine the emergence of MINKA (Indianista Katarista Movement), a Bolivian indigenous social movement whose main aim is to reflect on indigenous identities and knowledge in the contemporary context. The movement criticizes how the idea of the indigenous has been constructed and enacted by the MAS government, producing specific forms of power and knowledge. In addition, while consciously reflecting on the idea of “the indigenous” within the contemporary context, the movement aims to recognize forms of engagement and oppression that pervade the present in the country, thereby challenging colonial forms of power and bringing a new layer of politicization to Bolivian society.

This article³ explains how MINKA’s knowledge production, developed through embedded social practices, seeks to challenge “power-knowledge regimes” (Foucault, 1980) that oppress ‘the indigenous’ within the Bolivian society. Hence, through their knowledge-practices, which imply reflecting on historical processes, critically analyzing particular contexts, experiencing daily life, and re-thinking indigenous theories, they are challenging what is conceived as ‘the indigenous’.

³ This paper is based on my master’s thesis “RECOGNIZING KNOWLEDGE-PRACTICES IN LATIN AMERICAN SOCIAL MOVEMENTS: The case of MINKA in Bolivia and its aim at politicizing the indigenous” submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts (M.A.) awarded by the Philosophical Faculty of Albert-Ludwigs-Universität Freiburg i. Br (Germany) and FLACSO (Argentina). 27 of January 2016.

Describing MINKA⁴

MINKA is a group of young activists based in El Alto⁵, whose thinking revolves around two political lines: *Indianismo* and *Katarismo*. They describe themselves as part of a generation of activists that crystallized in 2003 with Felipe Quispe, in peasant-led blockades in La Paz city. As a formal organization, the Indianista Katarista Movement was born in May 2009 and was consolidated as a social movement after a conference on indigenous issues held in Puno, Peru, in the same year. Before the conference, MINKA members had met to discuss how they could contribute to conference debates. However, when MINKA participated, the event turned out to be a disappointment for them. According to one of its members, “it was made only for people who dress up ‘as indigenous’. They were using feathers and taking pictures of themselves, more interested in showing their bodies than in discussing anything” (anonymized, 08 December 2015). ‘The indigenous’ was stereotyped as folkloric.

This motivated MINKA to continue as a group. They began to organize courses and seminars, and to participate in demonstrations, while continuing the discussion about their key beliefs: *Katarismo* and *Indianismo*, but situating ‘the indigenous’ within the contemporary moment and criticizing its romanticization. Therefore, MINKA’s main objective has been to rethink ‘the indigenous’ renovating and

⁴ The paper is based on a Participatory Action Research methodological approach that proposes to develop the research in dialogue and collaboration with social movements (Casas-Cortes 2008, p. 28). It implies a relational mode of engagement that replaces traditional causal explanation for description, recreation, and translation (Escobar 2014; Latour 2005; Strathern 1991; Tsing 2005). Methodological tools suggested by Participatory Action Research are the ethnographic ones. (Escobar 1992; Goodwin and Jasper 2004; Johnston and Klandermans 1995; McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly 2001; Touraine 1988). The research uses qualitative methods to gather and interpret empirical materials, including ethnographic interviews. The information was gathered from open interviews to all MINKA’s members conducted during december 2015 and january 2016, and from materials developed by MINKA, such as texts, videos and other digital documents. Afterwards, communication with the activists continued, in order to be coherent with Participatory Action Research proposal. Regarding analytical tools, the research utilizes a combination of both global analysis and qualitative content analysis.

⁵ El Alto is the second-largest city in Bolivia, located adjacent to the Bolivian capital city: La Paz. El Alto is today one of Bolivia’s fastest-growing urban centers, with a population of 974,754 in 2011. It is also one of Bolivia’s poorest cities. Approximately 64% of the population live below the monetary poverty line, compared to a country-wide average of 60%. (Nilsson, & Gustafsson 2012)

updating the Indianista-Katarista theories to reflect on actual problems related to indigenous.

The Bases: *Indianismo* and *Katarismo*

MINKA members explain that their name comes from Indianismo and Katarismo ideologies. They understand the importance of recovering these ideas because of their historical relevance within indigenous struggles.

MINKA explains that, influenced by a context of colonial domination, in 1962 the Aymara and Kechua Indian Party (PIAK) was founded as an initiative of indigenous intellectuals. They developed what is known as *Indianismo*, which sees 'the indigenous' as the subject of colonization. They argued that, the political character of 'the indigenous' had been denied. In that sense, Reinaga (1970), one of its founders, argued that for the indigenous themselves to become the subjects of history, they have to be aware of their own history under colonial structures.

As of the *Indianista* movement was formed what is now known as *Katarismo*. The founders developed themselves closer to the struggle of labor movements and fought against the dictatorship in Bolivia. According to MINKA, Katarista struggle went further than indianista, because they not only developed an intellectual process about the condition of 'the indigenous' immersed in colonial relations as indianistas did, but they also sought to involve themselves in political actions.

MINKA's Knowledge-Practices

Through their critical thinking about 'the indigenous', MINKA's activism turned into an alternative space for knowledge production. They exemplify how social movements are engaged in the production of ideas that influence the creation of alternative political imaginaries, which are, in turn, intertwined with mechanisms of power.

Knowledge-practices⁶ theory has become a key framework that provides tools to explore these dynamics between power and knowledge (Casas-Cortes 2008). Such theorizing highlights the forms of power and knowledge that produce a kind of subjectivity, and the ways this can be challenged through knowledge production. It invites us to understand social movements as actors in the production of knowledge (Casas-Cortes 2008). Adopting arguments from this theoretical framework (Casas-Cortes 2008; Escobar 2012, 2014; Botero 2012; Santos 2005; Benford and Snow 2000; Goodwin 2004) one can observe how social movements are challenging contradictions embedded in society, rooted in historical processes and hegemonic power-knowledge regimes (Foucault 1980). That is why focusing on social movements as knowledge-producers, and not as simple “objects of study”, provides better intellectual tools to reflect about socio-political contradictions and also to understand alternative political imaginaries that social movements develop.

Based on K-P theory, this paper analyzes MINKA’s knowledge-practices and their influence on the production of alternative political imaginaries. Due to the fact that the experience itself is vast and rich, and in order to operationalize the knowledge-practice approach, two main sets of knowledge-practices are highlighted. a) Starting from concrete participants’ experiences, focusing on the micro-politics of their action; and b) reflecting on their critical analysis of reality. Moreover, this paper places a special emphasis on power relations that are cross-cutting to the production of knowledge.

It is important to highlight that MINKA’s thoughts are developed by a group of young indigenous activists living in El Alto in Bolivia, where many of them went to

⁶ Concept of knowledge-practice: knowledge is a type of social practice, which is embodied (Haraway 1991, 1997; Latour 1988, 2005; Varela 1999) and can take the form of experiences, narratives, and ideologies, but also theories, as well as critical analyses of particular contexts. Their creation, modification and diverse enactments are what is called “knowledge-practice” (Casas-Cortes 2008). Here the attention is placed on two components: MINKA’s experiences and critical analysis about Bolivian context in the contemporary moment and the situation of ‘the indigenous’ within this context.

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university. The development of their critique is, as Haraway (1988) states, located, contextualized and acquired through their own experiences.

Worth noting is that their embodied knowledge intends to challenge hegemonic understandings about ‘the indigenous’. MINKA challenges hegemonic knowledge both endorsed by the actual government of Bolivia and in other contested spaces, such as academia⁷.

MINKA’s embodied knowledge production is significant because of the recognition of MINKA members reflecting and theorizing about themselves, commingling the notions of subject and object.

Concrete lived experiences of MINKA members as sources of knowledge: the importance of micro-politics of knowledge

“We want to provoke a debate in the field of ideas” (anonymized, 04 December 2015). In other words, MINKA’s aims as a social movement are not only based on activism or mobilization, but also on rethinking and problematizing issues/received wisdom, and especially politicizing people through seminars, lectures, debates, reading sessions in public squares, presentations, training forums, and humor, among others. Since 2009, MINKA has been working on producing articles, conducting interviews, and have published three magazines.

The movement places importance on paying attention to the day-to-day experiences of its participants in the (circular) production of knowledge about ‘the indigenous’ in contemporary times. For MINKA, individuals’ experiences are considered a source of knowledge and reflection. In this sense, each member of MINKA brings

⁷ MINKA criticizes that **academia** in Bolivia also plays a role in the construction of an ideal indigenous. Therefore, not only does the government spread this notion but also other institutions do. Moreover, it is experienced in everyday life. However, due to limitations of the present research, the analysis places its attention on the criticism against the government of Evo Morales.

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knowledge from different fields and locations⁸. Their sources for knowledge production may be in academia, and also in community work and individual experiences. For instance, one member writes from his experience as a bricklayer, another from his university activism and yet another from mining and its relation with indigenous subjects.

This process of knowledge production is closely related to the notion of ‘prácticas-senti-pensantes’⁹ proposed by Arturo Escobar (2014) which implies the continuous and deliberate articulation of experiences, emotions, reasoning (or cognition), and the perceptions about the contexts that social movements aim to change.

Within these experiences that shape MINKA’s knowledge production, their early activities in public spaces are notable. During the initial years of the movement, the members would sit in public squares in La Paz and read authors who had reflected on the indigenous condition, such as Fausto Reinaga. The exchanges with people who came to hear them and the dialogues and debates they generated became a source of reflection and knowledge production.

Moreover, MINKA introduced art as part of their process of knowledge production. According to one of its members, they art is another way in which politics can be expressed: “politics is everywhere, also in music, that is why we decided to start expressing our ideas through these means” (anonymized, 03 December 2015). A notable activity was the first Aymara rock festival organized by MINKA in La Paz. Worth noting is that these practices are usually accompanied by a collective critical analysis in which participants reflect on how they felt and thought.

In order to understand the meaning of knowledge practices, it is necessary to break away from the understanding of politics as an ideal order, as a normative concept beyond questioning that it cannot even be discussed. Hence, reflecting on how MINKA creates and disputes areas of power, it seems necessary to seek knowledge

⁸ It is worth emphasizing that ‘location’ here does not refer only to geographical situation, but also social conditions, academic background, work and other factors that shape the different experiences of MINKA’s members.

⁹ This concept can be translated as ‘felt-thought-practices’.

production on the walls, in the streets, and other unconventional spaces. When opening the spectrum of spaces for knowledge production, diverse and innovative forms of political participation and collective action are observed in Latin America (Yung 2002). Songs, poetic imagery and parodies are developed with the intention of seeking approval and also of disturbing complacency.

MINKA and the micro-politics of Knowledge

MINKA's thought process is understood as a political process. It means that their knowledge production is involved in (concerned with?) power relations. They argue that "guided by *Indianista* and *Katarista* ideologies, MINKA develops itself, not only based on political activism, but also on proposals. In the present day, we understand our main objective as a struggle for power. However, this struggle is not for singular political power, but for total and diversified power" (anonymized, 04 December 2015).

MINKA's members try to problematize and rethink themselves in the current context of classical assumptions about 'the indigenous' and determining how these assumptions relate to power. This critical understanding is politically crucial in its aim to deconstruct, de-normalize and challenge power regimes, due to the inextricable relationship between knowledge and power. Therefore, MINKA's knowledge an integral part of power struggles.

MINKA's activists are convinced that changing power relations at the micro level can influence relations at the systemic level. Thus, they argue "we try to act from the micro practice of politics" (anonymized, 07 December 2015).

One concept emerging from MINKA's micro-politics of knowledge is the combination of community and individuality as a characteristic feature of their organization. MINKA proposes combining personal as well as collective elements, conceptualizing both characteristics as part of an interactive process in which the personal is influenced by the collective and vice-versa.

Moreover, MINKA's purpose is to develop the individual-collective production of knowledge as a horizontal process. These practices are premised on the belief that there is not absolute ignorance or absolute knowledge (Freire 2006).

In addition, this collective way of knowledge construction aims to establish relationships based on friendships in contrast to an instrumentalized and utilitarian association aimed at strategically bringing forward the diverse claims of the movement. In their own words, "if we only respond collectively, it affects individual creativity. Thus, we seek to challenge the romanticized criteria of the ideal indigenous community where the concept of the individual vanishes. Instead, we propose a combination of both individual and collective decision-making" (anonymized, 01 January 2016).

A final, fourth element involved in MINKA's process of knowledge-production is the concept of social 'rotativity'¹⁰. This notion, related to the idea of circularity, implies temporary possession of power, where no one centralizes power and all have access to it.

Reflecting on MINKA's critical analysis of reality

This section aims to analyze another component of MINKA's knowledge practices. As was explained, due to the richness of the MINKA case, but also because of methodological and time-constraints limitations, the present research focuses on two components of knowledge practice: experiences and critical analysis of reality. The paper then looks at the influence of these knowledge-practices in the creation of political imaginaries that intervene in important arenas of power.

De-politicization through romanticizing

¹⁰ According to MINKA the word is an interpretation of indigenous conception which in Spanish is translated as "rotatividad social"

MINKA's knowledge production is reflected in their criticism of the current government in Bolivia that, according to MINKA, reproduces classical stereotypes about 'the indigenous' and consequently de-politicizes them. The movement argues that the MAS government promotes an idea of 'the indigenous' that is abstract, idealized and romanticized, resembling the notion of "peasantry". The indigenous is identified as a "person who does not steal and who lives in a harmonious relationship with nature, someone who is not corrupt, a good person who lives in rural areas" (anonymized, 08 December 2015). This constitutes a form of ideology about 'the indigenous' which differs from those of indigenous people own experiences.

MINKA has shed some light on the fact that, through the romanticizing of 'the indigenous', the government ends up depoliticizing actual indigenous peoples. In MINKA's own terms, "the idealization of the indigenous has become political" (anonymized, 04 December 2015). Therefore, as Briggs (2007) argues, this process of homogenization of 'the indigenous' leads to the disregard of individual action, and ignores its relation to political power. It means that, if indigenous peoples are perfect and represent the expected human ideal, there is no need for conflict and for political struggle and therefore, there is no need to participate in the political sphere.

These reflections can be related to the argument put forward by Zimmerer (2014), who pointed out that romanticization can develop an image of 'the indigenous' and its practices and knowledges as static and timeless, frozen in time. Romanticization thus de-politicizes 'the indigenous' and rejects the role of indigenous peoples in the production of political imaginaries.

MINKA also challenges what Canessa (2004) defines as the myth of the homogeneous nation. The movement criticizes the idea of indigenous whose visions are apart from their position in society, cultural and social capital, and from intellectual and economic processes. Furthermore, "people are not concerned about finding 'difference'. There are no boundaries, yet one has influenced the other. In the Aymara communities, diverse forms of knowledge coexist and blend. There is no pure essence of 'the indigenous'" (anonymized, 08 December 2015).

The racialization of the Bolivian society

Adopting elements from indianismo, MINKA understands the Bolivian society to be based on cultural and racial¹¹ relationships. The movement argues that Evo Morales' government has not gone beyond colonial relations that existed before. The MAS government has failed in its aim to break with traditional colonial relations in Bolivian society. Rather, these colonial relationships are reproduced within the party. MINKA claims that power relations in general have not changed, and although 'the indigenous' occupy center stage in MAS's discourse, "it is [just] a pretext" (anonymized, 08 December 2015).

In the context of their claim against colonial boundaries, the movement denounces the reproduction of colonial relations within traditional political institutions such as ministries. Indeed, the latter are still dominated by "white people or traditional 'patrones' (i.e. employers or bosses), and indigenous peoples only serve for mobilizations sponsored by these institutions, or minor jobs such as driving or messaging" (anonymized, 03 December 2015). Hence, the long-awaited decolonization has not found a real institutionalized direction, because it is reduced to certain elites that are not characterized as indigenous.

It is important to briefly explain the main elements of MINKA's reflection about how colonial relations work¹² in Bolivian society. MINKA suggests that colonial mechanisms have historically denied the racialized condition of 'the indigenous', which engenders self-denial. Racialization has been based on the construction of a naturalized idea of 'the indigenous' as an inferior 'race' which has also underpinned

¹¹ Here the notion of 'Race' is considered as a political and social construct. Moreover, it is an "organizing discursive category around which has been constructed a system of socio-economic power, exploitation and exclusion, such as racism" (Gunaratnam 2003, p. 4). In that sense, the concept of racism from Hall is taking into account that: "Racism operates by constructing impassable symbolic boundaries between racially constituted categories, and its typically binary system of representation constantly marks and attempts to fix and naturalize the difference between belongingness and otherness" (Hall 1996, p. 445). Then racism must be understood as a sort of discursive practice "that has its own logic" (Hall 2000, p. 222). In that sense, it is a discursive practice of segregation, separation: "Racism is a structure of discourse and representation that tries to expel an Other symbolically –blot it out, put it over there in the Third World, at the margin" (Hall 1989, p. 16).

¹² This understanding was taken mainly from MINKA's publications, but also from interviews.

economic and political relations. Therefore, colonization through racialization has not only operated through representations, i.e. construction of the indigenous as inferior, but also based on material conditions. This denial of indigenous racialization made by the government is not a casual or unexpected result; rather, it has a specific function, which can be clearly observed in periods of political confrontation.

According to MINKA, in contemporary times, new mechanisms of colonization have been generated. The current situation of the indigenous “has changed from denying the condition of the racialized subject to vindicating the ‘indigenous identity’” (anonymized, 08 December 2015). Moreover, the recognition by the mainstream political institutions of the negation of the racialization process is made from a culturalist approach, which is reflected in the romanticizing of ‘the indigenous’ that consequently, de-politicized them.

According to MINKA, the government has re-created the colonial stigma of the Bolivian society, “characterizing the indigenous as superhuman and revitalizing racial prejudice, giving racism a charming appearance” (anonymized, 05 December 2015). Here Foucault’s idea that power should not be understood just as repressive, but as “productive” (of effects, subjectivities, practices) acquires central relevance. The romanticized, depoliticized but also racialized subject in contemporary moments is what MINKA seeks to deconstruct and challenge through their critical understanding of reality as part of their knowledge production.

MINKA recognizes that moving from a situation of devaluation to one of overvaluation of ‘the indigenous’ already implies a change. However, they argue that this change does not go beyond (or is limited to) the culturalist form of expression. To go beyond, MINKA proposes to “consider the past, not as a refuge, but as an experience of struggle, and the present, as the current time of struggle, with its economic and political configurations” (anonymized, 04 December 2015). This implies that the racialized subject should avoid attempts at self-affirmation through neo-colonial stereotypes.

Speaking like an indigenous state: the instrumentalization of indigenous knowledge

“The government contributes little to the indigenous reality; it only reproduces ‘pachamamismos’¹³” (MINKA)

MINKA criticizes the strategic use of indigenous knowledge made by the government, arguing that this instrumentalization enables the government to position itself not only at the national level, but also within the international arena. Therefore, MINKA questions the MAS government’s claims to power based on a “recurrent use of standardized linguistic expressions” (anonymized, 08 December 2015). MINKA argue that power depends on a manipulative, de-historicized and de-politicized instrumentalization of indigenous knowledge¹⁴. In this process, although indigenous identity may seem to be actively supported, the actual effect is its potential de-politicization. The MAS government uses indigenous knowledge in order to “help establish and consolidate its governing power, political legitimacy, and moral authority” (anonymized, 08 December 2015).

The re-politicization of ‘the indigenous’ through MINKA’s knowledge production: remaining challenges

As explained above, this paper aims at recognizing knowledge practices in social movements that bring about alternative political imaginaries that challenge hegemonic knowledge entrenched in power relations. Using theoretical tools that consider social movements as active actors in the production of knowledge, research focused on the particular case of the MINKA movement, which brings a novel perspective and processes of alternative reflection on the current situation of

¹³ The notion of “Pachamama” can be translated as “mother earth”. According to MINKA, “pachamamismo” is a political category that mirrors the discourse and political practice of the MAS-government. In idealizing Pachamama or aspects of the Andean world, the government conceals colonialism within Bolivian society.

¹⁴ Worth noticing is that MINKA does not reject indigenous knowledges or the achievements of social movements, and activists like them that have been struggling to render their knowledges visible. However, they question the strategic use of those knowledges. For instance, as was developed, MINKA adopts the indigenous notion of rotativity, yet the government adopts the same concept. However, MINKA argues that, in practice, this principle is not developed, it is only adopted rhetorically. This is an example from MINKA that intends to clarify their criticism about the instrumentalization of indigenous knowledges.

indigenous peoples' recognition in Bolivia. However, some Minka's critical analysis can be challenged from a number of perspectives that worth mention here.

Through their deliberate process of reflection and knowledge production, MINKA seeks to deconstruct the hegemonic understanding about 'the indigenous', and consequently, help in the process of rebuilding of a new understanding. They develop theoretical understandings about reality and reflections about the condition of 'the indigenous' in order to contribute to re-politicization of indigenous people. Therefore, MINKA's knowledge production should not be understood as separated from their political aim.

MINKA argues, "we do not have a romantic idea about the indigenous. We want to see ourselves as who we are, talking about the specific problems we have; that is, demystifying the indigenous and becoming political subjects" (anonymized, 05 December 2015). Therefore, a new notion of 'the indigenous', far from an abstract and romanticized perspective comes through a conscious production of knowledge. According to the movement, the idea of 'the indigenous' "must be understood beyond the historical resentment of 500 years, ethnocentrism, cultural folklore or from a biological vision" (anonymized, 08 December 2015). Similarly, they consider "the indigenous as a social, economic, political and historical subject, who in the economic sphere is the cheap and impoverished worker, in the political sphere, the person used for demonstrations and in the social sphere the one discriminated against because of his 'inferior race'" (anonymized, 08 December 2015).

One of the challenges related to the knowledge MINKA develops about the Bolivian society, particularly about the MAS government, has to do with the explanation about the connection MINKA build between romanticization of 'the indigenous' and their depoliticization. While it is clear that these ideas are based on indianismo and katarismo thoughts, the application of them in contemporary Bolivia lacks concrete and specific arguments. Therefore, the challenge for MINKA is to develop those arguments to justify their intention in the re-politicization of 'the indigenous'. This challenges their knowledge-practices and process of reflection.

Secondly, aspirations for change among MINKA-members require slow and steady effort to build political action and to articulate provisional agendas for political transformation. In that sense, as stated by MINKA members, they do not have a political programme to challenge the actual platform of the MAS government. Nevertheless, in a desired process of re-politicization, not only are a critical argumentation about the contemporaneous idea of ‘the indigenous’ and the practices that support this construction needed, but also required are new and specific political mechanisms that articulate political transformation.

Finally, the construction of a politicized indigenous people hence requires complex, time-consuming negotiation across boundaries of language, location, citizenship status, histories of resource control, gender, generation, and education among diverse subjects. However, none of factors is present in MINKA’s argumentation. Therefore, it is relevant for them to include multidimensional elements in their reflection about the idea of ‘the indigenous’.

Drawing Conclusions

The paper analyzed MINKA’s knowledge practices and their influence on the production of alternative political imaginaries. Its main argument was that social movements themselves, through their knowledge-creation practices, are providing alternative ways of knowing, in contrast to dominant understandings. These critical understandings carry important political and social implications. The main research question arose from the initial problematization about the strategic use of indigenous knowledge within the contemporary moment, where Bolivia appears as a paradigmatic case.

Regarding the theoretical framework of “Knowledge-Practice” theory, the article provided some key understandings of MINKA as an alternative space of knowledge creation. In that sense, the paper argued that social movements are challenging understandings and ideas embedded in society, rooted in hegemonic power-knowledge regimes. It focused on social movements as knowledge-producers, and thereby gathered alternative political imaginaries that social movements develop.

The analysis began with a description of MINKA. The Bolivian organization was characterized as a social movement, based on Indianista and Katarista ideologies, which brings together young indigenous activists from El Alto in Bolivia. Engaged in collective knowledge construction, MINKA critically rethinks 'the indigenous' in the contemporary era, and seeks to develop new subjectivities in order to engage itself in the re-politicization of 'the indigenous'. This explanation aimed at situating the experience of MINKA based on its origination, main beliefs, the content of their arguments, purposes and activities.

Due to the limitations of the research, the analysis focused on two of the components of alternative knowledge-practices: a) starting from lived experiences; and b) critical analysis of a particular context. After this analysis, a reflection was made of power relations that are cross-cutting to knowledge production.

The analysis initially focused on the processes and means used by MINKA in their knowledge production. It reflected on the development of MINKA's knowledge practices, how the movement organized itself to create knowledge, and the activities the movement followed (or pursued / undertook) in order to make their understandings known. MINKA's knowledge practices revealed their situated, embodied, and political conception of knowledge. These were based on concrete reflections of lived experiences within a varied space. Furthermore, among some of the alternative aspects of MINKA's practices the current use of art as part of their process of knowledge production can be considered.

A second element from MINKA's knowledge practices under analysis was MINKA's criticism of the present government. In order to generate new subjectivities in relation to the idea of 'the indigenous', MINKA's first step was to understanding their actual conception. Here, MINKA reflects on the Bolivian government which reproduces classical stereotypes about 'the indigenous people', and consequently, depoliticizes them. MINKA's understanding about Bolivian society, based on cultural and racial relationships, acquires special importance in understanding the power-knowledge regimes they deconstruct and challenge. In this sense, MINKA's main criticism is

that the MAS government has failed in its aim to break with colonial relations in Bolivian society.

A last critical analysis introduced by MINKA focused on the strategic use of indigenous notions by the government in its discursive aim to decolonize Bolivia. This allows us to reflect on the idea of power as intrinsically related to knowledge. This last reflection provided initial tools to understand the subsequent section about the relation between knowledge and power in MINKA's case.

The paper identified socio-political implications that emerged from MINKA's experience. MINKA's knowledge production shows its commitment to challenge power-knowledge regimes within Bolivian society. In this sense, while reflecting on and criticizing the idea of 'the indigenous' as foreign, MINKA sheds light on the notion of power as producer of relational subjectivities, exercised at the micro-level. Moreover, the paper explained that MINKA's struggles in politicizing 'the indigenous' imply - after reflecting on the movement's own construction of the idea of the indigenous - thinking about the indigenous as immersed in social, economic and political spheres, experiencing concrete problems in daily life.

A final section focuses on the challenges MINKA needs to tackle, according to my own perspective. One of the challenges relates to the knowledge MINKA members develop about Bolivian society and particularly the MAS government in relation to the connection built between the romanticization of the indigenous and its depoliticization. Secondly, aspirations for change among MINKA-members require a slow and steady effort to build political action and to articulate agendas for political transformation. Finally, it is important to reflect that the production of a politicized indigenous requires complex, time-consuming negotiations across languages, locations, citizenship status, histories of resource control, genders, generations, and education among diverse subjects. Nevertheless, not all of these factors are yet present in MINKA's arguments.

To conclude, I consider it important to reflect on research itself as a process of growth and constant self-challenge. Through the present research I have been constantly challenged, especially in relation to the 'what for' of engaging in research, and about

my role in perpetuating or challenging 'systems of truth' at the micro-level. In relation to Casas Cortes's (2008) argument, understanding social movements as knowledge producers implies - for the researcher - blurring the boundaries between the ideas of 'subject' and 'object' of study. This has implied, for me, continuous enquiry about my role as a researcher, and about the purpose of the research process. I consider it important to reflect that learning also refers to being aware of the systems of power-knowledge in which we are immersed, and which we can help to perpetuate or challenge. We should therefore understand learning as a complex process of questions and temporary reflections, and reject the notion of knowledge as fixed and complete.

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