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Bolivia's TIPNIS Road Conflict through the Lens of Xavier Albó's Writings

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Abstract

This paper focuses on the writings by Bolivian anthropologist/linguist Xavier Albó in relation to the widely publicized TIPNIS (Territorio Indígena y Parque Nacional Isiboro Sécure) road conflict in Bolivia's Amazon basin. The first part of this paper provides a brief historical review of the emergence of TIPNIS beginning with 1990's territorial rights march through its most recent related protest march in 2011 and its related ongoing controversies and conflicts. This background section provides the context for a discussion of selected Albó writings as contributions to the debates surrounding TIPNIS. His writing examines the multiple problematic impacts of TIPNIS as a controversial infrastructural project for its various environmental, indigenous rights, developmental, and coca-cocaine related issues and dimensions. The paper argues that a continuing concern throughout Albó's writing on TIPNIS is the importance of the struggle for indigenous political unity as a necessary foundation for the effective operations of Bolivia's innovative plurinational state.

Keywords
Indigenous communities, Plurinational State, terrotorial conflict, TIPNIS (Indigenous Territory and National Park Isiboro Sécure)

Resumen

Este artículo se centra en los escritos del antropólogo y lingüista boliviano Xavier Albó en relación con el ampliamente publicitado conflicto vial TIPNIS (Territorio Indígena y Parque Nacional Isiboro Sécure) en la cuenca amazónica boliviana. La primera parte del artículo ofrece un panorama histórico del surgimento del TIPNIS, con la marcha por los derechos territoriales a principios de los años noventa, hasta las marchas de protesta del 2011 y 2012 y los conflictos y controversias que las acompañan. Esta aproximación proporciona el contexto para discutir una selección de escritos de Albó que contribuyen al debate sobre el tema y examinan los múltiples y problemáticos efectos del TIPNIS como controvertido proyecto de infraestructura en problemática concomitancia con el medio ambiente, los derechos indígenas, aspectos vinculados al desarrollo y al cultivo de la coca. Este trabajo sostiene que una permanente preocupación que cruza los textos de Albó sobre el tema es la importancia de la lucha por la unidad política indígena, base necesaria para el funcionamiento efectivo del innovador Estado Plurinacional boliviano.

Palabras claves
Comunidades indígenas, conflicto territorial, Estado Plurinacional, TIPNIS (Territorio Indígena y Parque Nacional Isiboro Sécure)

> The publishers of the 1900 census predicted that in a few years the indigenous race if not completely erased from national life, at least would be reduced to a minimum. They did not expect that one hundred years later we would be speaking of *originarios* who are very much alive and now have even reformulated the Bolivian nation-state to be multi-ethnic, pluricultural and maybe even pluri-national. (Xavier Albó 1999. Author's translation)[1]

> The big question is whether *Convivir Bien* [Living Together in Harmony] can fit within the logic of power and political party dynamics. In the light of both the Plurinational Constitution and the Plurinational State, this logic must be reflected in *Vivir Bien* [Living Well]

[1] All translations from Spanish into English belong to the author. The author would like to express his appreciation for the excellent editorial assistance of Paula Durbin and Scott Odell yet any errors found herein are my own.

> and be prioritized by the new ministers. In the various discussions about TIPNIS, the most fundamental norm of *Vivir Bien* is dialogue and more dialogue, genuinely listening, getting inside the skin of the other side before imposing and claiming X or Y using mere slogans. Also get inside the skin of "Madre Tierra" [Mother Earth]. (Xavier Albó 2012b)

Introduction

This paper will discuss a selection of anthropologist/linguist Xavier Albó's publications reflecting his views and analysis of the highly polemical Isiboro Sécure National Park and Indigenous Territory (TIPNIS) road conflict in northern Bolivia, which has become the centerpiece of an ongoing national debate over its extractive development model for the eastern lowlands. This conflict has at its controversial core an officially recognized protected area and legally titled indigenous territory targeted to be crossed by a planned new road opening it to debated outcomes within Bolivian society. This conflict is between the state, together with its allies (national and foreign) and favored political constituencies on one side, and the indigenous inhabitants of the territory, allied with lowland indigenous federations and various public interest groups (e.g. environmentalists) in Bolivia and abroad, on the other. At stake in this conflict are issues of equitable socio-economic development, natural resource extraction, ecosystem degradation, Brazilian economic expansionism, the illicit coca-cocaine economy, and minority and collective indigenous citizenship rights and unity. This paper aims to highlight various important contributions of anthropologist/linguist Xavier Albó to this ongoing national debate.

The origins of the TIPNIS road controversy as a polemical public issue dates to l990, when a historic 35-day march Marcha por el Territorio y la Dignidad led by indigenous Yuracare, Chimane, Siriono, and Moxeno peoples from Trinidad, to La Paz which blew open the gates blocking recognition of indigenous collective land rights in Bolivian society, especially in the northern sub-tropical lowlands.[2] The march led to executive decrees from the national

[2] I will use the abbreviation TIPNIS for Territorio Indígena y Parque Nacional Isiboro Sécure throughout this paper. The term was first designated by these abbreviations with the advent of the Ley INRA in 1996 and used thereafter. However, this paper uses it in relation to the first indigenous march in l990 and thereafter. The mentioned controversial road project through TIPNIS originates in the town of Villa Tunari in the Cochabamba Department and ends in the town of San Ignacio de Moxos in the Beni Department.

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governing (Movimiento de Izquierda Revolucionaria) MIR led coalition granting collective territorial rights to these groups. In 1996, these executive measures became codified into law under the Ley INRA Ley de Servicio Nacional de Reforma Agraria, Ley 1750 by the subsequent Movimiento Nacionalista Revolucionario (MNR) led governing coalition. The Ley INRA not only secured TIPNIS legal status but also created a legal framework where indigenous peoples across Bolivia could stake their claims for official recognition and legal titling of collective territorial rights of their traditionally inhabited areas. Over time, the Ley INRA became recognized by Bolivian land reform experts as "Bolivia's second agrarian reform" –the first coming as a result of the MNR led revolution of 1952. (Colque, Tinta and Sanjinés 2016)

Over the next decade (2000-2010), nine other marches put demands on the negotiating table, propelling lowland indigenous groups toward attaining full Bolivian citizenship rights (IBIS 2013). Several of the new collective rights demands, such as indigenous political autonomy at the municipal level, gained traction as indigenous peoples´ agendas kept building on the successful activism and political capital generated by the 1990 TIPNIS march.

During 2004, a newly organized Pacto de Unidad, which formalized a political alliance between the lowland and Andean highland and Andean colonist (in tropical Bolivia) organizations, represented the potential for greater political empowerment set in-motion by the original TIPNIS march. The *Pacto de Unidad* agreement of 2006 blossomed during the year-long Constitutional Assembly sessions carving out the details of the path-breaking Plurinational Constitution, which codified new rights and concepts for both lowland and highland rural indigenous peoples. Subsequently and most evident in the most recent 2011 TIPNIS march, the *Pacto de Unidad* unraveled under MAS government pressures during a tumultuous governing period of tension, political conflicts, and deterioration in the mentioned innovative alliances.

This paper examines a representative sampling of Xavier's writings contributing to the Bolivian understanding and social activism surrounding the prolonged and animated debates surrounding the TIPNIS road controversy. My selection of Xavier's writings draws from various academic, advocacy, journalistic, and social media sources. Xavier has been a prolific writer and prominent public speaker on indigenous affairs especially indigenous movements in Bolivia since the early seventies. Since 2006 with the excitement surrounding the arrival of Evo Morales, the country's first

indigenous president, Xavier began writing a bi-weekly Sunday column in the national daily, *La Razón*, based in La Paz where his views and opinions have enjoyed wide readership. In addition, his numerous articles and opinions appear on the Centro de Investigación y Promoción del Campesinado (CIPCA) website (CIPCA.org.bo), the Jesuit-based NGO with development and educational programs with rural populations throughout Bolivia and where Xavier served as a founder/director and in other roles as a permanent member of its staff (Albó and Carmen Beatriz Ruiz 2017).[3] Although most of Xavier's prolific writings during his career at CIPCA have focused on the Aymara, Quechua and Guarani peoples in Bolivia, his publications have also addressed indigenous-related issues more widely in Bolivia and in the Americas with special attention to the Andean region in Peru, Ecuador and Colombia. In 2017 Xavier received the Condor of the Andes, the highest award given by the national government to a Bolivian civilian. Given his background as a prolific author and activist with CIPCA, Xavier is generally recognized in Bolivia as one of the original visionaries and ideologues of a Plurinational State.

The parameters of this paper cover a selection of Xavier's writings on TIPNIS in response to the 1990 march and its aftermath and a very impressive VIII Indigenous March in 2011 followed by a less successful one in 2012 along the same route to La Paz together with follow-up opposition activities and polemical debates flowing from that tumultuous national political development. The political controversy generated by 2011 and 2012 protest events remains ongoing despite the apparent stops and starts by the MAS government's continued pursuit of this infrastructural investment.

Key Questions to Be Addressed

The questions guiding my selective review of Xavier's writings on TIPNIS include the following: What aspects does he select to discuss and emphasize in relation to the TIPNIS conflict? What analytical frameworks and key terms does he use to make his arguments? What are his sources of evidence for commentary and critical opinions used for making his arguments and reaching conclusions? What is the value-added of his writings to the overflow of critical published commentaries with regard to the TIPNIS road project? Is there a common thread of concern throughout his writings tying together the various

[3] Most of the articles published in *La Razón* were also published in CIPCANotas (https://www.cipca.org.bo/analisis-y-opinion/cipcanotas) on the Análisis y Opinión section of the Centro de Investigación y Promoción del Campesinado (CIPCA).

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issues surrounding TIPNIS? And finally, what does Xavier suggest about the controversial motives behind and main objectives of the MAS government for undertaking such a major reversal in practice of its discourses and celebrated environmentally friendly development policy orientations represented by the TIPNIS project.

Article Outline

In the sections that follow, I will first offer background information on the TIPNIS conflict and its impacts during the 1990's. Next, I will focus on the controversy surrounding the MAS government's announced road plan thru TIPNIS in 2011-2012 and the backlash it generated from multiple organizations and media forms throughout Bolivia. Ultimately, these critical responses produced an opposition movement in the public spotlight most prominently displayed in the more successful VIII Indigenous March and via numerous struggles, debates, critiques and governmental maneuvers both legal and illegal to undermine this opposition. After this review of the evolving historical context surrounding TIPNIS, this paper turns to a selection of Xavier's writings as our guide to understanding the ongoing polemical TIPNIS road conflict in Bolivia.

1. Background to the TIPNIS Conflict

The 2011 TIPNIS protest march reflects citizen resistance to the government's effort to rollback the territorial rights accords from l990 and l996 (and the related articles of the 2007 Plurinational Constitution), along with recent lowland and some highland indigenous advances. In short, the 2011 march represents a collective defense of those rights established as a result of the l990's indigenous rights breakthroughs and cumulative follow-up governmental and concerned citizen actions and mobilizations. The MAS Party's and Evo Morales' ostensible development designs for the planned road revealed a radical shift from its development model presented during its presidential campaign and implemented though its initial years in office. Among the effects of the political fallout generated by this policy reversal were resignations of various high-level officials of the MAS government, who in turn joined the vocal and high-profile public opposition forces.

The TIPNIS territory/park is one of the most ecologically diverse areas in Bolivia and is inhabited by local indigenous populations of 12,000 people

residing in 67 communities.[4] The official reason given for the road project was to improve and modernize Bolivia's rustic road infrastructure and connect the Cochabamba and Beni regions to strengthen the movement of commerce and other needed rural development linkages and economic spin-offs. An important official argument was that the latter change would reduce traditional economic dependence on the Beni region on neighboring Santa Cruz, Bolivia's most economically dynamic region. The MAS government's official public justification and defense purported that it would increase social development (health and education) amidst the extreme poverty and social marginalization of the native inhabitants (Crabtree and Chaplin 2013, 17) within TIPNIS. Yet another possible explanation of such keen government interest in this particular road project was that the area holds hydrocarbon deposits –covering an estimated 27.5% of the TIPNIS area. (Makaran and López 2018)

Under Morales' presidential leadership, the MAS government initiated this construction of a paved road through the heart of TIPNIS without the prior consultation of the indigenous inhabitants, as mandated by domestic and international law. The absence of consultation for a new infrastructure project with probable negative social and environmental impacts on the local communities violated the previously mentioned accords for indigenous rights signed and promoted by the MAS government including its innovative Plurinational Constitution championing indigenous rights. The irony of an indigenous president having politically engineered a new path-breaking national constitution and frequently using a signature pro-environmental public discourse ("Madre Tierra") for national and international audiences threatening the birthplace of collective land rights legislation was a remarkable development paradigm flip flop.

Yet other ironies abound, such as the action of Evo Morales as a leader of the Federaciones del Trópico de Cochabamba who in a follow-up negotiation years later resulting from the indigenous TIPNIS march signed the original accord with TIPNIS leaders establishing its southern boundary. This agreement demarcated its separation from the Chapare which is the coca-growing area of the Andean colonists (*cocaleros*) supplying the raw material and coca paste for illicit cocaine processing and global trafficking. The Chapare's frontiers for coca leaf production had been advancing in the lowlands through Andean small

[4] The lowlands of Bolivia represent two-thirds of Bolivia's land mass and incorporates a part of the southern Amazon basin and the Gran Chaco eco-system characterized by dryland forest ecologies.

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farmer colonization processes since the l960's. In 2011, some 30,000 Aymara and Quechua-speaking colonists (*cocaleros*) cultivating coca adjacent to the TIPNIS areas as their main cash crop (the growth of the entire Chapare province went from 131,727 in l992 to 263,137 in 2012 for an annual growth rate of 3%).

In the heyday of Morales as the coca growers' flamboyant sindicato leader and in the context of growing respect for indigenous rights during the first half of the nineties, the cocalero movement's overt support for the TIPNIS territorial rights struggles could be recognized, for example, from the term Territorio appearing in large letters on cocalero placards during their public protests in the Chapare and Cochabamba. This was when TIPNIS struggles for territorial rights represented invaluable political capital which could be used by the cocaleros to help boost and legitimize their own protest struggles at that time.

In 2011, the TIPNIS protest march covered the same road route of 1990, yet took almost twice the time involved (64 days) to reach La Paz (Fundación TIERRA 2012) given the interruptions vis-à-vis attempted MAS government manipulations and intransigence. The government deployed measures such as pseudo-community consultations, counter-mobilizations, roadblocks by allied Andean colonists (under federations in alliance with MAS government direction), and police repression of the marchers. However, these latter repressive tactics backfired in the realm of public opinion, boosting the protestors' public aura as well as their determination to continue marching to La Paz, where cheering throngs embraced their cause.

With the mounting of public pressure on the MAS government and the arrival of the marchers in La Paz, President Morales was compelled to receive their leaders in an official meeting at the presidential palace and publicly recognize their demands as legitimate. At this political juncture, damage-control efforts in the face of this widespread public pressure and outrage led the MAS government to reverse its policy once again by passing a new law (Ley 121) ostensibly protecting the TIPNIS territorial integrity (giving it a protective "intangible" legal status), which in principal invalidated the road project or any infrastructural plans or investments aiming to affect it.

A significant contextual difference between the 1990 and the VIII and IX indigenous marches is that the latter were in a context of Brazil's growing hegemonic economic interests established in the framework of its Amazonian development plans, *Corredor Bioceánico* and *Infraestructura Regional Suramericana* (IIRSA). IIRSA includes major infrastructural and energy investments in five countries connecting Brazil to the Pacific Coast and global

markets. Through a broad swath of South America, IIRSA will consist of new road networks, hydroelectric dams, ports, and modified waterways to facilitate the movement of Brazilian commodities such as soybeans to international markets (Makaran and López 2018; CEDIB 2010-2017). These interests were also consistent with the MAS government's surprising embrace of classic neo-liberal extractive development policies geared to exporting the country's natural resources with little regard to their widespread negative environmental impacts.[5]

At the initial juncture of the project, Brazilian public and private institutions were involved as the major actors both in its financing and constructing of the TIPNIS road, and its incipient construction had already begun.[6] Bolivian analysts argued that succumbing to these expansionist development designs was at the heart of the MAS government commitment to the TIPNIS road project and argued that the MAS government failed to acknowledge publicly these nearby "foreign interests" while deflecting public attention instead at the United States Embassy's alleged conspiratorial hidden hand behind the march.[7] Yet Amazonian roadbuilding in Bolivia and elsewhere sets-in-motion a chain of predictable inter-related changes which spread Andean colonist models of agro-livestock production systems and environmental degradation in heavily forested and fragile tropical and sub-tropical eco-systems. As a result, the native indigenous communities of lowland dry and rainforest areas have had their lifeways turned upside down by resulting migration, demographic, infrastructural, environmental, and land use changes.

The favorable broad political impact of the VIII Indigenous March in particular was comparable in magnitude to the march of l990, and once again ultimately compelled the national government to introduce new legislation supporting territorial rights. In 2011 it resulted in Law 190, which declared TIPNIS as an "intangible area" whose integrity would prohibit development designs of any kind, even by its native local inhabitants. However, it was

[5] For background on extractive development policies in Bolivia see Humphreys Bebbington and Bebbington; Gandarillas Gonzáles; Makaran and López; Perreault; and CEDIB 2010-2017.

[6] The Brazilian entities remained between 2011 and 2012 until the surrounding political controversies and heated atmosphere of political mobilization led to their replacement by a Bolivian state company.

[7] A documentary DVD which offers this critical perspective on Brazilian regional interests is *Detrás del TIPNIS* by Karen Gil. See also CEDIB (2010-2017).

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perceived at that time by many analysts and opponents that the MAS government's willingness to advance the new law–given its quick passage–was more of a tactical retreat, a maneuver to defuse public disenchantment until a better political plan of action took shape to resume the road project. (Osorio 2011, 22)

Sure enough, several months later in 2012, the ever-determined MAS government promulgated an amendment (Law 222) to annul the Law 190. So, the MAS government was once again reversing field to negate its own Plurinational Constitution and prevailing high-minded environmental discourse (to "Pachamama" and "Madre Tierra") which again triggered vigorous and wide-ranging critiques in Bolivia's social media and the mainstream national and international press. These loud oppositional voices all along had disseminated concerns and issues contributing to the spread of public debate and political opposition, especially from civil society organizations. And in response to these sudden political changes and legistlative reversals, a smaller set of representatives of indigenous organizations and their allies sallied forth in a new protest march.

As previously indicated this IX Indigneous March was fueled by the MAS majority-controlled national congress elimination of the protected "intangible" status which it had previously secured. To accomplish this change, with both houses of the National Congress under their control, they maneuvered an amendment to Ley 190 which annulled the "intangible" status. The MAS government's apparent overall political strategy had aimed to disarm and deceive its critics and opponents with the earlier law, and reverse course once they were demobilized from the VIII Indigenous March to continue building the planned road. Bolivian analysts argued that the MAS government's deployment of various elements of an effectivie counter-mobilzation strategy during the IX Indigenous March had enabled them to gain the upper hand in the ongoing struggle over the road project (Guzman 2012; CIPCANotas 2012; Makaran and López 2018). And then in 2017 these changes were put into the new Law 969 promulgated by the MAS controlled Congress. President Morales followed up by hosting a celebration event in a coliseum in the Beni capital of Trinidad (Makaran and López 2018, 274).

The road project continued up to the present albeit slowly, cautiously and less visibly in the public eye given that it is an election year in Bolivia. The MAS government's presidential candidate, Evo Morales is competing for an unprecedented and controversial fourth consecutive term in office and in so doing, aims to avoid any significant political fallout from TIPNIS. Two

sections of the road which lie outside the park/territorio at its northern and southern ends (tramo 1 and tramo 2) have been completed yet less is known about road building progress inside TIPNIS itself which has had multiple stops and starts.

TIPNIS in 1990

Building on this general overview of the history of the TIPNIS road conflict, I will focus on Xavier's engagement with the topic in greater detail, beginning with 1990 path-breaking march. One of Xavier's first contributions to the public understanding of TIPNIS was his overview synthesis of the indigenous peoples occupying historically rooted territorial areas of Bolivia's vast subtropical lowland region. Xavier provided a synthetic overview of these marginalized and diverse lowland peoples, many of whom were not publicly known nor recognized as *bona fide* citizens by the Bolivian state and society (Albó 1991a).[8] However, Bolivian interest in their diverse histories and mixed economies had increased by leaps and bounds thanks to the widespread publicity and public interest generated by the 1990 TIPNIS march. Xavier's introduction to this journalistic report-diary on the march helped to place the march and the indigenous demands for change in a broader demographic, social, and historical context of the eastern lowlands of the Bolivian nation.

As a world-class social-linguist and anthropologist, Xavier's conceptual tools and analytical frameworks derive from multiple social science literatures. In his characteristic lucid, concrete, and concise prose, Xavier masterfully weaves together an integrated and intricate analysis connecting inter-related variables. He presents eastern Bolivia's ethnic diversity covering its 30 distinct languages from 10 linguistic families by organizing this material into a set of typologies, with classifications into sub-groupings for this lowland indigenous population profile.

He highlights the diversity of lowland peoples by comparing them briefly on their levels of Western acculturation, population size, geographic location, forms of settlement and natural resource use, their respective sub-tropical eco-

[8] This overview essay by Xavier Albó served as the introduction to the diary of a Bolivian journalist who accompanied and reported on the 1990 march (Contreras Baspineiro 1991). Part of this authoritative essay had been previously published in Part Two of *Para Comprender las culturas rurales en Bolivia* (1989, 197-232), a volume about native peoples of the Americas which was part of a series published in Bolivia by the Ministry of Education and others.

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systems inhabited, and historic and ongoing relations with various local actors including religious missionary organizations–protestant, evangelical and Catholic. This discussion also highlights the complex and conflict-laden interactions between the lowland indigenous and Andean colonist settlers occupying areas of their traditional territories.

These observations and generalizations draw upon a vast social science literature on Amazonian and other lowland peoples. Yet within Bolivia's dominant racialized democracy, they were eye-opening, novel, and challenging. Moreover, his analysis refers to the well-documented deprivations suffered by the lowland indigenous throughout various historical epochs. His familiar cast of history's oppressive characters includes expanding cattle ranchers, assorted fortune hunters, rubber tappers, loggers, economic enterprises, and diverse religious missionaries shaping an oppressive heritage thru processes aiming at appropriating, colonizing, and "civilizing."

The most negative and ongoing impacts on the lifeways and settlements of these ethnic *selváticos* (*selva* ethnic inhabitants) as labeled by Xavier, figure prominently. Yet he also argues that in comparative terms, Bolivia has experienced less of such violent impacts on the lowland Amazonian indigenous groups than in neighboring Brazil and Peru.

His discussion of religious missionaries' institutions is more complex and nuanced. He acknowledges the colonizing force of religious missionaries invading indigenous territories for imposing their religious conversion projects. Their socializing and reshaping of indigenous identities and institutions from these actions have often produced profound changes. Yet he also underscores the emergence over time, for example, of the cultural hybrid institution of the indigenous "cabildo" with its Catholic content of sainthoods and corresponding feast day celebrations, but whose contemporary political structures and purposes gave them a key political mobilizing role in the first TIPNIS march. Xavier's writing also acknowledges that religious missionary institutions including the fundamentalist evangelical kind provided at times invaluable protection from violent incursions of colonizers. He points out how the Jesuit Missions provided a barrier for an extended period, preventing cattle ranch incursions into indigenous territories. Yet as an anthropologist/linguist, one of his main arguments is that indigenous cultural practices and institutions have, for better or worse, been altered and reshaped by colonizing and "civilizing" forces throughout history. The ways the indigenous security, autonomy, cultures, and

livelihoods have been impacted by such long-term encroachment is central to his overview analysis in this chapter.

Xavier focuses also on the inherently problematic relationship between the Andean colonists and the lowland indigenous communities documented amply in the mainstream social science literature. This relationship has been evident during decades of state-sponsored and "spontaneous" colonization projects undergirding rural to rural migration processes of Andean populations relocating from the Western highlands to rural sub-tropical areas of the Eastern Bolivian lowlands.

One of Xavier's important insights here is his characterization as an important "structural" issue which shapes an inherently conflictive situation. His structural level of analysis focuses on radically different "*lógicas*" [worldviews of resource-use] characterizing distinctive "*estilos de vida*" [life-styles] and "*modos de producción*" [modes of production]. This prevailing Andean colonist behavior contrasts, collides, and competes with the "*selvícolas locales*" mixed systems of hunting, fishing, fruit-gathering, and horticulture conceptualized by Xavier in this instance as "ecological nomadism." In his concise and penetrating phraseology, he writes that:

> All these differences lead to two potential structural conflicts. The first is between the two modes of production implied. For the collas it is the small parcel production, which is significantly monetized given its relative articulation with the market (characteristics which become greatly intensified in colonization) with a type of limited and controlled access to land. The local *selvícolas* [ethnic inhabitants] in contrast maintain a strong component of hunting and fishing and perceive the territory much more like water and air, to which everyone has a shared access. (1991a, xxxiv)

Another feature of this *andino-selvícola* structural problem according to Xavier is manifest in the prevailing social ideology of the Andean colonist of having a false sense of cultural superiority in a racialized view of the "Other," (my term and quotes) which serves to justify the latter's marginalization and dispossession. He thus refers to reconciliation as an important goal for mitigating these contrarian outlooks with a more humane and educated approach:

> The second is between two contrasting social ideological structures. Given his greater experience in the larger Bolivian society, the Andean colla tends to manifest a false sense of superiority and to have

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> a competitive sense more developed with more initiatives which have the effect of reducing the area of resource use for the local ethnic inhabitants […] Whatever the case, the weaker party in this conflictive relationship is the native *selvícola.* Thus, the need is to strengthen their position as other colla towns and leaders of their organizations have accomplished throughout the march. Yet above all there is a need to bring about in these situations a genuine reconciliation of interests. (xxxv)

Xavier under this light argues that a recognition and reconciliation of these structural differences is a necessary and enlightened step for advancing indigenous political empowerment in Bolivia, as it would help facilitate and solidify political alliances and unity, which helped to make possible the history-making 1990 march.

Xavier in effect is suggesting a closer examination of the conditions and orientations necessary for these alliances to take shape together with an acute awareness of how the described structural imbalances impede them. Xavier was highlighting in this analysis reflections almost in a prophetic sense, problems which subsequently became paramount for the struggles with rising environmental awareness surrounding the TIPNIS road project. His observations here carried an implicit warning for the future pitfalls and policy and political reversals enmeshed in the ongoing TIPNIS story of social and political conflict. His focus on issues of political unity also is prescient of the struggles to come in safeguarding the gains from the original TIPNIS march for Bolivian society as a whole.

2. TIPNIS and Beyond in 1996

TIPNIS reappears in Xavier's publication "Bolivia: Making the Leap from Local Mobilization to National Politics" of the North American Congress of Latin America (NACLA 1996) which provides a perspective on the march's ongoing and noteworthy impacts on various levels of Bolivian society and polity some four years later (Albó 1996). Xavier's writing in English is perhaps for a broader international audience, both academic and activist, arguing that the TIPNIS march constituted an important turning point for indigenous affairs in Bolivian history.

Xavier again highlights the march as an exemplary demonstration of indigenous political unity between the highland (including Andean plus colonist organizations) and lowland indigenous federations. These groups have historically had many challenges in maintaining such unity, and thus this

continued coalition promises much greater socio-political empowerment for their communities within Bolivia's expanding democracy. The l990 march helped to foster unity in the quest for territorial rights between the CSUTCB (Confederación Sindical Única de Trabajadores Campesinos de Bolivia), the main federated organization of the highland *sindicatos* and CIDOB (Central de Pueblos y Comunidades Indígenas del Oriente Boliviano), the largest and oldest representative federation of the lowland peoples. Both organizations participated as allies and protagonists respectively in the 1990 march. His focus on this demonstrated capacity for indigenous political unity among the indigenous federations and confederation would remain as an important thread in Xavier's ongoing analysis of the ups and downs of Bolivia's indigenous struggle for political empowerment related to TIPNIS and elsewhere.

In some of Xavier's points about positive advances, he calls attention to the political context not only in Bolivia but in the Americas more broadly. He views these favorable political conditions which helped to trigger the TIPNIS march and subsequently to broaden its impact. Indigenous rights at a watershed moment in the early nineties infused indigenous movement vitality and public interest across the Americas. Xavier underscores this all-important context of anti-quincentenaries' protest campaigns marking 500 years since the European invasion spreading across the Americas (Albó 1991b), as providing an important fuel for indigenous mobilizing in Bolivia. For example, its discourses and media coverage cast a negative public spotlight light on the misleading noun "discovery" of the Americas by Christopher Columbus used in the official history books. Other Latin American indigenous protests such as the *Levantamiento Indígena* in Ecuador and the *Zapatista Levantamiento* in Chiapas, Mexico also represented these new political post-Cold War currents of indigenous political activism which were also generated by their opposition to recent neo-liberal economic development policies.

Xavier's assessment of the march's positive impact in Bolivia grew stronger with the passage of time in light of ongoing policy changes in Bolivian political culture and society, manifest by legislative and political milestones. According to his NACLA article, these changes were manifest in the election of Bolivia's first indigenous Vice-President, Victor Hugo Cárdenas from Aymara ethnic background; the first "chola de pollera" (expression for highland Andean woman) elected to the Bolivian national congress; new laws of decentralization and popular participation benefitting local indigenous institutions and social participation in local governance; the constitutional amendment recognizing Bolivia as a pluri-cultural and multi-lingual nation; and bilingual and intercultural educational reforms which validated and supported

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indigenous languages for official use in public schooling (NACLA 1996, 17-20). If Xavier's article had been published a year or two later, it would have included the Ley INRA, which became the most promising development for Bolivia's lowland indigenous peoples in attaining territorial rights and underscoring all these advances through political unity between highland and lowland peoples. (Colque, Tinta and Sanjinés 2016)

This article is also balanced with his critical assessment of the negative socio-economic impacts on Bolivia's rural poor resulting from neo-liberal economic reforms which would include trade liberalization. Widely documented in the development literature, these reforms were devastating families, causing rapidly falling rural incomes and massive urban and rural migration, the latter including to the coca growing Chapare region which is most relevant to this paper (Healy 2001b). Xavier had been a consistent intellectual critic of this standard package of neo-liberal economic reforms and their impacts on the low-income population, especially its differential impact on Bolivia's stratified farming populations and rural enterprises. He also pointed to the difficulties in reshaping other important areas of national governance for social and economic reform given the grip on power by political and economic elites despite the marches many positive impacts and inroads within Bolivia's political culture. Nonetheless, some important gains for indigenous peoples were on the rise in Bolivia and represented some of the cumulative changes emanating from the demands and related changes emerging from the ongoing impact of TIPNIS.

3. TIPNIS: 2011-2 017

This discussion now fast forwards to the year 2011, when another TIPNIS march returns to the center of the national political spotlight. Writing on this latest phase of the TIPNIS story, Xavier focused on a government embroiled in political controversy managing a large political and social conflict. His writing on this topic frequently takes the form of Op-ed pieces in Bolivian newspapers (also disseminated on social media) and the CIPCA website. His earlier writings had displayed support (yet always as an objective analyst rather than a single-minded partisan ally) for the MAS government's sweeping policies of political and social inclusion during its first term in office. However, with the abrupt reversal of its pro-environmental policies in the Bolivian lowlands demonstrated most dramatically with the TIPNIS road project, Xavier's writing became more critical and his message more urgent and focused. His writing shows an increasingly adversarial tone on these developmental topics and the

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politics surrounding them. His analysis in effect is holding the MAS government accountable to its own stated plurinational principles and policy platform, which by 2011 seemingly had gone off the rails for Xavier and many Bolivian political analysts. Similar to other MAS supporters and a few disenchanted high-level government defectors, his analysis becomes increasingly concerned about the MAS policy reversals related to these lowland environmental and indigenous territorial issues.

Perhaps it is not surprising to find that among the political and social casualties of the MAS policy shift toward lowland extractive development policies for Xavier was the political break-up of the *Pacto de Unidad* mentioned previously as a key institutional nexus favoring continued indigenous political empowerment (Albó, CIPCANotas 2011c). This break-up became highly visible during the 2011 TIPNIS march in the context of the MAS government's wheeling and dealing to undermine and publicly de-legitimize the goals and actions of the communities of TIPNIS and their allies. In his writing lamenting this concerted demise, he implores the MAS government to reverse the continued disintegration of this relationship.

Xavier's writings also focus on the underlying tensions and difficulties in holding together this alliance. In one article, he criticizes a national Andean indigenous leader who publically expressed racist remarks in his references to the indigenous peoples of TIPNIS as "savages" (Albó, CIPCANotas 2011c). This commentary by Xavier reconnects with his earlier analysis in the introductory chapter to the journalistic report on first TIPNIS protestest march for "Territory and Dignity" in 1991 which calls attention to difficult and persistent "structural barriers" between the highland colonists and lowland peoples-albeit their contrasting social ideologies and "modes of production" which places them at loggerheads when together using the same sub-tropical forest eco-system. Now in his 2012 analysis of these highly problematic structural problems in relation to TIPNIS, he adds a volatile and problematic economic variable –coca farming in the Chapare– to his analytical framework for the sub-tropics:

> It becomes difficult for them (Andean peoples) to understand and accept that for the eastern lowland indígenas, despite their being so small in relative numbers, have gained access to large territories forthemselves which the Andean farmers and colonists desire for exploiting for themselves and their children in an intensive production system thru clearing forest lands for expanding their coca crops. (Albó, CIPCANotas 2012f)

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He continues to lament that many of these former Andean farmers unfairly criticize the native inhabitants as "latifundistas" who appear to grossly underutilize their property. "Why do they have so much and we highlanders so little. Is this just?" (Albó CIPCANotas 2012f). In statements such as these the reader can see the importance of competing social ideologies for natural resource management schemes as well as the potentially related and problematic political attitudes and behavior for building a plurinational state.

In relation to the environmental consequences, he laments social ideology of the Andean colonists:

> They do not understand the distinctive lifestyle of these peoples with nature. Nor do they remain impressed at a global level, of the key role that these large forests play in the maintenance of important reserves of pure oxygen and water within our sick planet. "We have to sacrifice the Pacha Mama for development," a well known 'intercultural leader' insisted. (Albó, CIPCANotas 2012f)

And the addition of coca farming as well as its value-added processing for relatively high earnings generated by the global cocaine economy to this matrix exacerbates an already inherently conflictive situation:

> There is a strong contrast between the focus of the indigenous who have lived in TIPNIS as its native inhabitants and those more recent farming populations from the Andes who farm coca, sell it, and some even process it. (Albó, CIPCANotas 2012f)

> The Trinitarios, Yucaraes and Chimanes who although have their own and sometimes critical problems of survival are closer to a harmonious relation with *Madre Tierra* which is a key element in *Vivir Bien*. Many *cocaleros* (Andean colonists) in a sub-tropical environment where plants sprout more easily than in highlands do not have a felt need to the same degree to maintain a sacred relation with and offer rites to *Madre Tierra:* and this is especially the case for those producers who have plunged entirely into producing (coca) for the legal or illegal market. (Albó, CIPCANotas 2012f)

> Another aspect is that alongside the native inhabitants of the region, the cocalero population keeps growing and penetrating into new lands which become a threat to the livelihood and 'Big House' [*Casa Grande*], jungle and its rivers of these peoples. (Albó, CIPCANotas 2012f)

Xavier's critique in denouncing this negative perception of the lowland indigenous with references to them as "savages" also includes a refutation

which highlights their important cultural contributions to society and civilization. He refers to the musical traditions of the Moxeño peoples of the eastern lowlands as a powerful example which has been documented by and made available to society by the Jesuits in three large volumes containing their musical compositions. He argues that the new footing needed and expressed in the Bolivian Plurinational Constitution is an embrace of the principle of "intercultural," signifying building relationships of mutual support, respect and complimentary essential for the genuine functioning of Bolivia's Plurinational State. This shift would signal a change in orientation from expressed domination of one indigenous group (Andean highlands) over others in a society continuing to reproduce deep racial and ethnic hierarchical perceptions and divides between superior and inferior cultures (Albó, CIPCANotas 2011b).

In another piece, Xavier expresses his appreciation for the flourishing of the *Pacto de Unidad* during the year-long Constitutional Assembly process as a collective experience when "we were able to dream together" for a vision of how a Plurinational State would work and thrive. In focusing on the dynamics and state actions during the prolonged VIII Indigenous March itself, Xavier joins various media voices offering opinion pieces aiming to be both didactic and critical. This approach was especially the case in describing the MAS government's handling of this protest march, which he characterized in his columns as both misleading and manipulative. Xavier focused on the MAS government's contradictory behavior during its intermittent negotiations with TIPNIS community representatives during the march. In his role as a scholar-activist, Xavier makes a blistering critique of this governmental action in its manipulative negotiating style and adds an impassioned appeal for the MAS government representatives to engage in a genuine dialogue with the communities and other actors involved in the TIPNIS road dispute. His article calls attention to "the principal errors of the Government" with respect to managing the meetings and discussions with TIPNIS leaders and community members (Albo 2012, 188). He bemoans the absence of a genuine dialogical approach and the corresponding skills needed by the MAS government representatives for achieving a genuine concertación of interests among the various institutional and community actors.

Xavier thus takes the MAS government to task for its failure in adhering to the *Ley de Consulta Previa, Libre e Informada* [the Law of Prior, Free and Informed Consultation], mandated by its own Plurinational Constitution and international agreements it has ratified such as the UN Declaration on

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Indigenous Rights and ILO 169. His analysis also zooms in to identify six key articles of the plurinational constitution which the TIPNIS road project would violate or negate and quotes a central passage from the Constitution's inspiring Preamble which reflects its guiding philosophy:

> A State based upon respect and equality among all peoples, with principles of sovereignty, dignity, complimentarily, solidarity, harmony and equity in the distribution and redistribution of the social product, where the search for *Vivir Bien* prevails; with respect to economic, social, juridical, political and cultural pluralism of the inhabitants of this land: in living together collectively with all having access to water, labor, education, health and housing. (Albó CIPCANotas 2012b)

Xavier argues that the MAS government's policy of *consulta previa* failed to adhere to the normative standards and high-minded original intent of the ILO Convention 169 in terms of its essential elements as being both prior and informed. In the TIPNIS road case, neither of these two pre-conditions had been met by the MAS government actions. Indeed, not a single community-based consultation had taken place prior to the financing agreements and initial road construction activities underway by the Brazilian road construction company. The consultations began after the TIPNIS road construction had already begun in response to public pressure and outcry.

The MAS government version of such necessary consultations moved in a reverse direction during the VIII and IX Indigenous protest marches themselves, and their meetings failed to address the most obvious possible environmental and social impacts on the TIPNIS inhabitants and their territory. Indeed, Xavier points out that the so-called consultation exchange also failed to incorporate findings of an independent environmental impact assessment which would enable the population to make informed judgements about the road's eventual impact on their community livelihood going forward.

Xavier argued that such community consultations are mandated by national and international norms to be carried out in a collaborative good faith spirit shared by both sides in order to reach a mutually satisfying and fair-minded assessment and enduring agreement. Xavier's outspokenness on this issue perhaps exemplifies a strong Jesuit value orientation guiding his perspective. Instead of putting forth a good faith effort, the MAS government style as described by Xavier was both manipulative and condescending toward the indigenous inhabitants of TIPNIS. His adjectives for characterizing the MAS government's pseudo-engagement or perhaps lack thereof included

"arrogant" and "overbearing," and resembling "patronal and neo-liberal elites" (Albó 2012, 188), a very low blow indeed given that the MAS government had criticized these policies in public discourse and used them for legitimating its own public appeals for its political constituencies.

Xavier's critique also pointed to MAS government officials repeated public threats highlighted in the Bolivian media against this mobilized opposition to the MAS government's road project. Xavier writes quoting this often-repeated threat, "quieran o no quieran, se hará la carretera" [whether they like it or not, we will build the road] (Albó 2012, 188), arguing that such threats were completely out of step with a necessary dialogical approach which the government was constitutionally and internationally mandated to practice. Within his critiques, Xavier does offer an important corrective measure to help remedy this unfavorable set of circumstances and distorted practices for the future–the passage of new implementing legislation for the Plurinational Constitution, spelling out in specific detail how prior and informed consultation should be practiced in such situations.

To add to these arguments, he demonstrates how local consultations and reports can be done more responsibly and professionally and with greater integrity by comparing the MAS governments report on the communities of TIPNIS side by side with a report completed during the same period with far fewer resources by a network of prominent civil society and human rights organizations and leaders led by Caritas Boliviana, an independent Bolivian NGO of the Catholic Church (Albó, CIPCANotas 2013d).

In the broader Latin American context, implementation of the "*consulta previa*" processes to comply with the ILO 169 agreements have been plagued with similar problems and setbacks and are often manipulated by the Latin American governments similar to Bolivia's. And yet for some of the most powerful indigenous organizational actor engagements in the hemisphere, they often result in improving negotiating capacities for greater indigenous economic benefits rather than environmental protection per se (Torres Wong 2018). This was primarily the case involving the Guarani peoples´ mobilizations and negotiations towards these ends in southern Bolivia which shows the MAS government interest first and foremost in economic settlements to protect its extractive policies while negating critical environmental concerns. However, in light of Bolivia's political innovations under an indigenous head of state and former social movement leader, and with his political party in control of the main organs of governance, adherence to indigenous rights, norms and aspirations was expected to be applied across the country (Crabtree and Chaplin 2013).

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Xavier´s analysis invariably places this TIPNIS-related critique within a broader framework of the general political dynamics of Bolivian democracy under the MAS government characterized often by "confrontational politics," where "winning means annulling" one's political opponent instead of respecting legitimate differences in outlook and approach. (Albó 2012, 188)

Xavier argues that the MAS government's basic approach to the larger lowland federations such as CIDOB (as well as the federation CONAMAQ representing the Andean ayllus) discussed earlier in this paper is to deploy the tactic of "divide and conquer" to weaken them politically and undermine their independence as an indigenous federation representing the needs and demands of its broad base of diverse constituents (Albó 2012, 188). "Divide and conquer" is also a strategy of political cooptation to force subservience to the MAS government's policy priorities and controversial projects of sectors and often newly created organizations with an indigenous political identity. For Xavier these tactics have been used time and again as a way to weaken and dismantle legitimate indigenous opposition to the MAS government's most controversial extractive development policies similar to TIPNIS.

As a corollary to this practice of attempting to eliminate, intimidate, co-opt or marginalize independent indigenous activism in the lowlands, Xavier calls attention to the MAS practice of creating duplicate lowland indigenous political federations, one officially aligned, adequately financed, and practically a loyal mouthpiece of the MAS government, and the other struggling to survive as an independent representative entity harassed by the state and with meager resources to defend the interests of its member constituents (Albó, CIPCANotes 2014c). Material enticements and personal benefits (e.g. "prebendas") are deployed strategically by the state in Bolivia to facilitate such political cooptation, causing indigenous leaders in opposition, for example, to become induced to switch sides and begin advocating contrarian pro-government viewpoints and allegiances. This type of political manipulation also led the MAS government to expel from Bolivia the European donor agency IBIS Dinamarca which had continued to fund the independent federation activities when the MAS government was attempting to undermine them and silence their independent critical voices. (Albó, CIPCANotes 2014c)

In the above-mentioned argument, he writes that "the logic of this act of dividing has contributed to the dangerous polarization between campesinos and indígenas and indeed destroying the *Pacto de Unidad* which was a key alliance for shaping the pathbreaking Plurinational Constitution between 2006 and 2009 led by the MAS Government." (Albó 2012, 188)

Such political strategies of cooptation have frequently been deployed by Latin American and Bolivian governments. Yet in this case, Xavier is holding the MAS government to a higher standard given its *Proceso de Cambio*, Plurinational credo presented publicly as a purported radical break with the neo-liberal and neo-colonial past. Ironically, the MAS government wound up with the same playbook of conservative neo-liberal Latin American governments which have also used such tactics to undermine independent indigenous political empowerment efforts and protect its dominant extractive development policies.

However, in writing about the TIPNIS conflicts, Xavier is fair-minded and no starry-eyed advocate as he can be critical of both sides of these territorial struggles when assessing in his columns the dynamics of power and resistance at play. At the same time, he expresses admiration for the courage of the TIPNIS indigenous marchers in their resistance struggle against the MAS government's repeated efforts to undermine their autonomy and expressed grievances in relation to the recognition of an intangible legal status for TIPNIS. Xavier writes:

> These small groups of peoples marginalized at the bottom of the country's social pyramid despite their (or perhaps thanks to) setbacks, media attention, and physical abuse suffered extensively yet in their quest succeeded in compelling the MAS government to reverse course. This change led to at a least temporary yet significant and historic reversal in an important societal process to which many actors across Bolivia contributed. Yet ultimately this effort deteriorated and derailed especially over this past year. (CIPCANotas 2011b)

4. Extractive Development Pursuits and Environmental Projections in TIPNIS and La Paz

In recent years following the overturning by the MAS government of the "intangible status" for TIPNIS, Xavier contributed another critical article, bolstering his case with didactic resources such as maps to enlighten his readers on one of the dire environmental outcomes at stake in the TIPNIS road conflict. To present in an effective graphic way the deforestation from the TIPNIS road impact, Xavier compares two maps projecting deforestation trends (one with the projected TIPNIS road and one without it). In the former case the predictable colonization/deforestation effects are projected over a thirty-year period from the time of possible resettlement by the Chapare-based cocalero colonists. He headlines the title of this op ed with the old cliché that "Maps are worth more than a thousand words." (Albó, CIPCANotas 2011a).

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Then in a subsequent column, his critical environmental impact argument incorporates the analysis circulated by a Bolivian university-based scientist, Roger Calvo. Calvo's work, disseminated on YouTube, showed the TIPNIS project leading to the disruption in the hydrological cycle that contributes to the water supply of the city of La Paz. His analysis points to a sequence of changes set in motion resulting from the predictable massive deforestation predicated on TIPNIS road's impact. His cause-effect analysis begins with response to this new opportunity by the Andean colonists' massive resettlement and their clearing of the subtropical forest areas in the TIPNIS territory to expand the production primarily of the coca leaf and implies it is no secret in Bolivia that this product is supplying the value-chain of the global cocaine economy. The disappearing rain forest eliminates the TIPNIS area's capacity to seed rain clouds passing over it, which carry moisture that is subsequently released when the clouds collide with the Andean cordillera. This rainfall collects in a nearby reservoir which supplies an important quantity of potable water for La Paz residents. This would cause an urban social welfare crisis for residents of La Paz, according to this analysis. Thus, Xavier's writings served to disseminate these dire and sophisticated environmental impact dynamics and other critical perspectives on such trade-offs as outcomes resulting from the planned infrastructural development.

Xavier joins other Bolivian TIPNIS critics to show through comparing detailed maps of the road route through the territory/park that alternative routes would exist without the deleterious effects of expanded coca production in this area. Moreover, this road would still serve to link the city of Trinidad (capital of the Beni department) which is another important justification advanced as the MAS government's development rationale and agenda. Cochabamba and the Beni would indeed, be connected yet the deleterious environmental and social impacts would be avoided as he titled his article "Carretera sí, pero no por ahí" [Yes, a road yet not here but over there] (Albó, CIPCANotas 2017b). In a sense, such road location critiques serve to call the MAS government's bluff about its underlying intentions in terms of the designated project beneficiary populations.

In one of his most revealing articles on the TIPNIS road project, Xavier offers his conclusion about the main motivation behind the MAS government's determination to push through the road project in the face of widespread political fallout (Albó, CIPCANotas 2017a). While the government has insisted that its project will satisfy the economic development needs first and foremost of the Beni and Cochabamba regions, their defense also includes important

socio-economic benefits accruing to the native members of 30 indigenous communities of TIPNIS, bringing gains they argue far superior to their current life-styles and opportunity structures.

Yet Bolivian political pundits and analysts have identified various policy incentives as predominant interests pushing the TIPNIS road project, such as Brazil's regional economic interests via IIRSA or expanding oil development, while others point to large-scale soybean mechanization schemes which have been a dominant Bolivian agricultural extraction model for propelling regional economic growth in the neighboring Santa Cruz region (Cortez 2017; Makaran and López 2018). Critical analysts have argued as well that the MAS government's motivation reflects all of the above for the TIPNIS road project.

Xavier, however, identifies the Chapare colonist/*cocaleros* as the principal beneficiaries and the main motivating factor behind the MAS government's determined effort to construct the road. It is well-known in Bolivia that the *cocaleros* represent President Morales's most favored political constituency (Albó, CIPCANotas 2017a). The group also represents a growing population in need of additional land both to maintain as well as expand high levels of coca production and population growth in the Chapare. While President Morales needs his oldest political constituency as he strives to remain in power in a controversial political ploy, he has ignored a popular referendum on term limits in seeking another electoral presidential term in office in 2020. Xavier has concluded in this article that President Morales' motivation for the TIPNIS road project is basically to satisfy the resource demands of his political base among the cocaleros. His argument has its basis in President Morales pledge at a public assembly in the Chapare to build the road to make new cocalero resettlement in TIPNIS possible. Hence an explanation for his prolonged intransigence when it comes to the TIPNIS infrastructural priority. Xavier's analysis thus recognizes a decision driven by the political dynamics of MAS party politics, presidential ambitions for another term in office, and President Morales' deep-seated loyalties and political obligations to his home constituents.

To convey this main conclusion, Xavier uses clever wordplay in his op ed title: "TIPNIS tangible = MAS cocaleros." His "MAS cocaleros" phrase carries a double-meaning with the references to the MAS Party (e.g. membership) as well as the increase (*más*) in cocalero beneficiaries poised to move into the TIPNIS territory in the pursuit of income earnings made possible by the global punitive drug control paradigm in which Bolivia and other Andean

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producer countries revolve. This title also refers to lifting of the "*intangible*" status and changing it to "*tangible*," whereby ecosystem damage by coca farmers would proceed unimpeded.

Thus, the contradictions of the illicit coca-cocaine economy in Bolivia and beyond which fueled President Morales' extraordinary political climb may continue to shape the political forces behind this current fall from grace for large sectors of the Bolivian population. For conflict in TIPNIS is not only a clash between two competing models of economic development (i.e. extractive versus sustainable), but also represents an accommodation with the dominant prohibitionist global drug control paradigm which maintains a flow of significant economic benefits to President Morales' most valued and loyal political constituents.

Conclusion

In reviewing these selected writings of Xavier about TIPNIS and its road conflict, and using the questions posed in the Introduction as our guide, we can pinpoint a main thread throughout his writings about the importance of indigenous political unity among the diverse federations (both highlands and lowlands) for shaping a functioning and viable Plurinational state. When describing the "structural barriers" separating and counter-posing Andean colonists with "*selváticos*" in the Amazonian sub-tropical eco-system, he is identifying factors which have potential political implications as well for maintaining indigenous political unity. For him, indigenous political unity was also a major success factor in the l990 march and for the subsequent territorial rights laws of the Ley INRA l996.

Xavier emphasized the indigenous political unity expressed by the *Pacto de Unidad* during the constitutional assembly process as a vital ingredient for the pluri-national constitution with its recognition of new indigenous citizenship rights. The constitution's article affirming the role of intercultural relations in lieu of traditional references to "colonization" actions also argues for abandoning old prejudices and forms of racism which work to undermine the indigenous political unity needed for continuing societal reform. An embrace of the important principle of intercultural relations advances practices of mutual respect and admiration among distinct indigenous peoples, especially those from Andean highland backgrounds and lowland indigenous backgrounds respectively. In his view and one permeating the new constitution, cultural and socio-economic differences

should be perceived as complementary rather than hierarchical terms, and the word "colonists" or "colonizers" should find little resonance, and thus should be replaced. Redefining Bolivia as a Plurinational State with cultural and linguistic diversity as assets on equal footing flowing out of the intercultural perspective also speaks to the importance of this type of political unity and a commitment to removing forms of cultural discrimination.

The importance and defense of indigenous political unity also appears in Xavier's critique of the MAS governments' continuous efforts to undermine it through its practices of "divide and conquer" and co-optation of leaders and rural federations to remain subservient to the established MAS Party line and its priorities for extractive development in the Amazon region.

Another analytical framework used by Xavier which also speaks to his overriding concern for achieving political unity is the ILO 169 Convention on the *Consulta Previa, Libre e Informada* when making his critique of the MAS government's flawed implementation of both this international convention and the Bolivian Plurinational constitution which used the former terms as its model. In addition to his strong critique, he goes a step further toward reforming it by recommending implementing legislation outlining the steps and the philosophical intent which inspired its creation as a basic consultation methodology for respecting indigenous rights. The latter feature involves adopting a genuine dialogical approach by the participating Bolivian societal actors.

Xavier's writings presented in this paper also draw upon basic environmental impact frameworks and contested issues to bolster his political and methodological critiques of the TIPNIS project and deploy maps and sophistical hydrological analysis to do so. And last but not least, he argues that President Morales' motives behind the road project come down to satisfying his most important political constituents back home–the cocaleros of the Chapare. His evidence for this motivation is a public address to an assembly in the Chapare where President Morales himself promised this road infrastructure to benefit them. This critique once again speaks to the issue of "indigenous political unity," since it rejects the government's proposal because it would damage indigenous political unity by favoring one indigenous group at the expense of the other. All the exploitation of the natural resources of one group would damage cultural and environmental heritage, contradicting stated priorities of promoting *Buen Vivir* for all peoples and honoring the the *Pachamama.* In short, this publicly damaging critique became Xavier's most important in his analysis of the prolonged TIPNIS controversy.

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In conclusion, these writings of Xavier Albó reflect his abiding vocational commitment of speaking truth to power–perhaps in the Jesuit tradition of supporting and defending indigenous rights. Xavier envisioned and worked toward a democratic Bolivian society that permits all to share justly in the country's bounty, nurtures its eco-systems and diverse cultures and empowers citizens to challenge national political leadership when it promises an enlightened policy approach benefitting society and does the opposite. Although various of Xavier's commentaries reviewed here are not necessarily original critiques of the rise and fall of *Madre Tierra* in TIPNIS, they carry the moral weight of Bolivia's most prolific, passionate and influential author/activist engaged in engendering indigenous empowerment over the past five decades.

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