



MALMÖ HÖGSKOLA

Una Ola Humana Interminable

-A Minor Field Study about FEJUVE and
it's Influence on Structural Inequalities in
the Bolivian Society

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Abstract

We have taken as our point of departure the structural inequalities in Bolivian society, and recognised that these need to be reduced in order to create a better functioning society. We have chosen to conduct an investigation on how these structural inequalities can be reduced. In order to do this we have conducted a field study in Bolivia, where we through interviews and observations investigated a social organisation situated in El Alto, called FEJUVE. We have focused on how this through it's work and organisation influence Bolivian society, in positive as well as less positive manners. We have chosen five different aspects of the organisation which we have studied in closer detail, since we hold that these have a special relevance in the struggle for a structurally more equal society. These aspects deal with questions concerning: democracy; machismo culture; coercion; critical awareness; the FEJUVE's relation to the ruling political party and it's current relation to conflict that "shuts down" society. Theories about democracy; structural inequality; marginalised groups' relation to conflict and social movements are discussed and assessed throughout this thesis. Our conclusion erads that the FEJUVE has good as well as less good qualities, our investigation thus contributes to exhibiting the complexity of civil society, and the impossibility to view this as either simply a positive or a negative force.

Key words: FEJUVE, Social Movements, democracy, structural inequalities, critical awareness, Minor Field Study, MFS, Bolivia, El Alto

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Resumen

Nuestro punto de partida han sido las desigualdades en la sociedad boliviana y el convencimiento de que estas han de ser reducidas si nuestro objetivo es construir una sociedad que funcione mejor. Así pues, hemos investigado como podrían ser reducidas estas desigualdades estructurales. Para ello hemos desarrollado un estudio de campo en Bolivia, basado en entrevistas y observaciones en FEJUVE, una organización social situada en El Alto. Con ello hemos tratado de analizar la influencia de las acciones de FEJUVE en la sociedad boliviana, con sus aspectos tanto positivos como negativos. Hemos elegido cinco aspectos diferentes de la organización y los hemos estudiado en detalle ya que sostenemos que son importantes en la construcción de una sociedad más igualitaria. Estos aspectos son: democracia; cultura machista; coerción; conciencia crítica y las relaciones de FEJUVE con el gobierno boliviano actual. Teorías sobre democracia; desigualdades estructurales; implicación de los grupos marginales en los conflictos y movimiento sociales son discutidas y analizadas en este trabajo. Nuestra conclusión afirma que FEJUVE cuenta con aspectos tanto positivos como negativos dignos de tener en cuenta. Así pues, nuestra investigación contribuye a extender la idea de la complejidad de la sociedad civil y la imposibilidad de reducirla a ser un factor positivo o negativo.

Palabras claves: FEJUVE, Movimientos Sociales, Democracia, Desigualdades estructurales, Consciencia critica, Minor Field Study, MFS, Bolivia, El Alto

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Sammanfattning

Vi har utgått från de strukturella ojämlikheterna som finns i det Bolivianska samhället, och insett att dessa måste reduceras för att skapa ett mera fungerande samhälle. Vi har valt att göra en undersökning kring hur dessa strukturella ojämlikheter kan förminska. För att göra detta har vi utfört en fältstudie i Bolivia där vi genom intervjuer och observationer studerat en social organisation belägen i El Alto, kallad FEJUVE. Vi har fokuserat på hur denna genom sitt arbete och organisation påverkar det Bolivianska samhället, såväl positivt som mindre positivt. Vi har valt ut fem olika aspekter av organisationen som vi har undersökt i särskilt djup detalj, då vi anser att dessa har en speciell relevans i kampen mot uttraderandet av strukturella ojämlikheter. Dessa aspekter behandlar frågor om demokrati, machismokultur, tvång, kritisk medvetenhet, organisationens relation till det styrande politiska partiet, samt dess relation till samhällsomstörtande konflikt. Teorier kring demokrati; strukturella ojämlikheter; marginaliserade gruppers relation till konflikt, samt sociala rörelser diskuteras och utvärderas i denna uppsats. Vår slutsats visar att FEJUVE har goda så väl som mindre goda egenskaper, och således studie bidrar vår studie till att visa på civilsamhällets komplexitet, och omöjligheten i att se detta endast som en positiv eller negativ kraft.

Nyckelord: FEJUVE, Sociala Rörelser, Demokrati, Strukturella ojämlikheter, Kritisk Medvetenhet, Minor Field Study, MFS

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1 Introduction

Una ola humana interminable que nunca se ha visto y creo aue nunca mas se verá – a never ending wave of people which had never been seen before, and which I think will never be seen again¹. This is how the demonstrations of October 2003 are described by an inhabitant of La Paz, Bolivia. Just a few weeks earlier the government of Sanchez de Lozada had reported that they were going to export gas from Bolivia. Less than a week later Sanchez de Lozada handed in his letter of resignation and then fled the country². Despite the fact that Bolivia is rich on natural resources, it is the poorest country in South America, beset with massive social and economical inequalities and problems. The decision to sell and export gas made many people feel angry since they didn't have access to gas themselves. Behind many of the demonstrations and strikes stood *las juntas vecinales*³ of El Alto, with the *Federación de Juntas Vecinales El Alto* (FEJUVE El Alto)⁴ coordinating them. The organisation had existed since 1979, but only after the “Gas War” of 2003 was the FEJUVE recognised as an important political actor, nationally as well as internationally. The city of El Alto was during these events described as a ticking bomb⁵. Four years have passed since then, and the FEJUVE remains an important actor. The organisation's main objective is to be a critical counterpart to the government and the state, while also working to improve the living conditions for the people of El Alto, where approximately 74 per cent of the inhabitants are poor⁶. Beyond these explicit objectives there is also a possibility that the FEJUVE can, as a representative of civil society, be a driving force in the progression towards a more comprehensive democratic society, as well as to help decrease the structural inequalities of Bolivia. Having said this, we do want to avoid creating and reinforcing an idealized image of the social movements, and hence also be attentive towards possible negative aspects of the organisation as well. We seek to study the FEJUVE of El Alto by focusing on five different aspects of the organisation.

¹ Mamani Ramírez 2005:121

² Amnesty 2004

³ Neighbourhood council, the 500 neighbourhood councils in El Alto together create the Federación the juntas vecinales of El Alto.

⁴ There are *juntas vecinales* in many Bolivian cities. When we write FEJUVE we refer to FEJUVE El Alto.

⁵ Gobierno Municipal El Alto 2005: 12

⁶ By poor we mean survives on less than 2 USD/day

1.1 Purpose

The majority of the literature quoted in this text confirm that Bolivian society is ridden with structural inequalities. Poverty is widespread and wealth lies in the hands of a small minority. These structural inequalities can potentially be a breeding ground for the eruption of violent conflict according to Edward Azar's protracted social conflict (*PSC*). We want to study the social movement FEJUVE in order to investigate what part it can play in reducing these social inequalities and possibly expand Bolivian democracy. We will focus on five different aspects of the FEJUVE, which will help us to assess to what extent it is a constructive force in Bolivian society.

According to our purpose we want pose the following main research question:

- Can the FEJUVE reduce the structural inequalities in Bolivian society?

In order to answer this main question, we divide our investigation into five different aspects. These aspects will also help us answer our sub-questions, which are as follows:

- To what extent does the FEJUVE affect people's sense of being able to influence the course of their lives by being a knowledge forum?
- In what manner does the FEJUVE influence the democratic situation in Bolivia?
- To what extent can the FEJUVE be said to be independent from the government?
- How does the FEJUVE relate to conflict under the government of Evo Morales?
- To what extent does the FEJUVE use coercion in order to ensure participation?

Starting from these aspects, we believe that we will be able to assess FEJUVE's influence on Bolivian society and attempt to decide whether this influence is constructive in terms of enhancing democracy and diminishing poverty and structural inequalities. The basic concepts will be defined here and elaborated on more thoroughly later. A social movement is, as defined by Wettergren and Jamison:

a sort of organised (in loose networks, groups or organisations) collective action, wherein the actors share certain basic assumptions about the surrounding world, and feel solidarity with each other whilst being in a state

of conflict with the establishment in the field where they work and bring forth their protests⁷.

The essential part of this is that the movement is an action rather than an actor. In our thesis we hold that the FEJUVE is a social organisation and that the social movement is created in the interaction between it's members, as well as in interaction between it's members and other actors. However, temporary participants can also be included in the social movements, which makes it rather difficult to distinguish where the movement begins and ends⁸. We will show that the FEJUVE as a social organisation can contribute in the progress towards a more substantive democracy in Bolivia. Our definition of democracy thus distinguishes itself from traditional liberal conceptions, which holds that the state is the only relevant actor to focus on in the study of democracy. Additionally we hold that democracy need to hold a dimension of social justice, and hence involve a struggle to reduce structural inequalities.

1.2 Method

1.2.1 Choice of method

The Bolivian context is important and urgent when it comes to social movements and their influence on society. This is so partly because Bolivia is in a state of change, the country's constitution is being re-written and for the first time ever the country has an indigenous president. Another reason that Bolivia is special in this regard is the fact that the social movements have a strong influence on the changes in Bolivian society, manifested for example in the fact that they are a part of the group that has recently been re-writing the country's constitution⁹.

We think that our subject is very relevant to our study, since there is not enough research done on how social movements influence society in a negative as well as a positive manner. We thus hold that much research on social movements have has been fairly uncritical.

Our study is of a qualitative interpretive character and seeks to explain, by analysing in example, what sort(s) of influence social movements can have on society. Quantitative research focuses on width rather than on depth, by answering questions such as: "how many",

⁷ Wettergren and Jamison 2006: 10

⁸ Alvarez et.al. 1998: 16

⁹ Petras and Veltmeyer 2005: 175

”how often” and ”how much”¹⁰. The objective of a quantitative study is to get a large quantity of facts, which can be gathered, measured and assorted, in order to be able to generalise the result ¹¹. The aim of our research is not to provide ”hard” facts as these, but rather to provide a deeper image of how people perceive their lives in El Alto and La Paz. By using a qualitative method we strive to analyse what part the FEJUVE is perceived to have in the lives of people. We thus seek to uncover the subjective worldview of each person that we have interviewed, and are not looking for any ”objective truth”¹². In a research study such as ours, the individual goes from being a mere part of a statistic, to becoming more actively involved in a research process¹³. To conduct a field study in Bolivia was a necessity for us in order to be able to answer our research questions. We felt that the available literature on the FEJUVE was not enough for us to do this.

1.2.2 Selection

Concerning selection we have followed Ryen’s recommendation to ”search for a selection that covers the heterogeneity which can exist in the population which is characterised by a certain homogeneity” ¹⁴. In this manner we have strived to interview people of different ages and backgrounds, and with different positions within the FEJUVE. We have also attempted to interview as many women as possible, since it is important for us to understand how women perceive the organisation. This however turned out to be harder than we assumed, which is more a reflection of the structure of the FEJUVE which has few women in it, rather than our lacking ambition to interview women.

Ryen advises us to interview people with a lot of information, and to cover parts of the periphery, by for example interview people who are no longer actively involved. In line with this, and in our striving to give a picture as complete as possible we have talked to former members of the FEJUVE, and interviewed people who have earlier been leaders of the *juntas*. We have also sought to interview people outside of the FEJUVE, who hold relevant information about the organisation. In sum, we conducted 15 interviews. Except for interviews, we also use as our empirical material observations and informal conversations that we had during our stay in Bolivia.

¹⁰ Öhlander 1999: 21 and Trost 2005: 14

¹¹ O’Reilly 2005: 113-114

¹² O’Reilly 2005: 114

¹³ Trost 2005: 112

¹⁴ Ryen 2004:88 - own translation of quote

1. 2.3 Interviews

We used a unstructured form of interview, which differs from the structured form. In the latter form, you use pre-prepared questions which you stick to throughout the entire interview. There is also an intermediate alternative which is situated in-between the unstructured and the structure form of interview - the semi-structured one¹⁵. We used this form of interviewing in the beginning of our investigation, but gradually moved towards a more unstructured form as our degree of proficiency in interviewing increased. We thus always had some pre -prepared themes which we wanted to cover in our interviews, but we were also open to elaborate on other important aspects when we felt it to be necessary¹⁶. In this way, we were able to be more flexible, and to elaborate on questions and themes as they appeared during our interviews. We felt that we could, using this form of interview, go deep into the subjective world view of each person that we talked to¹⁷.

In our interviews we sought understanding of the work of the FEJUVE, and how people engaged in the organisation perceived their role in the national political context. Our questions accordingly came to be oriented around the interview person's relation to the FEJUVE, which is another reason for wanting to choose the semi-structured form of interview. People that we interviewed had different interests and specialities, for example *junta* leaders came to speak of their information spreading function, while members of the executive commission of FEJUVE had the possibility to discuss the organisation's relation to the government. One downside to our interviewing technique may be that our questions and follow up questions may at times have been a bit directed, which was further exacerbated by the fact that there was a mild language barrier between us and the person that we interviewed.

1.2.4 Analyses and choice of aspects

According to O'Reilly qualitative research is "iterative-inductive"¹⁸, which means that research is not a linear process, but rather that the design is created continually as the research project goes along. This applies to our thesis, as the different aspects which we have chosen to elaborate have grown during the time that we have been working with our thesis. The aspects are based on the results of our interviews as well as on theoretical discussion in the literature.

¹⁵ O'Reilly 2005: 116

¹⁶ Trost 2005: 50

¹⁷ Trost 2005: 23

¹⁸ O'Reilly 2005:38

Of course, the main reason for choosing the aspects that we did was in order to be able to answer our main research question.

The choice to make a qualitative study leads to difficulties in generalising our results. Nevertheless, we hold that the aspect discussions can be relevant in other studies and contexts, and not just in our specific ones. Likewise we believe that in the study of social movements and the civil society a constant research is necessary. This is so because, just as the word movement implies, it is an ever changing concept, which thus constantly needs to be researched in order to keep the research up to date with "reality".

1.2.5 Criticism of our sources

The sources that we have used in our thesis consist of literature; academic articles; news paper articles; internet sources; our interviews as well as observations and informal conversations from our stay in Bolivia. The literature that we have used, and the interviews and observations that we have conducted, have complemented each other in an exemplary manner.

We hold the conviction that the local perspective is very important for a better understanding, therefore a lot of the literature is taken from Bolivian writers. However, this local perspective may supply a directed view, in which the neo-liberal economical system is considered to be something negative. We also lack a sufficient gender perspective in the literature that we have used. We consider this to be literature deficiencies, but not to the extent that it has influenced our ability to answer our research questions. As mentioned earlier, the literature on social movements tend to uncritically celebrate social movements, while potential negative aspects of these are neglected. We do however see that some authors provide a more balanced view of social movements than others, which we then of course take into account in our choices of sources.

1.3 Demarcations

Throughout the thesis we often refer to "the FEJUVE" as well as to "the juntas" as if these were clearly demarcated and homogenous units, which they aren't. These organisations are of course made up by people of different wills. We can only observe general tendencies, where

there are such, and report on these. We do however on many occasions report on different wills and contradictory responses that we have met during our field study and in the analyses of the literature concerning the FEJUVE and the juntas.

In relation to *PSC*, which is discussed under structural inequalities, we do not wish to investigate under what specific conditions and circumstances marginalisation *actually causes* conflict. We settle for stating that marginalisation *might* constitute a risk for the eruption of violent conflict, and that every risk could be an actual threat to the peace.

1.4 Disposition

Continuing this thesis we will first hold a theoretical discussion on structural inequalities, social movements, and democracy. We then turn to discuss how social movements and democracy may reduce social inequalities. After this we will provide the reader a contextualisation of the political development in Bolivia. Then we turn to a further investigation of the city El Alto and the social movement FEJUVE. After this follows a section where we present our empirical findings and discuss these through five different aspects of FEJUVE. We do this in order to assess whether the FEJUVE constitutes a constructive or a less constructive force in Bolivian society. We will bring our thesis to an end in a concluding discussion, in which we will present and discuss our findings.

2 Structural inequalities, social movements and expanded democracy – a conceptual discussion

Our conceptual discussion strives to discuss what we mean with structural inequalities, and to discuss how these are related to conflict. Further we introduce the concept of expanded democracy, and of social movements, and then relate these concepts to structural inequalities. Can social movements and an expanded democracy reduce the structural inequalities in a given society?

2.1 Structural inequalities

Our reasoning rests on the assumption that an expanded democracy can help reduce structural inequalities. These inequalities are termed structural violence by Johan Galtung, and are incompatible with the establishment of a positive peace. The structural violence can be all kinds of structural discrimination, such as for example racism and wealth-inequalities¹⁹. According to Barrón the one indicator that is the most relevant when measuring structural inequalities is the percentage of the population living in poverty. He also points to other important indicators, such as the quality of; health, education, housing and employment²⁰.

Our point of departure is that structural inequalities such as these are incompatible with a positive peace, and that these even can cause the eruption of violent conflict. This second assumption is based on Edward Azar's theory "Protracted Social Conflict", *PSC*.. This highlights the inherent risk for violent conflict in the social and political exclusion of (identity-) groups. There is thus a constant risk for conflict in the social and political marginalisation of any societal group. The same applies for groups which are economically marginalised. These different kinds of marginalisation are of course interdependent and

¹⁹ Galtung 1969: 171,177

²⁰ Thorpe 2006: 457

mutually reinforcing. The main point is, simply put, that marginalisation of societal groups might breed conflict ²¹. This marginalisation may or may not actually cause the eruption of conflict. Marginalisation is only a precondition, given which the risk for conflict might increase.

2.2 An expanded concept of democracy

Our definition of an expanded concept of democracy is grounded in Hayne's theories of substantive democracy, and in addition to this on Alvarez's theories on culture politics. Our concept of an expanded democracy constitutes a critique of the much too narrow liberal conception of democracy which dominates western current debate. What people today perceive of as democracy is in fact rather the liberal reading of democracy, which mainly entails free elections and markets. Sometimes this liberal conception of democracy is supplemented by stressing that society should be fairly equal, and that the citizens should participate in the democratic processes to a large extent. Apart from the liberal conception of democracy there are many other conceptions, which accentuate other things, and hence is the liberal conception far from self evident, and has been the object of intense discussion. One line of critique is focusing on the so called "formal" democratic systems, where the citizens are allowed to vote, but apart from that lacks any real influence on the politics of the nation. A second line of critique questions the alleged necessity of a free market. McNeish, for example, criticizes the UNDP measure-mechanism "Human Development Index", arguing that it focuses too much on market oriented reforms²². Sklar on the other hand criticizes the liberal model on the basis that it is not well suited for developing countries, which, according to Sklar, rather ought to bring in elements of social democracy where social reconstruction and recognition of cultural differences are important aspects ²³. Our definition of the concept of democracy takes as it's point of departure these different critiques of the traditional liberal conception of democracy. In the expanded conception of democracy that we elaborate use we take as one point of departure Hayne's concept of *substantive democracy*.

This substantive democracy is characterised by individual freedom; different interests are represented in the public room; that everybody has access to state processes and has a say in the collective decision making. The whole system is characterised by justness, equality and

²¹ Miall et al 2004: 84

²² McNeish 2006: 229

²³ Pinkney 2003: 17

respect for Human Rights²⁴. Additionally substantive democracy highlights that the government should be responding to, and respecting, individual concerns and opinions, and that control mechanisms are built into the democratic system which limits the possibility for arbitrary action by authorities and the military²⁵. Something very basic but ignored in many theories is to highlight that women and men should be participating in the democracy to the same extent. The feministic project may be read as an attempt to expand democracy²⁶. It rests on the assumption that *machismo* culture diminishes the democracy within a country, since women are categorically denied to exercise influence to the same extent as men are.

In the concept of an expanded democracy, we also include the need for other actors than the traditionally political to be recognised as actually political. Political parties are often viewed as the only political representatives, and as the only link between people and the state²⁷. Since the social movements of Latin America have been building a cultural politics which doesn't fit into the traditional political framework, it is important to look beyond what is a traditional liberal democracy²⁸. A view of democracy where only the traditional political sphere is recognised will to a large extent exclude the social movements, and hence also their potential for changing hidden power relations in society. In this, the social movements receive only a minor part in democratization processes, which we argue creates a false picture of how society works. We rather hold the conviction that social movements have a large influence on people's lives, outside of the official political sphere, and can be seen as a link between the state and the people and hence the view of democracy needs to be changed²⁹. A slight change of attitudes can be observed though, even within conservative academic circles, where the potential of civil society actorship is recognised to some extent. This is especially so in the context of the decline of the nation state's independence in relation to globalisation and regionalisation processes³⁰.

To conclude this discussion, we hold that democracy is and should be a system where free multiparty elections are held, social equality is prevalent and where citizens feel that they can influence the course of the state processes. This feeling of influence doesn't, however, need to

²⁴ Haynes 1997: 85-86 and Pinkney 2003:16

²⁵ Pinkney 2003: 3

²⁶ Diez & Steans 2005: 134-35

²⁷ Lazar 2006: 185

²⁸ Alvarez et.al. 1998: 10

²⁹ Alvarez et. al. 1998: 19 and Lazar 2006: 186

³⁰ Pinkney 2003: 3

be bound up with traditional political channels, but could just as easily be related to alternative political avenues such as social movements.

2.3 Theory on social movements

There is a wide spectre of theories dealing with social movements, which are differentiated depending on the tradition the theory is elaborated within. In the U.S. the political process approach has been prevalent, whilst in Europe the identity paradigm has been the most influential. The first one focus on the political questions on organization of the social movements, and their connection to the specific state institutions where they prevail. The latter one highlights the social movement's construction of collective identity and how this creates the collective action³¹. Melucci claims though, that social movements are analytical constructions and not empirically given phenomena³². The definition that we chose is thus a sort of theoretical guideline. We will, as stated earlier, have as our point of departure the definition of social movements as provided by Wettergren and Jamison:

A social movement is a sort of organised (in loose networks, groups or organisations) collective action, wherein the actors share certain basic assumptions about the surrounding world, and feel solidarity with each other whilst being in a state of conflict with the establishment in the field where they work and bring forth their protests³³.

Additionally a social movement is characterised by the collective demands that are put on the power holders. A social movement entails a consistent challenge to the power holders³⁴. According to Alvarez and others, the social movements drive a cultural politics, with the main goal being to transform society in one way or the other. This aspiration is being put into practice outside of the traditional political sphere, and is hence usually not perceived of as political aspirations. This leads to the problem with social movements not being perceived of as important for the democracy building, which we have discussed above³⁵.

³¹ Foweraker 1995: 18 and Wettergren and Jamison 2006: 22

³² Wettergren and Jamison 2006: 26

³³ Wettergren and Jamison 2006: 10

³⁴ Tilly 2000: 22

³⁵ Alvarez et.al.1998:1

An important distinction in the definition of social movements is that between action and actor. We have in our definition chosen to assume that a social movement is a collective action performed by a group. This is in line with Wettergren and Jamison's reasoning, which makes a clear distinction between the action and the actors performing it. The movement is then situated in-between groups of actors, with its borders being produced and reproduced in relation to other groups and the larger society³⁶. In this, the concept of social movements becomes somewhat abstract, which makes it hard to grasp in relation to specific cases. A more concrete and simpler explanation is provided by Tilly and Tarrow, who argue for the need to differentiate between social movement-base and social campaign. The social movement-base is constituted by the different actors, the social organisations and networks, as well as cultural artefacts, memories and traditions that form part of the social campaign. The social movement campaign can then be said to be resembling the collective action (as discussed above), which is mainly characterised by a continuous challenge on the power holders³⁷. The social campaign is built on worthiness, unity, number and conviction. These principles may not always be compatible though. There may for example be an apparent contradiction between increasing the number of participants and the unity of the movement³⁸. The concrete actions that are performed can be for example: meetings, demonstrations, petitions and press-releases, all in the form of unspoken threats, which give the movement its strength.

One aspect that is characteristic of social movements is the linkage between the cultural dimension and the social struggle. The social movement then enters into the domain of the divide between state and society, which is particularly deep in the Latin American context, which we deal with below³⁹. Within the identity-paradigm there is a belief in social movements as bearers of societal change. These changes can occur in the questioning and disbandment of contemporary institutionalised norms and actions⁴⁰. It is not obvious that social movements affect the democracy in a positive manner, which becomes apparent in the racist, excluding and patriarchal structures of some social movements⁴¹.

³⁶ Wettergren and Jamison 2006:11

³⁷ Tilly and Tarrow 2007:119

³⁸ Tilly 2000: 24

³⁹ Touraine 2002:176

⁴⁰ Wettergren and Jamison 2006:13

⁴¹ Alvarez et.al. 1998: 17

2.4 Social movements in a Latin American context

Despite similarities between the social movements of Europe and Latin America, it is important to also observe the differences, and in this case to focus on what is specific about the Latin American context. Boussard states that "the social movements are not created in a vacuum, and must accordingly be analysed in relation to the context in which they figure"⁴². There is a clear distinction in the literature concerning social movements between the traditional and the new social movements of Latin America. The new social movements are distinct in that they, first, hold a negative attitude towards the neo-liberal project as such. This was an opinion which was often expressed during our field study by members of the FEJUVE. This can be seen as an example of the "shared values" of the social movements, which were discussed above. Secondly, the new social movements of Latin America share a sceptical attitude towards the traditional political system. Democracy has been the prevailing form of governance in most of the Latin American countries during the latter part of the 20:th century, and in Bolivia since 1952. This democracy has though been in the form of formal democracy, in which the citizens have been allowed to vote, but not much more than that. The citizens have not then enjoyed the social rights which proponents of the substantive democracy suggest and recommend⁴³.

In the matter of the sceptic attitude towards the traditional political system, the new and the old social movements of Latin America can easily be contrasted. In the latter there was often an obvious political ideology which guided the movement, and the movement was often tied to a political party, which in turn opposed a military dictatorship⁴⁴. This linkage to a political party is something that the new social movements have distanced themselves from. There are rather strong elements of an "anti-politics"- ideology, and an explicit denial of being a political movement: *it's not a good idea for FEJUVE to get involved in politics, because it's a civic organisation*⁴⁵.

The collective action of the new social movements occurs to an increasing extent within the traditionally cultural sphere rather than in the political. This does not, however, make it less of an actually political action⁴⁶. The strong (rhetorical) differentiation between political and

⁴² Boussard 2006:170

⁴³ Alvarez et.al. 1998:9

⁴⁴ Boussard 2006: 157

⁴⁵ Interview 2007-07-17

⁴⁶ Wettergren and Jamison 2006: 24

cultural spheres, creates an increasing divide between what is considered civil society and what is considered political society⁴⁷. The methods of the new social movements are mainly protest and lobbyism, and other types of pressure on the government. Sometimes the methods are of a more "self-help" character, which entails that the movements works with basic projects such as road building, construction of schools and houses, and improvement of the local medical services. When a social movement is built up around local needs such as these, they can build a more constant presence in society, argues Lehman⁴⁸.

⁴⁷ Alvarez et.al 1998: 9

⁴⁸ Lehmann 1990: 150-151

3 Bolivia, El Alto and FEJUVE

3.1 The political development in Bolivia

Bolivia's recent history is scarred by political instability; it has been dominated by military coups, mixed with periods of democratic governance. Since 1982, there has been a fairly democratic period in Bolivia⁴⁹. The country's political instability has in many ways shaped the Bolivian view of politics – a general mistrust towards politics and politicians is widespread within Bolivian society⁵⁰. In addition, the largest part of Bolivia's citizens, the indigenous, have been deprived of political rights and political representation throughout the main part of the country's history. This fact should mainly be read as a consequence of Bolivia's colonial background. The indigenous citizens of Bolivia, mainly the Quecha and the Ayamara, make up about 62 per cent of the entire population. They weren't given their political rights until 1952 after the Bolivian revolution⁵¹. During the 1980:s a large number of neo-liberal reforms were introduced in Bolivia, executed and initiated by the IMF and supported by the USA. This resulted in an economic upsurge, but this did not contribute to the general wealth of the average Bolivian⁵². In combination with the US-sponsored eradication of coca-crops these reforms resulted in a seriously worsened economic situation for the already marginalised parts of the population, which were in an overwhelming majority of the cases indigenous people. Today approximately 65 per cent of the Bolivian population of 8,4 million, is poor.⁵³

The above mentioned factors enhanced the appeal and the growth of the Bolivian social movements such as; FEJUVE; MST; Coca Tropicó and CONAMAQ⁵⁴. Social movements such as these thus gave a voice to the muted groups in society – various marginalised groups became united in striving to eliminate the inequalities that torn the Bolivian society.

⁴⁹ García Linera 2004: 11

⁵⁰ Espóstito Guevara and Arteaga Aguilar 2007: 21

⁵¹ Postero 2007: 3-4, Stefanoni and Do Alto 2006:20

⁵² McNeish 2006: 223-224

⁵³ survives on less than 2 USD/day, McNeish 2006: 225

⁵⁴ MST (Movimiento sin Tierra) group of landless peasants with there base in the east, Coca Tropicó, a group of coca growers in the region of Cochbamba and CIDOB (La Central Obrera Boliviana), CONAMAQ iConsejo Nacional de Ayullus y Markas del Qullasuyu) an indogenous movement García Linera 2004: 21

Manifestations of the actions of these groups could for example be seen in the so called “water war” of 2001. A large crowd of people “closed” an entire region of Bolivia, in order to force the French corporation Bechtel to leave Bolivia, and stop its privatization of the water of Cochabamba. This was a successful action, and the company was forced to leave Bolivia⁵⁵. A further example of the growing power of the social movements was when 500.000 people demonstrated against the government’s plans to export gas in 2003. After eight days of mobilisations, hunger strikes and blockades, the president Sánchez de Lozada had to resign and fled to the United States. This was to be called the gas war, or in local terms, red October, because of the many people that were killed, 70 people died and 200 were injured⁵⁶.

Evo Morales was elected President in 2005. This was historically significant since he is the first president ever of indigenous heritage in Bolivia. Another important note for our study is the fact that Evo Morales before he became president was a leader in the coca movement⁵⁷. This is indicative of the special relationship that has come to form between the social movements and the governing political party in Bolivia today. Morales seized office promising an improved economic and social situation for the marginalised groups in society; a de-privatization of the main corporations of Bolivia as well as a profound rewriting of the country’s constitution (which has barely been changed since it was written by the Spanish in the 19:th century)⁵⁸

The writing of the new constitution began in August 2006, and the process has been far from harmonious. The divide between different groups in Bolivia has become deeper, and resulted in difficulties to meet an agreement. Simplified the country can now be divided in two different camps, one where Evo Morales enjoys strong support and the other part consists of the four wealthier departments where the *prefectos*⁵⁹ are openly opposed to Evo Morales. These are called *la medialuna* -the half moon, in the local expression.

3.2 On El Alto

El Alto is one of the highest situated cities in the world, it lies on 4000 meters height, from

⁵⁵ Crabtree 2005: 24

⁵⁶ Albó 2006: 329 and Crabtree 2005:102-103, Lazar 2006: 183

⁵⁷ Stefanoni and Do Alto 2006: 55

⁵⁸ Kohl 2006:18

⁵⁹ The Prefecto is the leader of the department, which is elected by the citizens in each and every of Bolivia’s nine departments.

where it looks down on La Paz. This is the area that is called the "altiplano" - the Bolivian high plateau.⁶⁰ It is estimated that 74 per cent of the inhabitants of El Alto are poor. The social problems are hence huge, and only 7% of the inhabitants have their most basic needs satisfied, for example people lack electricity and access to clean water and health services, as well as educational avenues and sufficient housing. The infrastructure of the city is also in a bad state, and many streets have not yet been asphalted⁶¹. El Alto is divided into nine different districts, of which eight are urban and one is rural. These districts are then subdivided into different zones⁶². It is these divisions that the organisation of the *juntas* which make up the FEJUVE is built on. We deal with this more thoroughly below.

3.2.1 History of El Alto

El Alto is a young city, as late as the 1920's the first settlers are estimated to have arrived. At the time of the Bolivian revolution of 1952, the city had grown into six large zones; Villa Dolores, Villa 12 de Octubre, Villa Bolívar A, Zona 16 de Julio, Villa Balliván and Alto Lima. The inhabitants had by then grown to approximately 11.000⁶³. From 1976 to 1988 there was a very dramatic population growth in El Alto, when the number of inhabitants rose from 95.455 to 307.403⁶⁴. One reason for this growth has to do with the closing of the rurally situated mines, whereas people moved to the cities in the search for new ways to earn a living. The former miners constitute one of the more influential and numerically large groups of El Alto today. The number of zones had by 1988 grown to be 166⁶⁵. The number of inhabitants of El Alto today is not certain, in the census of 2001 it was said to be 649.958. This number is however considered to be unrealistically low, and should more accurately according to FEJUVE's own census be closer to one million⁶⁶. The reason for this discrepancy in numbers can possibly be due to the fact that many inhabitants of El Alto are still nationally registered in their rural birth towns⁶⁷.

3.2.2 Identities in El Alto

The inhabitants of El Alto generally have many different senses of belonging, and hence their identities will also be spread. One strong source of identity for the people of El Alto is where

⁶⁰ García Linera 2004: 591

⁶¹ Mamani Ramírez 2005:29 and Arbona 2006: 52

⁶² Gobierno Municipal El Alto 2006:5

⁶³ García Linera 2004:591

⁶⁴ Mamani Ramírez 2005: 28

⁶⁵ García Linera 2004: 592

⁶⁶ Interview 2007-08-08

⁶⁷ Mamani Ramírez 2005: 9

in the city they live. *Vecino*, which translates as neighbour, has a different connotation than what many are used to. In El Alto *vecino* connotes a sense of "brotherhood in the neighbourhood", and this feeling of belonging is shared between the people who live there. The reason for this may partly be explained by the mobilisations of 2003 where different groups of *vecinos* went out in the streets to fight the government forces⁶⁸. Another reason for the sense of belonging with your neighbours are the social network structures and groupings which are very characteristic of El Alto. During the most intense period of urbanisation people from all over the high plateau and from the mine districts of Oruro and Potosi settled in El Alto. These usually settled in different neighbourhoods depending on from where they came and what their occupation in the countryside had been. Hence, today there are fairly clearly demarcated "miner's districts" as well as "merchant districts" et cetera⁶⁹.

For example, one of the people that we interviewed says "Yo soy minero", which translates as "I am a miner", even though he himself has never worked as a miner, only it was his father's occupation back in the countryside⁷⁰.

People of El Alto usually feel a sense of attachment to their place of birth, and a will to hold on to customs and habits from there. The indigenous identity is probably the most important identity for the people of El Alto. 81 per cent of the inhabitants identify themselves as indigenous, and 74 per cent of these identify themselves as *aymara*. This is the reason to why El Alto has often been called the capital of the Aymara's⁷¹.

3.2.3 Social upheavals in El Alto

Despite the city being so young, it's location has a history of social indigenous struggles. Tupak Katari and Bartolina Sisa, who are national icons in Bolivia, used El Alto as a base camp when they seiged La Paz in 1781. Likewise, El Alto was one of the key places during the revolts of the 19:th century⁷². In contemporary Bolivia, El Alto is still the main location for social upheavals⁷³. The different mobilisations of 2000 can be viewed as a starting point for these, with the big protests from students, *vecinos* and others leading to the establishment of UPEA⁷⁴ that same year⁷⁵. The years that followed were to be characterized by big social

⁶⁸ Mamani Ramírez 2005: 54

⁶⁹ Gobierno Municipal El Alto 2005: 18

⁷⁰ Interview 2007-08-08

⁷¹ Mamani 2005:8

⁷² Gobierno Municipal El Alto 2005: 11-12

⁷³ Mamani Ramírez 2005:43

⁷⁴ *Universidad Publica de El Alto* – the public university of El Alto

⁷⁵ Mamani Ramírez 2005: 35 ; Gobierno Municipal El Alto 2005: 19

protests with the peak of the gas war in 2003⁷⁶. One explanation for why El Alto has been so "prominent" when it comes to social upheavals can be found in its strategic position. The city is situated above La Paz, and you have to pass it in order to go from La Paz to other important regions of Bolivia, as well as to go to Chile and Peru⁷⁷. Blockades of these routes can hence "shut down" large parts of the country.

3.2.4 Social Organisations in El Alto

There is extensive experience of social organisation in El Alto, which constitutes an integral part of the social relations in the everyday life of the city⁷⁸. The organisational models that are used in the city originates from the rural parts of Bolivia, but are modified in order to suit city life better⁷⁹. There exists a multitude of organisations in El Alto which jointly creates a complicated political and economical network. Among these organisations are for example *las gremialistas*, *las transportista*⁸⁰, the students of UPEA, COR⁸¹ and the FEJUVE⁸². At a number of occasions there has been strong cooperation and mutual movements between these organisations, which has strengthened the organisations further. For example, the FEJUVE and the COR cooperated in the struggle for the establishment of UPEA and then later during the Gas War mobilisation of 2003⁸³. El Alto has received the pet name "ciudad rebelde" (Rebel City) due to the many strong social organisations which are situated here⁸⁴. In many of the major social struggles in Bolivia El Alto has played an important part, and the city has become an ideological center from where Bolivia's political development is steered in new directions⁸⁵.

⁷⁶ Gobierno Municipal El Alto 2005: 22

⁷⁷ Mamani Ramírez 2005: 28 ; Gobierno Municipal El Alto 2005: 31

⁷⁸ Mamani Ramírez 2005:9

⁷⁹ García Linera 2004: 591

⁸⁰ These are different trade unions

⁸¹ Central Obrera Regional, The Regional Workes Union

⁸² Mamani Ramírez 2005: 9

⁸³ García Linera 2004: 595

⁸⁴ Dok. Movimientos sociales från Juan Carlos . Ibid

⁸⁵ García Linera 2004: 595

3.3 FEJUVE

The FEJUVE of El Alto is the largest and best structured of the FEJUVEs that exist in Bolivia⁸⁶. This has much to do with the clear political line that it runs⁸⁷. FEJUVE's main goals are to always be in a contesting position towards the government, and to work in order to provide the basic need for the people⁸⁸. During the Gas War of 2003, FEJUVE was the main actor that organised the social upheavals in El Alto. It was here that the ideas of discontent and revolt against the state took form, which has later become influential discourses throughout all of Bolivian society⁸⁹. The demands that were put forward in the wake of the Gas War were that the gas production becomes nationalised, that a new constitution is written and later that the president Sanchez de Lozada resigns.

3.3.1 The structure of FEJUVE

The FEJUVE of El Alto is a federation of all the *juntas vecinales* in El Alto. A number of *juntas* came to form the FEJUVE El Alto in 1979. Since then El Alto has grown considerably, and the number of *juntas* have grown accordingly. Today there are 520 *juntas* spread out in the nine districts of El Alto. These districts are divided into zones where a varying number of *juntas* form part⁹⁰. The FEJUVE consists of an executive committee which has 39 chairs, of which the president and the vice president chairs are the most important. Every other year a congress is held (*el congreso ordinario*) in which the committee is elected. Representatives from all the nine districts should form part of the committee, none of which should be (party-) politically active⁹¹. Here the objectives of the executive committee are decided for the coming two years. Apart from the fact that the executive committee meets twice a week, all the leaders of the *juntas vecinales* gather in a big meeting on a monthly basis⁹².

⁸⁶ Gobierno Municipal El Alto 2005: 31

⁸⁷ Interview 2007-08-21

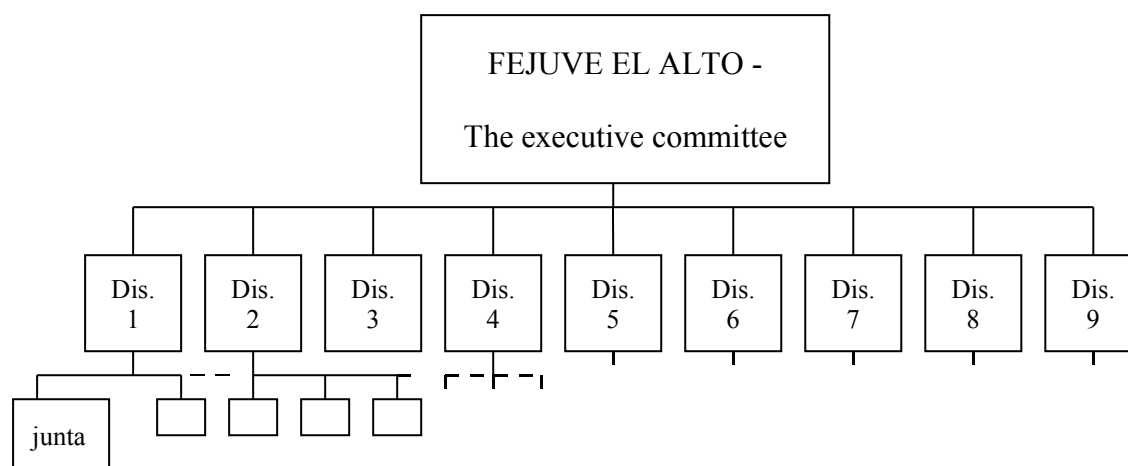
⁸⁸ Interview 2007-08-09

⁸⁹ Mamani Ramírez 2005: 121

⁹⁰ Mamani Ramírez 2005: 10, 35

⁹¹ García Linera 2004: 596

⁹² García Linera 2004: 598,600



Picture 1

The FEJUVE functions as the highest authority with the executive committee. This consists of representatives from the nine districts of El Alto, which are then subdivided into *juntas*.

Every *junta* of the FEJUVE has to have at least 200 inhabitants which it represents⁹³. At least once a month there is a meeting in every *junta*, where different problems of the neighbourhood are discussed⁹⁴. At these meetings the *junta* leader informs the neighbours about how the work of the FEJUVE is progressing⁹⁵. There is often someone in the neighbourhood who is responsible for informing the neighbours who didn't participate in the meeting of what was discussed⁹⁶. In these meetings the leaders of the *juntas* are also elected. These leaders have a large responsibility, acting as a link between the FEJUVE and the neighbours (or "the base"). The leadership of the *juntas* decide how active the *junta* is going to be, but the neighbours can also influence this by demanding an increased or decreased activity level⁹⁷. The neighbours also have a big influence in that they elect the representatives who then elect the executive committee of FEJUVE. The leadership is supposed to be re-elected every other year, in order to be replaced by other people from the neighbourhood. During our field study however, we learnt that this is not always the case. Sometimes when the neighbours are satisfied with the work of the leadership, these same leaders are re-elected for longer periods of time. Even though there are general expectations on the president of every *junta*; that he has to inform "the base" about the work of the FEJUVE, about joint

⁹³ Mamani Ramírez 2005: 40

⁹⁴ García Linera 2004:599

⁹⁵ Interview 2007- 07- 17

⁹⁶ Lazar 2006: 187

⁹⁷ García Linera 2004: 600-601

mobilisations et cetera, the work of different *juntas* may vary considerably. Each *junta* has its specific character, with different traditions and customs. This naturally leads to different organisational structures.

3.3.2 *The development of FEJUVE*

The first *junta* of El Alto grew up in the 1950's as the city began to grow rapidly⁹⁸. After 1959, a growing number of zones created their own *juntas*, which mainly dealt with questions concerning the basic necessities of the different neighbourhoods. State sponsoring was granted for improving the access to water, light and transport. However, the neighbours had to do all the hard work, for which they weren't paid, only for the material costs⁹⁹.

The main function of the *juntas* was to administer and coordinate the social demands that the neighbours had. The organisation of the infrastructure of El Alto came to be another subject which the *juntas* dealt with, and brought forward the demands of the neighbours to the mayor¹⁰⁰. In 1957 the first *Consejo Central de Vecinos*¹⁰¹ was formed, and Juan Cruz Mamani was elected president of it. Six years later the *juntas* gathered for the first time as *Sub-Federación de Juntas Vecinales*¹⁰². In 1979 the first *Federación de Juntas Vecinales* (FEJUVE) is formed during the first national congress of the *juntas vecinales* (El Primer Congreso Nacional de Juntas Vecinales) in Cochabamba¹⁰³.

The context at the formation of FEJUVE El Alto was one in which social organisations struggled against dictator governments, and hence one of the main aspirations of the FEJUVE El Alto was to be an anti-dictatorial organisation. During the 1980's the FEJUVE El Alto's power grew, when it became the main organ that people used in order to present their demands and complaints on the government. There were at this time a number of mobilisations, for example the *Marcha por la Vida* 1985¹⁰⁴.

⁹⁸ Mamani Ramírez 2005: 30

⁹⁹ García Linera 2004: 592

¹⁰⁰ Mamani Ramírez 2004: 32

¹⁰¹ Main Neighbourhood Council

¹⁰² García Linera 2004: 592

¹⁰³ García Linera 2004: 593

¹⁰⁴ García Linera 2004: 594

3.4 FEJUVE as a social movement

As already discussed, it is important to distinguish between a movement and its practitioners. This means that the FEJUVE is not its members in themselves, but rather the relation between these and the actions that are performed in the name of the movement. FEJUVE is the movement base, and each *junta* constitutes a potential movement base which can perform the collective action that is the social movement. The *juntas* vary in strength depending on the members' commitment and depending on the elected leadership of any given time. It is important to note that each *junta* is independent of the FEJUVE. For example, several *juntas* disbanded themselves from the FEJUVE during the ordinary congress in 2006, because they were opposing the election of the new president Nazario Ramírez¹⁰⁵.

The FEJUVE strives to stand up against the government and act as a counterpart to it, which is one important aspect in the definition of a social movement, as argued by Tilly. This will be elaborated further in aspect three.

The actions that the FEJUVE performs are typical for social movements; demonstrations, strikes, blockades et cetera. Tilly writes that a social movement shows its strength partly through its large number of participants, which is apparent in the FEJUVE. The organisation holds that the more participants at a given demonstration (for example) the better legitimacy that demonstration receives. The FEJUVE is especially known for being able to mobilise large number of people: *the FEJUVE organised one of its gigantic marches. A never ending human wave that has never been seen before, and I think will never be seen again*¹⁰⁶. This desire to mobilise as many people as possible for demonstrations and other such gatherings involves the risk of coercion being used to ensure mass participation. This problem will be discussed more under aspect five. Here we settle for stating that the desire to gather a large number of people may be in conflict with retaining ideological unity in that number of people.

Social movements are generally characterised by a strong internal solidarity. This solidarity is noticeable in the FEJUVE, and can be viewed as an extension of the strong sense of shared identity of El Alto inhabitants. *We have to struggle for all the brothers of El Alto, we have to be united throughout the good and the bad*¹⁰⁷.

¹⁰⁵ Interview 2007-08-14

¹⁰⁶ Mamani Ramírez 2005:121

¹⁰⁷ Interview 2007- 08-09

4 Aspects of FEJUVE

On the basis of our background presentation of FEJUVE, and the theoretical discussion on the social movements and their potential to be a strong actor, we now wish to discuss different aspects of the FEJUVE and how these relate to structural inequalities in Bolivian society. In an introductory section of each aspect we will discuss why this specific aspect is relevant to study. Further on we will apply this to the FEJUVE, and discuss and evaluate how well the organisation works with this particular aspect.

4.1 To what extent does the FEJUVE affect people's sense of being able to influence the course of their lives by being a knowledge forum?

4.1.1 Points of departure

Here we are referring to people's sense of being able to influence the course of their lives (e.g. their perceived capability to influence the politics that are of relevance to their lives). This sense is of course very much influenced by the actual social and political conditions wherein people lead their lives. Throughout our thesis this aspect is referred to as awareness. Social movements can possibly help create conditions wherein democracy and grass roots- influence can increase. The main theoretician who is of relevance when discussing awareness is Paulo Freire. He puts emphasis on the need for people to be actively involved in society, not just passive bystanders. This activity can, argues Freire, reduce oppression and alienation. In order for people to be able to exercise influence on their lives, they need to be able to get access to information and to deal with this information critically. In order to be able to do this people need to be literate, which was one of Freire's main points¹⁰⁸. Freire's thought rests on the assumption that people are able to steer the course of their own lives, and that people have an innate capability to handle their own development successfully. People need to be empowered

¹⁰⁸ Mayo 1999:50

and liberated. Marginalised people have generally been deprived of this capability, and made to believe that it doesn't exist. Thus, for people to be liberated and empowered they need to challenge the leaders who reinforce "the myths of ignorance", and thus keep people unempowered, uninformed and so forth¹⁰⁹. This un-information is usually distributed through education¹¹⁰. Relating this to our sense of the word "awareness" we find many similarities to Freire's concepts of critical awareness and empowerment. We hold that people need education and information in order to be able to challenge the political structures which keep them marginalised. We also hold that these structures *need* to be challenged, and for that to happen people need to believe that they have the ability to do this. This would then correspond to Freire's thoughts of innate capabilities which have been muted by the political leaders and the structures which they have created. Thus, we find that we share Freire's concern with empowering people and making them retrieve their critical awareness. This is necessary in order to challenge the structural inequalities which plague Bolivian society.

This criteria has to do with whether the FEJUVE and the *juntas* work in order to educate the people who constitute its' grass roots. If so, this would mean that people become more politically aware and influential. This would certainly also entail that people would feel less marginalised in the given society in which they figure. In not providing educational opportunities, we argue that the changes that the organisation manages to create in society aren't as far reaching as they could be, had they provided for the education of people. We also relate this aspect to Azar's theory *PSC* which highlights the importance of reducing the sense of marginalisation in a given society, in order to create a more peaceful one¹¹¹.

4.1.2 FEJUVE and critical awareness

The main question for this aspect is; How does the FEJUVE affect people's sense of being able to influence the course of their lives? We start this discussion with a quote from our interview with a leader of a junta in el Alto:

First of all: I am not involved in politics. But of course I have to talk to my neighbourhood, especially in meetings, talk about the political and economical situation in our country. It is very important for me and everybody else. So I have to talk about it. I have to ... make people conscious - this is my work. In my neighbourhood people just work ... and sometimes they don't have good information

¹⁰⁹ Mayo 1999: 51

¹¹⁰ Freire 2000: 77

¹¹¹ Miall et al 2004: 84

about the political and economical situation in our society... The leaders are the ones who have to give this information to people ¹¹².

This quote is representative of the general attitude in FEJUVE. The *junta* leaders hold the conviction that they have to educate and inform the grass roots of their *junta*. The grass roots also demand this from the leaders, so it is not simply a top down- educational process. The meetings are held once or twice a month in every *junta*. In one survey made by Lazar 77 per cent of the neighbours claimed that they regularly attend some kind of civic meeting and most of them went to the *junta* meeting. Above all it is the *jefe del calle*¹¹³ that goes there and who is supposed to inform the rest of the people living on the street¹¹⁴.

The education is considered necessary because members of the *juntas* and the FEJUVE find it important for people to be aware in order to be able to make informed decisions. They realize that the leaders have to fill this function, much because of the situation in Bolivia, where people don't have the time necessary for retrieving this information themselves since they have to work for many hours each day. *People are very interested in politics, unfortunately they don't have the time*¹¹⁵, sums it up quite well. There is also a widespread perception that people recently have become more political, and are feeling more politically forceful¹¹⁶. Why? Many people in FEJUVE attribute this to the success of the Gas War mobilisations of 2003. Now people feel that they have more ability to influence the politics of the nation, and aren't just passive bystanders. This success can in large part be attributed to FEJUVE, since they were the main organizing force behind the mobilisations of 2003¹¹⁷.

We got more conscious from that year, 2003, that fight was very important for me, for all the neighbours, to change their minds about politics. Before, we were sleeping ... From 2003 ahead ... we have changed in our minds, we are more conscious...Because of the success of the Gas War ¹¹⁸.

Yet there are also critical voices about whether the *juntas* and the FEJUVE actually provide this information-spreading function which they claim to do:

¹¹² Interview 2007-07-17

¹¹³ The FEJUVE representative on the street

¹¹⁴ Lazar 2006:186

¹¹⁵ Interview 2007-07-17

¹¹⁶ Interview 2007-07-28

¹¹⁷ Interview 2007-07-28

¹¹⁸ Interview 2007-07-17

Education should be one of FEJUVE's tasks. Because a citizen that is not aware of her rights, can't take an active role in the public control of the state. But in reality, what people really say about the FEJUVE is that they only make demands to the mayor¹¹⁹.

We think that this criticism is partly justified, and that some *junta* leaders don't initiate these meetings. If the people in the *junta* in turn don't demand this from the leader, then these meetings will remain a distant ideal. This criticism points out that the info spreading of the FEJUVE is far from perfect. However, our investigations reveal that this function exists, and we hope that it can be developed further.

The FEJUVE played an extremely important part in organizing people in the mobilisations of 2003, the success of which made people feel more politically influential. There is a possibility, we argue, that the FEJUVE increased the critical awareness of people in the *juntas*, which in turn facilitated the the events of the Gas War in 2003. This is in line with Paulo Freire's arguments regarding critical awareness - that people need knowledge in order to challenge the existing oppressing order.

4.2 In what manner does the FEJUVE influence the democratic situation in Bolivia?

4.2.1 Points of departure

We have in the theory section established that a substantive democracy is an important factor in preventing violent conflict. Our basic assumption in this regard is that when people feel that they can influence their life situation in a positive direction, this is constructive for the development of a certain society. Accordingly, a social movement which functions as a channel that enables people, who would otherwise have been politically marginalized, to exercise influence is a way to reduce the structural inequalities in a society. However, the mere existence of a social movement doesn't guarantee a feeling of influence over ones life, since there exists movements with racist, authoritarian and exclusionary tendencies. Authoritarian social movements may even be relatively common, and one of our interview

¹¹⁹ Interview 2007-08-21

persons says the following: *Generally I think that the social movements have a deficiency in the democracy conception. The social movement are fairly authoritarian*¹²⁰.

We therefore try to find out if the FEJUVE contributes to a more substantive democracy, in a manner which gives people the feeling of being able to exercise more political power. This aspect will be elaborated in two different parts, the first focuses on if FEJUVE is a democratic organisation internally and the other if FEJUVE contributes to improvement of overall democracy in Bolivian society.

The first part, investigating the democracy within FEJUVE will be elaborated according to: are the leaders of the juntas, and of the FEJUVE, democratically elected? As a second part we investigate the women's role in FEJUVE. Since the Bolivian society is known to be very *machismo* we find it important to elaborate on this question. It rests on the assumption that *machismo* culture diminishes the democracy within an organisation, and *in the first place* may reject women as members of the organisation, and *in the second place* may deny the women that are actually allowed to participate to exercise influence. This would, without any doubt, constitute serious limitations on the organisation's internal democracy.

A second part-aspect is whether the FEJUVE serves as a positive force in the expansion of Bolivian democracy. According to Escobar, an expanded concept of democracy needs to include the recognition of actors other than the traditional political parties. These "un-traditional" actors could for example be the social movements. We observe that the FEJUVE has a large political part to play in Bolivian society, which could mean that they help guide the political transition towards a more substantive democracy. This we argue partly because the FEJUVE works mainly in order to decrease social inequalities in Bolivian society. This is also one of the main features of a substantive democracy; one liberated of vast social inequalities. We will not engage in the statistics on how the FEJUVE decreases social inequalities, but rather just conclude that this is their aim. According to our investigations, it appears that they are making progress in this regard¹²¹.

There are theories which stress that the internal democracy of an organisation is not necessary for the organisation to have a positive effect on the societal democracy in general¹²². *We do*

¹²⁰ Interview 2007-08-21

¹²¹ see for example interview 2007-07-28

¹²² Alvarez et. al. 1998: 20

agree that these are two different dimensions of democracy, but also hold the conviction that internal democracy is better than internal authoritarian rule, as one of the persons that we have interviewed said: *Democracy is not nurtured by authoritarianism, democracy is weakened by authoritarianism*¹²³.

4.2.2 FEJUVE's democratic performance internally

The people that we have interviewed are stating that the leaders of the FEJUVE are democratically elected: *The FEJUVE has a very good organisation because they choose their leaders every two years*¹²⁴. Another one says: *There are people represented from every junta, two thousand people come...and you choose someone who is active and collaborate easily with other people*¹²⁵. Despite these obviously confirmatory answers to this question we also have to consider the fact that there was a lot of talk about corruption, bribes and rigged elections in the FEJUVE. This is not something that can just be shuffled into oblivion, since it may indicate some far reaching problems with the democracy of the organization. In the Bolivian context, corruption is very widespread, much statistics suggests that it is one of the most corrupt states in the world¹²⁶. This is in no way a justification of the corruption that seems to plague the FEJUVE and the juntas, but merely a necessary contextualisation of this.

As a second part we wanted to investigate women's part in FEJUVE, and here we discovered some obvious problems. Women are under-represented in the executive committee of the FEJUVE, only 9 out of 39 chairs are filled by women. When we spoke to women who were active in the FEJUVE and the juntas, we encountered much frustration regarding the machismo of the organisation, and that they were not allowed to take part of the organisation to the same extent as men. This made it very hard for women to have a say- as well as to realize their projects¹²⁷.

Another person that we have interviewed said: *Men in FEJUVE are not all the same, they have different characters and personalities, but very few support the women*¹²⁸. We encountered this lack of support and belief in women in the FEJUVE as well. We found that, during our interviews, Martin was consistently addressed before Kim. The male researcher

¹²³ Interview 2007-08-21

¹²⁴ interview 2007-07-18

¹²⁵ interview 2007-08-08

¹²⁶ Latin America I

¹²⁷ Interview 2007-08-13

¹²⁸ Interview 2007-08-09

was thus assumed to be more suitable for speaking with regarding these “political issues” that we discussed.

4.2.2 External democratic performance

If we look to a wider national context, outside of the internal democracy of an organisation, we see that the FEJUVE has a large influence in affecting the Bolivian democracy building. The FEJUVE acts as a linkage between the citizens and the state, and as such creates an opportunity for people to influence politically. This is especially so for the people who have been excluded from the traditional political avenues. In this sense, the FEJUVE has a positive effect on democracy in Bolivia, since it has a big influence on politics and society, while still remaining an independent social organisation. Manifestations of this influence can be seen in the fact that FEJUVE, as well as other social organisations, are part of the groups that have been rewriting the Bolivian constitution.

Some of the persons that we interviewed discussed the problem with FEJUVE being at it's strongest in situations of crisis and conflict. In building a more substantive democracy however, the social movements need to have a more stable presence in the everyday lives of people, and not just be powerful during periods of instability.

Democracy is under constant construction in the creation of a system with collective rights for everybody. Then the participation of FEJUVE and the participation of social movements have to be directed to solutions, but not only to conflicts, but also to daily life - how is it possible for all Bolivian people to be happy¹²⁹.

According to our observations though, we see that the FEJUVE and the juntas strive to be a constant force in Bolivian society. The organisation wishes to improve, mainly, the everyday lives of people, by working to get them access to gas and water and other such basic necessities¹³⁰. How does this relate to crisis? In a sense, we can argue that the everyday situation of the average Bolivian citizen is a state of crisis, given that approximately 70 per cent are poor. Following this argument then, the structural inequalities is the crisis that keeps the social movements strong. We do however want to emphasise that we believe that social movements need to build a more permanent presence in Bolivia, in order to secure the

¹²⁹ Interview 2007-08-21

¹³⁰ Interview 2007-08-08

transition to a more substantive democracy.

4.3 To what extent can the FEJUVE be said to be independent from the government?

4.3.1 Points of departure

Is FEJUVE, in any sense, absorbed by the government? Or does the organisation manage to stick to its independent, critical, standpoint. This critical standpoint is important, we argue, for many reasons. Mainly; this “absorption” can be a problem since it may also mean that the social organisation stops being critical of the government. If this happens then the social movement also has to stop demanding things from the government, or so says the general perception. The voice of the people which the FEJUVE, in this case, claims to represent would then be silenced. *We need a big organisation to make demands towards the government- and that's FEJUVE*¹³¹. Statements like these are common in the context of FEJUVE.

In the FEJUVE, the most commonly expressed opinion is that the organisation is necessary to serve as a counterpart to the government, and to articulate the needs of the people which constitute the organisation's grass roots ¹³². Thus, one of the most important characteristic of social movements and organisations is perceived to be their critical position towards the government. Some actor, other than the government, is thus needed to articulate the needs of the “ordinary people”. Just like Alvarez and Lazar express it, the social movements are a link between the government and the citizens.

The perception that this link is necessary is likely due to the fact that historically, in countries which are characterised as “poor”, the government has not been able (and many times not willing) to satisfy the basic needs of the “ordinary people”. A quote that sums up this widespread opinion very well is: *We don't need any more political parties, we have enough. But we need a lot of basic social organisations. It doesn't matter what government is running the country, we will always need social organisations in order to fight for our demands!*¹³³

¹³¹ Interview 2007-07-17

¹³² See, for example, interview 2007-07-17

¹³³ Interview 2007-07-28

So it seems that when it comes to popular perception, it is of utter most relevance that the social movements and organisations stay independent and in a critical position towards the government, as a sort of watchdog. This is a position that is sound, we argue, because there is always the risk of the monopolization of power, which historically has proven to be a very destructive force for society in general, and for the “ordinary people” of poor countries in particular¹³⁴.

4.3.2 FEJUVE and independence from the government

To what extent has the FEJUVE been co-opted since the new, popular, government of Evo Morales assumed office? There are diverging opinions on this, as will be elaborated below.

The current ruling party MAS has made it clear that they are more willing to listen to the social movements than earlier political parties have been. One of the ministers in the MAS-government tells us that: *MAS is not traditional political party, it is a political instrument*¹³⁵. Another example of this accommodating attitude towards the social movements is how the former FEJUVE president Abel Mamani got appointed water minister 2005. Is this then a sign of a co-opted FEJUVE? The information from our interviews tell us this isn't so.

As stated above, many people in the FEJUVE and in the *juntas* emphasize the need to be in an independent position towards the government. Many are also taking an active stand against Mamani: *He (Mamani) doesn't care about FEJUVE now. He is just following the government line- the political line*¹³⁶. Some regard him as a traitor, since he has now become a politician¹³⁷. To be a politician is a strongly derogative term in the FEJUVE context, as well as in the Latin American context in general, as elaborated above. This is reflected in the constant affirmation that: *The organisation (FEJUVE) is a civic organisation, we don't follow any government leader - we are not political*¹³⁸. There is a general mistrust towards politics and politicians in the FEJUVE as well as in Bolivian society. Thus anyone who enters into politics, according to this perception, is or becomes corrupt. This position emphasizes the need of alternative political (in lack of a more suitable term) systems, such as the social organisations and movements¹³⁹.

¹³⁴ See for example global issues 2

¹³⁵ From a MAS information meeting 2007-06-28

¹³⁶ Interview 2007-07-13

¹³⁷ Interview 2007-08-08

¹³⁸ Interview 2007-07-06

¹³⁹ Interview 2007-07-28

Even though there is a general mistrust towards politicians within the FEJUVE, there is also an awareness that this government has actually been elected by the people who constitute the grass roots of the organisation. It is thus seemingly problematic to oppose this government “too” much. This problem is discussed in terms such as: *We just support this government, but we are not from the MAS. When the government does something wrong, we let the government know that, but that doesn't mean that we are against the government*¹⁴⁰. There appears to be confusion as to whether this government can actually be opposed. There appears then to be a contradiction between the (theoretical) ideal of a social organisation in constant opposition of the government, and the situation when the social organisation gets its way and actually elects the government. But as stated above, being a watchdog of the government doesn't necessarily entail being against the government. There *is* such a thing as supporting while simultaneously making demands.

How, then, is the actual behaviour of the FEJUVE and the juntas? As mentioned above, the FEJUVE considers that it is still important to make demands on this government, even though they in a sense have chosen it. But still, there have been extremely few FEJUVE-organized mobilisations since the government of Evo Morales took office. The logic behind this is caught in statements such as: *This government is what we wanted, so we cannot make mobilisations now, because it has just passed a little time since Evo became president*¹⁴¹. Since mobilisations have been very common in the Bolivian context historically (as discussed in the background section), this is a break from an old pattern. This break could, but doesn't necessarily, indicate that the FEJUVE has been “bought” by the present government. The fact that a former FEJUVE-leader has now become minister of water in the present government can be read as symptomatic of this co-option. There can however be other factors that have reduced FEJUVE's will to mobilise, such as their actual agreement with the government on their main policies. What is the point of mobilising if there is widespread agreement? None, of course, which is demonstrated in statements such as: *The FEJUVE has become more powerful since the gas war, but we don't show that power to the government yet, because we are waiting for something that we are against*¹⁴². The conclusion reads that there is a very fine line between general agreement, and hence relative calm in relation to mobilisations, and co-option. Those who want the social movements to disappear will of course argue that co-option

¹⁴⁰ Interview 2007-07-30

¹⁴¹ Interview 2007-07-30

¹⁴² Interview 2007-07-30

is the cause for the relative calm. This is, we argue, not the case when it comes to FEJUVE, a point which will be elaborated on more below.

4.4 How does the FEJUVE relate to conflict under the government of Evo Morales?

4.4.1 Points of departure

The FEJUVE and the *juntas* have historically been known to use mobilisations in order to get their demands satisfied. These mobilisations often implied the “shutting down” of society, of markets and roads et cetera, through the mass participation of people of the *juntas*. These methods have by many been termed methods of necessity - the only means available to the mainly poor people who make up the *juntas*. And, as was often stated in our interviews, the methods have as well proven to be successful¹⁴³. Thus, the FEJUVE found in these mobilisations an effective way to exercise power, and to actually influence the politics of the nation. This was certainly the matter in the *Guerra del Gas*, just to name one salient example¹⁴⁴.

There are however downsides to these mobilisations, the main one being that they mainly strike the poor people in el Alto, which are precisely the ones who the FEJUVE are “working for”. As one of the people that we interviewed said: *Rich people are not affected, they can buy things in the supermarket for example ... Poor people are the victims of the blockades*¹⁴⁵. There is an apparent contradiction in this, which may or may not be problematic. It is mainly a question of whether you think that the means can ever justify the ends. And, as stated above, it is also a question of necessity- there appears to be no other methods for the mainly poor people of the *juntas* to influence the powerful politicians of the nation. At least that is the generally held belief in the FEJUVE and the *juntas*¹⁴⁶.

In the short run these methods make the poor people even poorer. They may also create an unstable society which is very hard to build a peaceful one on. Thus it is, we argue, important to limit the use of mobilisations to when they are “really necessary”. Yet it is also, as argued

¹⁴³ See for example interview 2007-07-28

¹⁴⁴ See for example interview 2007-07-04

¹⁴⁵ Interview 2007-07-28

¹⁴⁶ Interview 2007-07-28

above, important that the social movements demonstrate their power in order to keep challenging the (otherwise monopolistic) power of the government. There is, according to these preconditions, both a risk that the social movements keep using mobilisations, even though they may no longer really “need” it, as well as a risk that the movements lose their power because of their lack of manifest power (e.g. mobilisations).

4.4.2 FEJUVE in conflict; the current situation

The fact is, as mentioned above, that the FEJUVE-initiated mobilisations have almost entirely ended since president Evo Morales assumed office¹⁴⁷. There has been just one FEJUVE-organised mobilisation since Morales assumed office, which was actually not directed to the government, but rather to the *prefecto*¹⁴⁸.

At the same time, the situation of the “ordinary people” hasn’t improved in any real sense. As one of the persons that we interviewed puts it: *We don’t have the basic things to live, for example the bread; it costs more now than before*¹⁴⁹. People are just as poor and are perhaps even more frustrated that the situation hasn’t improved¹⁵⁰. So, why aren’t there any FEJUVE-organised mobilisations when there seems to be a real need for them? Has the organisation become co-opted by the government?

No, there are other reasons for this mobilisation calm, we argue. First: the organisation understands that the processes of nationalisation (as well as other policies) that the government has initiated take time. The situation is not going to improve overnight. The perception among the leaders of the FEJUVE and the juntas is that the “ordinary people” don’t understand this process, as is reflected in one junta leader’s statement: *We cannot change the lives, the social and economical situation fast - it’s a process. I think that people don’t understand this ... Maybe the poverty gives us that attitude*¹⁵¹. The people, according to this logic, thus need to be kept calm, for their own good, in order for the government’s policies to deliver and improve their lives. Whether this logic holds any truth concerning the general public we can hardly know. It appears plausible of course, since poorness also ought to lead to frustration.

¹⁴⁷ Interview 2007-07-30

¹⁴⁸ Interview 2007-07-13

¹⁴⁹ Interview 2007-07-30

¹⁵⁰ Interview 2007-07-17

¹⁵¹ Interview 2007-07-17

But it is also plausible that the people in general have more faith in this government than they had in the earlier ones. Evo Morales is the first indigenous president ever in Bolivia, and phrases like: ... *they know that this president is one of them, so they are conscious that they cannot fight against him. It doesn't make any sense because he is one of them*¹⁵² are common. The trust that people feel for Morales doesn't exclusively relate to the fact that he is of indigenous heritage, but has perhaps just as much to do with his political vision, the socialist vision: *The government now seems to be socialist, they are paying more attention to the people*¹⁵³. So, perhaps the current mobilisation calm has just as much to do with "ordinary people" having faith in this government, as it may have to do with FEJUVE "calming" the frustrated masses. Although this may be so, there are factors that actually *do* speak for FEJUVE having a calming effect on people in the *juntas*. The most obvious "evidence" suggesting this is the fact that the FEJUVE almost entirely ended their mobilisations after the election of Evo Morales, while most other organisations did not. For example, we witnessed several roadblocks during our stay in Bolivia, none of which were organised by the FEJUVE or the *juntas*, but rather by the minor's organisation¹⁵⁴. There is also nowadays an apparent acceptance within the FEJUVE that all mobilisations have to be preceded by dialogue. The organisation thus no longer simply go out in the streets and start a road block when dissatisfied with something, but rather first tries all dialogue possibilities¹⁵⁵.

Another important aspect to mention in this context is that the mobilisations referred to above are the ones that "shut down" society in order to achieve a certain goal. These have ended, or at least been temporarily ended by the FEJUVE, but another kind of mobilisation of a more symbolic nature seems to be evolving. During our stay in Bolivia, between one and two million people got joined in a huge street mobilisation in El Alto. This mobilisation was called the "gran cabildo", or just the "cabildo". The purpose of this mobilisation was officially to show support for keeping the capital in La Paz. This may partly be so. However, many people in the FEJUVE referred to it more as a demonstration of unity, a manifestation of latent power, than as simply showing support for the capital staying in La Paz¹⁵⁶. This seems plausible - as a method for reconciling the seemingly irreconcilable: to avoid mobilisations that "shut down" society, while simultaneously showing the government that the social movements haven't lost their power, and hence cannot be neglected.

¹⁵² Interview 2007-07-28

¹⁵³ Interview 2007-07-13

¹⁵⁴ See for example interview 2007-07-30

¹⁵⁵ See for example interview 2007-07-28

¹⁵⁶ see for example interview 2007-07-30

4.5 To what extent does the FEJUVE use coercion in order to ensure participation?

4.5.1 Points of departure

This criteria rests on the assumption that all participation should be voluntary, in order to be democratic, and thus a constructive force in society. The theoretical foundations of the "constructive nature" of democracy are discussed more extensively above.

We settle for stating that: coercion exists when actor A does something in order to make actor B do something, thereby limiting actor B's potential choices¹⁵⁷. This is of course a voluntarily vague definition, but one that we consider sufficient when applying it to our specific case study.

4.5.2 Coercion in the FEJUVE?

First, we must discuss the nature of FEJUVE's power. It is in many respects an organisation that draws its force from mass participation. If people choose not to participate in a particular mobilisation, then this is, and in a sense has to be, considered a problem. If the power of the entire organisation is dependent on people of the juntas participating in huge masses, there appears to be an innate risk in such a system for coercion of different sort, in order to make people participate and thus enable the FEJUVE to exercise power. Is this risk to any extent manifest in our study of the FEJUVE? And if it is, to what extent is it damaging to society?

The answer to the question of whether the FEJUVE and the juntas are using coercion of any kind to make people participate has to be a quite clear yes. There is no doubt that people are not always participating out of their own free will. This is obvious in references to being fined if not participating in mobilisations, which we encountered in our interviews and in interaction with people in La Paz and El Alto. There are also references to moral judgment and condemnation, as a mechanism for ensuring mass participation. Our friend Elena talked about having to join a certain march, otherwise everyone would know, and she would be badmouthed by the people of the neighbourhood. There thus appears to be a collective, quasi-mob mentality, in the ensuring of mass participation in the different mobilisations. Although this exist in a very real sense it is very hard for us to assess to what extent this is so.

¹⁵⁷ *Emanuel and Hawkins* 2005:17

Another example of the coercion that exists within the FEJUVE and the juntas are the control mechanisms that were established during 2003 in order to be able to monitor which juntas and barrios that participated in the mobilisations and which did not. There were widespread rumors that those neighbourhoods who didn't participate would be looted. There were groups going around knocking door, telling people "either everyone or no-one goes out (to march)"¹⁵⁸. This constitutes another compelling example of the quasi-mob mentality discussed above.

¹⁵⁸ Lazar 2006: 194 and Mamani 2005: 71

5 Concluding Discussion

In this final part we will review the results of our investigation of all the aspects that we have gone through in this thesis briefly. We will then conclude this thesis with a discussion of the FEJUVE's influence on Bolivian society.

Aspect 1

We found that the FEJUVE is in fact a knowledge-supplying organisation. The juntas organize constantly reoccurring meetings where social and political information is shared, spread and exchanged. As argued earlier, this is not simply a top-down educational process, but rather so that the people of the neighbourhoods demand that the leader of their junta organizes meetings and shares information. We argue that this knowledge-supplying function actually constitutes an increased critical awareness for the people who make up the grass-roots of the juntas.

Aspect 2

We have found first, that the FEJUVE and the juntas help create conditions that may guide Bolivian society towards a more substantive democracy by being a political actor which is distinct from the traditional political parties. This is particularly necessary in the Bolivian context where belief in political parties is very low, and the FEJUVE creates a different channel for people to express their needs. The FEJUVE thus constitutes an additional political avenue, and is recognised as such in Bolivia, and is thus helping Bolivian democracy to progress towards a more substantive one.

We have also found that the FEJUVE is an internally democratic organisation, in relation to elections and the possibility to dismiss elected leaders. However, there is a problem relating to FEJUVE's democratic performance in that the organisation is very much influenced by machismo culture. This entails that "women's issues" are often disregarded, and that women have a harder time than men to influence the course of the organisation.

Aspect 3

We have found that the FEJUVE in general supports the government of Evo Morales, even though some of our interviewers are critical. This does not mean, as critics would argue, that they have become co-opted and “bought”, but rather that they are in agreement with this government. There *is* actually such a thing as supporting while simultaneously making demands, even though critics argue the opposite.

Aspect 4

We have found that the FEJUVE has not organised any mobilisations of the sort that “shuts down” society since the Morales government assumed office. This is not, as argued above, to say that they have lost their power or become co-opted, but rather that they are in general agreement with the politics of this government. Had there been any real “need” to mobilise, the FEJUVE would have organised new mobilisations, which is confirmed by the people that we have interviewed. Built into this is also a mechanism of political awareness, which recognizes that policies take time to materialize. This awareness may have a calming effect on people in general, who are frustrated from the lack of an increased standard of living. The FEJUVE thus can have a calming effect on people, which keeps them from mobilising against the first president who is “one of them”¹⁵⁹. A new kind of mobilisation, of a more symbolic nature, also seems to be evolving in which the FEJUVE plays an important part. We argue that the *cabildo* was of this kind.

Aspect 5

We have found that the FEJUVE and the juntas *do* use mechanisms of coercion on inhabitants of EL Alto, in order to ensure participation. This coercion takes different forms - fines and moral condemnation appears to be the most common. We can not determine to what extent this coercion is used, but can simply state that it occurs.

¹⁵⁹ Interview 2007-07-28

5. 1 Discussion

So what then can be said about the influence of FEJUVE on Bolivian society? Does the organisation help to decrease the structural inequalities in Bolivian society?

A strong civil society, with social movements and organisations being the backbone of it, is important in order to expand democracy in any given society. This is perhaps especially the case in Bolivian society. In order to achieve a society which is relieved of structural inequalities there needs to be room for social organisations, and these must be allowed to exercise influence. Power can not be monopolised in the hands of politicians, but must rather be dispersed, and "untraditional" actors such as the FEJUVE must be *recognised* as actually politically influential. There is no doubt that the FEJUVE already has a strong standing in Bolivian society, and the degree of their influence is high. The fact that the FEJUVE was part of the group that has been re-writing Bolivia's constitution is one salient example of the organisation's influence on Bolivian politics. How then does this influence relate to the structural inequalities of the nation? Many people that we have talked to during our interviews stressed their belief that political parties simply aren't enough to alleviate the situation of the average Bolivian. People in general have thus, quite understandably, lost faith in political parties. In this context the work of the FEJUVE makes sense; the organisation works as a sort of watchdog on the government, a constant reminder of the latent power of the marginalized groups in society. This is, we argue, sound in a context like the Bolivian where approximately 65 per cent of the population is poor. Many Bolivians today express that they wish for the social organisations to become even stronger, which indicates that many people already have re-assessed their view of politics.

We must of course avoid to idealize the FEJUVE and other such social organisations. As academics highlight; there are less democratic social movements as well as more democratic ones. Social organisations are generally not a splendid exception from the society in which they figure. As our interviews indicate, social organisation can for example be fairly authoritarian. Regarding FEJUVE the democratic structure is well functioning.

Despite this, we did find some compelling problems with the organisations democratic performance. Machismo culture is prevalent, and the organisation uses different forms of coercion in order to ensure participation. As argued, this is quite representative of Bolivian

society, but that doesn't make it any less problematic. In line with the identity paradigm, we hold that social movements are bearers of change. It is then here, rather than in society in general, where progress in questions like these seem the most likely.

The simple fact that the organisation works in order to improve the situation of the politically and socially excluded groups of society doesn't mean that we should stop being critical of it, rather the opposite. In order to point out the organisation's flaws we also feel that we support it, in a sense. We accentuate where the organisation needs to improve, while simultaneously supporting it's struggle to give voice to the needs of the muted groups in society. And, as we have learnt throughout this thesis, there *is* such a thing as supporting while simultaneously making demands. That is what we do.

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