

International Conference

Rethinking difference: beyond language, culture, and indigeneity

Abstracts

Human non-human relations

Jonathan Alderman

Mountains as actors in the Bolivian Andes: The interrelationship between politics and ritual in the Kallawayaya ayllus

This paper will examine the way that a Bolivian Andean people, the Kallawayas, incorporate mountains—seen as beings with agency in their own right—into their structure of kinship and politics. The Kallawayas interpret mountains as inhabited by ancestral spirits, who are incorporated into the local political structure as authorities. This understanding of the mountains denies the Western separation of politics and nature. I follow de la Cadena (2014) in positing mountain spirits, known as machulas, and humans, known as runa, as mutually constituting one another within the socio-territorial space of the ayllu. In this space nature and politics are not divided but intertwined. However, the political organisation of the Kallawayaya communities has undergone profound changes in recent decades that have affected the ritual relationship between the Kallawayas and the mountain spirits. As the federations which had previously connected Kallawayas politically have become divided, so the ritual relationship that had connected Kallawayaya communities not only with ancestral spirits, but also with one another, has also become splintered, as rituals that once united the Kallawayas as one people are no longer performed. The manner in which Kallawayas incorporate their ancestors as authorities therefore provides evidence for the propensity of ritual to reflect social structure.

Sarah Bennison

“I would like to tell you about something which *does* exist in all the villages of Huarochirí”

What can landscape beings teach us about indigeneity? How might those who ritually adore landscape beings teach us about our theoretical pitfalls? This paper explores these questions in relation to the Spanish-speaking province of Huarochirí (Lima, Peru). Here, locals differentiate themselves from outsiders through oral narratives centring on their unwavering conviction that the landscape is home to a diverse array of beings. Drawing on fieldwork conducted in 2012, I shall reflect critically upon conversations I had with *campesinos* from the San Damián district. Through these conversations, locals expressed their concerns that my ontological outlook was not compatible with the characteristics of the locality, and they taught me how to avoid the wrath of the landscape-owning ancestors. Is this an ‘indigenous ontology’ or something else?

Huarochirí is home to the so-called Huarochirí Manuscript (c.1608), an anonymous Quechua document describing local traditions during the early colonial era. Today, Huarochiranos practice many of the traditions mentioned in the Manuscript, including rituals to pacify the animate landscape. Although Huarochirí’s ethnohistorical record relating the traditions of ‘the people called Indians’ has warranted academic discussion concerning its anonymous ‘indigenous’ authorship, there is scant, if any, evidence that Huarochiranos have ever defined themselves as indigenous

(Salomon 2001). As such, I problematize the fact that pre-Hispanic ways of (re)producing identity persist in Huarochirí, yet its *campesinos* cannot reap the benefits of Peru's recent institutionalisation of land rights for indigenous peoples.

Antonia Manresa

Contesting 'critical' in identifying intercultural education

The term 'intercultural' in Latin America forms part of a politics of contestation for recognition of ethnic cultural diversity. The emergence of the indigenous movement in Ecuador during the 1980's is seen to articulate the possibility of positioning an 'alternative pluralist political project' (Walsh, 2009; Lopez, 2009), challenging dominant homogenizing state ideology. Implicit within the demand for pluralism is the need to reconceptualise recognition based on 'sameness' to that able to encompass 'difference'.

This has led to the articulation of 'interculturalism' as a practice (C, Walsh, 2003) and as 'a dialogue' between 'saberes' (ways of knowing) (De Sousa, 2010). Within academic and political discourse alike, the aim of an intercultural education is identified with a means to promote social transformation. As an educational process intercultural education can be understood to relate 'difference' to both a form of practice and a demand for recognition. However, in Ecuador four decades on, bilingual and intercultural education has become a site for bitter dispute. Consensus appears to relate only to the common accusation that 'intercultural education' is employed as a political rhetorical tool. Where does this leave 'bilingual intercultural education' on the ground?

From my own ethnographic analysis based on a particular Kichwa Amazonian Ecuadorian community, I consider that 'difference' enters the classroom in unexpected ways. By analysing classroom discourse I contest the notion that difference is articulated as a critical process of educational practice that challenges official knowledge (H, Giroux). I describe instead how ontological difference (De la Cadena, 2015) becomes articulated passing unnoticed and avoiding epistemological confrontation. In so doing I suggest the ability for exercising possible ways of 'worlding' is retained (M, Blaser, 2010).

Identity and politics (1)

Joanna Crow

Beyond Identity: Tracing the Circulation of Ideas about Indigeneity through Transnational Intellectual Networks in Early 20th Century Latin America

Everyone recognises that indigeneity is an idea that travels and that is not reducible to a national context. Nonetheless, it has been researched mainly within national contexts. In this paper, I highlight the importance of considering notions of indigeneity from a transnational historical perspective (drawing on the example of Chilean-Peruvian intellectual conversations in the early twentieth century). I also suggest that one useful way of getting beyond the dominant categorisations of identity in relation to indigeneity might be to scrutinise the creative processes behind such categorisations; in other words, by digging down into the detail of how they were formed. Linking these two points together, I propose investigating the extent to which ideas about indigeneity have been shaped by the transnational circulation of texts and people rather than primarily or exclusively as a consequence of conflicts within national political cultures. Finally, I

explore a couple of key examples of indigenous and non-indigenous actors that disrupted “conceptual comfort zones” (de la Cadena, 2010: 336) in early twentieth century Latin America by engaging with “other-than-human beings” (ibid: 345): the Mapuche political leader Manuel Aburto Panguilef (1887-1952) and the Chilean writer Gabriela Mistral (1889-1957).

Laura Alessandra Nocera

Indigenous Land Right in new Latin-American Constitutions

From the protection of indigenous rights to the consideration of land as a "common": the development of the Nuevo Constitucionalismo

The definition of "indigenous people" and its development in the international scenario has characterized, in the last decades, a new consideration about the rights of indigenous peoples, whose self-determination is connected to a specific land, occupied and translated from generations and synonym of an unique identity (the anthropological concept of "ancestral land"). It caused a re-interpretation of the relationship between land and indigenous peoples, providing the reintegration of indigenous peoples in their ancestral lands and considering land as a common, in which natural resources should be managed by communities.

The fact has been particularly relevant in the Latin-American contest after the transition to democracy with the theory of Nuevo Constitucionalismo. That constitutional theory considers indigenous costumbre as one of the sources of State law, if not in contrast with human rights. Every indigenous community is seen as an entity per se, recognised by the State and entitled to possess their ancestral land and to manage it in accordance with their custom and their harmonic relationship with nature and Mother Earth (Tierra Madre or Pacha Mama). [Several examples of Latin-American Constitutions will be discussed.]

Ernesto Schwartz-Marín

The net worth of Mexican “indigenous DNA”: genomics, (bio) economy and the sovereign making of ancestry

This paper explores the value(s) that “indigenous DNA” has acquired for population genomic research, bioeconomies, legal regulation and data/sample sharing practices in Mexico. I argue that its thanks to the successful enrolment —and sometimes erasure— of “indigenous DNA” or ancestry that advocates of the Mexican Institute of Genomic Medicine (INMEGEN) have been able to successfully collect various thousands of indigenous biological samples without the bitter disputes that have characterised similar projects around the globe: for example the Human Genome Diversity Project (Reardon 2005) or the Colombian, Great Human Expedition (Barragán 2011) -both of which came to an abrupt halt due to fierce opposition of indigenous representatives and NGO's. Our story starts by exploring how indigenous ancestry was mobilised by advocates of human genomic research in order to give political import to the creation of the INMEGEN and the promises of a new bioeconomy based on the protection of 65 indigenous groups and the rest of Mexico's mestizo (racially admixed) population “that has a unique genomic make up” (Jiménez-Sánchez 2002). Our story then travels to the Mexican Genome Diversity Project (MGDP) sampling jornadas, in which officers of the INMEGEN adapted informed consent processes to indigenous participants

“cosmovisions”; in order to evade possible objections and public disputes. Afterwards I examine how the boundaries between indigenous and mestizo DNA are constituted in the laboratory, producing regimes of research and sample exchange, in which indigenous samples (for many practical-symbolic reasons) are considered to be more valuable. Finally I show how once “indigenous DNA” reaches the legal realm, practices of silencing and erasure, flatten ethno-racial distinctions to leave in its place a more homogeneous “Mexican DNA”. The paper establishes that the distinctions between indigeneity and racial mixture are sharpened when talking about genetic diversity (a bioeconomical asset), and blurred when dealing with thorny ethical and legal issues (a possible source of confrontation). In following the transmutations of ‘Mexican Indigenous DNA’ to the fore the way in which the onto-politics of indigenous peoples are strategically enrolled, and ‘respected’ to support a politically correct version of engagement in which the incommensurable world making practices, and ontologies of indigenous and mestizo populations foreclose debate and support the *status quo*, in order to produce a ‘tolerant’ postcolonial Mexican modern science.

Identity and politics (2)

Elena McGrath

The Politics of Class and Indigeneity in Bolivia

In my paper, I explore the way Bolivian miners have navigated politicized relationships to indigeneity over the course of the 20th century. I argue that ideas of “proletarianization” and “modernization” have obscured the shifting and multiple relationships between indigeneity and class in the case of Bolivia. My paper traces the history of this relationship with an eye towards the varied sites of deployment of identities as well as the political value of adhering to or obscuring particular facets of identity in particular times and places.

At the beginning of the century, I show how Bolivian workers in rural mining cities began defining themselves as a class with a distinct cultural identity from their indigenous neighbors, but remained indigenous in the eyes of urban observers, social reformers, and most particularly, politicians. During the nationalist revolutionary ferment of the 1940s and 1950s, this class identity became valuable to revolutionaries and reformist, as workers represented the hopes of assimilating indigenous difference into modern citizenship through labor. As a result of this coalition, workers demanded a central place in the Revolution of 1952’s new social order as workers who deserved state protections and rights rather than Indians. Over the course of the 1950s and 1960s, miners in the state mining corporation asserted this privilege of place within their own neighborhoods, communities, and even families by seeking to control access to resources granted through the state. This process alienated neighbors and family members who could not access the privileges of state miner belonging. Three factors changed the relative value of worker versus indigenous identity in the 1970s and 1980s, however. First, the increasingly hostile and repressive Bolivian state treated demands to collective economic rights as threats to the social order, especially after the Banzer coup of 1971. Second, the development of alternative political and intellectual projects among Kataristas and Indianistas in La Paz gave new value to articulating resistance to the state along racial or cultural rather than economic lines. Finally, the increase of employment in the mines outside of the state sector through cooperative mining enterprises gave rise to populations of workers who shared working conditions but could not claim access to the state on the same terms as their salaried, neighbors. As a result, many Bolivian miners began to cultivate once again a relationship to their indigenous cultural heritage as a political tool for articulating struggle at the end of the 20th century.

At no point in the 20th century did the identity of worker entirely erase either indigenous cultural practices or the racialized exclusions experienced by workers and their families, but worker identity did allow some members of mining communities to assert a form of local leadership and authority. I suggest that this history can help understand the slippery political contours of indigeneity and class in Evo Morales's Bolivia.

Sarah Fearn

'We are not indigenous, we are not cholos, we are not Indians. We are Aymaras':

Extra-group and Intragroup Understandings of Ethnic Identities in Rural Peru

This paper begins by illuminating the divergences between scholarly conceptualisations of ethnic identity categories in rural Peru (the extra-group understandings) and the meanings attributed to these categories by the local actors who are frequently assigned these identities (the intragroup understandings). Taking the term 'indigenous' as the starting point, it examines how external agents and institutions have formulated, defined and utilised the term 'indigenous' in ways that are fundamentally at odds with rural Peruvians' subjective understandings of indigeneity. The paper then discusses how alternative ethnic identity labels, such as ethno-cultural identities and the term 'originario', are also differently understood and utilised by extra-group and intragroup actors.

Through an elucidation of the extragroup and intra-group understandings of ethnic identity categories (and the divergences between them), the paper seeks to examine how labels of ethnic identity are cast upon populations by external actors to delimit 'sameness' and 'difference'; how rural populations themselves narrate their own imagined boundaries of sameness and difference; and how labels are adopted, negotiated and contested when local populations look to exploit relationships with external agents.

Based on a chapter from a completed PhD, the ethnographic fieldwork for this paper was carried out in three sub-national departments of Peru, encompassing both the Andean and Amazonian regions. Although the paper itself is epistemologically informed by interpretivism, it provides an incisive critique of scholarly assumptions around the shared understandings and meanings of words as we attempt to represent the perspectives of others.

Stefan Rzedzian

Promoting and Defending the Rights of Nature in Ecuador: Environmental Activist Organisations and their Resistance to Extractivism

The 2008 iteration of the constitution of Ecuador marks, globally, the first formal recognition of rights for Pachamama, or Mother Earth. The establishing of nature as a rights bearing entity in and of itself was seen by many as a radical move, and one that positioned the Ecuadorian government as a beacon of eco-development progress and aspirations. Since 2008, the existence and implementation of the rights of nature has been highly problematic. Despite initial hopes for change, the Correa administration has continued the country's economic model of intense extractivism, which has been viewed by many to be in direct violation of the rights of nature. Given Ecuador's heavy reliance on the extraction of natural resources (especially oil as well as, increasingly, minerals), sceptics and critics have remained unsurprised that the eco-political situation is transpiring as it is.

Originally framed as part of a wider anti-imperialist and post-development/post-neoliberal state-sponsored narrative, these rights have increasingly become operationalised by environmentalists against the government itself. Based on fieldwork carried out in Ecuador during the years 2014/15 I here seek to explore how the rights of nature are currently utilised by local environmental activists and NGOs as an anti-government discursive tool in order to promote an eco-development ethos and political agenda. Furthermore, I discuss how these rights have become progressively radicalised, leading to a spatial shift in where they are promoted and defended, and how this contributes to a perpetual cycle of conflict between environmentalists and the state.

Discourse and indigeneity

Sheila Aikman

Gold mining and new indigenous identities in SE Peru

This is a case study of one Arakmbut community in the SE Peruvian Amazon and its rejection of intercultural education. Intercultural education in this context means 'intercultural schooling' and conforms to a nationally recognised model of primary schooling for indigenous communities. It was introduced as an outcome of many years of lobby and work by their indigenous federation but after only a few years the community succeeded in having the school returned to the control of the Dominican Diocese school network (RESSOP). This rejection of the intercultural school offers a case study through which to problematize dominant categories of indigenous identity embedded in institutionalised intercultural schooling. Moreover, it demands an investigation into ways in which the massive expansion of artisan gold mining in this region of Madre de Dios has shaped Arakmbut people's physical and social environment and their values and choices over the past 30 years. The Arakmbut cultural system has undergone and continues to undergo transformations to which the intercultural schooling programme seems wilfully oblivious. The scale and intensity of the gold mining, together with abuses of power and rights have influenced Arakmbut social, political and economic relationships and engagement with the state, with migrant miners, with their indigenous federation and within their community. Today their livelihoods depend heavily on gold mining raising questions about the how to think about these changes and the complex of diversity of their lives. The case study looks to the concept of 'indigenous creolization' whereby "so called Natives creolize by becoming native to formerly unknown contexts and by successfully dealing with new political and social structures and kinds of peoples" (Halbmayer 2013).

Peter Baker

Who is indigenous in Bolivia today?

Defining an emergent indigeneity through the activism of indianismo-katarismo

The term indigenous is an amorphous one whose meaning is determined in multiple ways according to different procedures. Indigeneity is not, in this sense, an 'observable' phenomenon 'actually existing' prior to its performance, whether through ethnographic observation or in legal disputes, in the same way that anaemia, for Annemarie Mol, is never one thing but three strictly incompatible things which depend on three different types of performance: clinical; laboratory; and pathophysiological. The amorphousness of the term becomes particularly visible in a place such as Bolivia, where the political currency that the term 'indigenous' carries has created an ever-shifting

terrain of identity politics which can be used to engage with land rights, environmental concerns, the protection of cultural and linguistic rights, and other issues besides. One example of this amorphousness can be found in the enormous shift in numbers between the two Bolivian censuses of 2001 and 2012, which record an 18% drop during this decade in the number of Bolivians who identified with some kind of indigenous group. It is clear that these changes cannot be explained only in terms of actual shifts in demographics, but must also be due to changes in the way in which people choose to identify. Based on the author's research on contemporary indigenous writing and activism in Bolivia, this paper will suggest a conceptual understanding of the term 'emergent indigeneity', a term already widely used in anthropology, to suggest a supplementary, politicized understanding of indigeneity which is not necessarily compatible with other definitions of indigeneity as found in the U.N. or mainstream contemporary anthropological work. The aim will not be to 'improve' our current definitions of indigeneity, but rather to add an increasing layer of complexity to them, although it is hoped that this added complexity will add to and not detract from our appreciation of global indigenous movements today. The paper will discuss some of the difficulties for contemporary indigenous political movements in Bolivia that become apparent from this proposed understanding of indigeneity, in part by drawing from contemporary research in anthropology on what has been called 'ontological difference'.

Michelle Bigenho and Henry Stobart

Grasping Cacophony in Bolivian Heritage Otherwise

A "fever" of heritage registration (patrimonialización) is raging at multiple levels of Bolivian society. Under the pro-indigenous government of Evo Morales, many laws have moved specific cultural expressions into legal framings as intangible cultural heritage. In part, this booming interest in heritage may be related to desires to capitalize on cultures, to support cultural rights claims, and/or some combination of these economic and cultural rights explanations. To help account for specific local uptakes of heritage assemblages and for differences between the levels of heritage dispute, however, this paper suggests also considering a "heritage otherwise" perspective. Rather than attributing local conflicts over heritage "cradle" declarations entirely to the impact of neoliberalism and UNESCO's processes, this paper explores them in terms of the dynamics of origin politics and a preference for cacophonous modes of musical performance. Such dynamics and "cacophonous relations," it is argued, are more about reproducing worlds than parcelling them into new forms of property.

Language and identities

Charles Pigott

Decolonizing the Self in Contemporary Indigenous Literature

This presentation shall deconstruct the "culture/nature" and "individual/social" binaries by comparing examples of contemporary literature written in Quechua and Yucatec Mayan. While the contemporary literary movement in both languages is motivated by the aim of cultural reassertion (often by re-imagining what it means to be "indigenous"), an overview of the literature shows that ecology is an equally central theme. Already, this reveals the inseparable intertwining of "culture" and "nature" in these two literary contexts. However, I argue that the deconstruction of these concepts requires an even deeper deconstruction of the "social" versus the "individual". By citing

excerpts from an interview with Wildernain Villegas Carrillo, a Yucatec Mayan poet, I shall illustrate how his engagement with nonhuman elements of the environment is not predicated on the imposition of subjective categories onto an object, but is rather an intermeshing of personal biography and current experience, to the extent that the boundaries between Self and Other are temporarily dissolved. Moreover, not just the current experience with the nonhuman, but the personal biography itself, is profoundly inter-specific, being constituted in large part by relations with the nonhuman world. Thus, the inherent sociality of the Self, in its openness to the nonhuman, questions what it means to be “human” in the first place, a questioning that, I would argue, is central to the contemporary “indigenous” literature.

Cinzia Monti

The language of memory: the role of the Amazonas Quechua in the identity construction of its last speakers

This paper explores the issues of the identity construction and negotiation between the last Quechua of Amazonas speakers and semi speakers in rural communities, in the Amazonas Department (Peru). This Quechua dialect is an endangered variety and it counts only few last speakers. The loss of this language is the result of the choice, made in the past decades, to teach to the children not the Quechua dialect but the Spanish language. In these communities, the Quechua language has been considered a sign of indigeneity, interpreted as marginalisation and shame. The native language is not spoke in daily life, even in the family unit, and it lives only in the memory of the people who was able to spoke it in youth. The Quechua of Amazonas, in its last stage of the decay process, is the language of the memory, an access to private familiar memories and affections; it also remembers of the loss of friends and kins. The loss process has the same dynamics of a mourning every time the communities lose one of their last speakers, and in that case the word “quechero” define the role of the passed away as “Quechua speaker” not with shame, but with pride. The process of self determination shows a dualism: life and death. On one side there is the necessity to embrace the Spanish language and reject the mark of indigenous; on the other side there is the regret, because the language is going to disappear and the memories and the knowledge of the oldest will be lost too. The mechanism of identity negotiation is conflicting between the necessity to forget and the fear of being forgotten.

Rosaleen Howard

Shifting voices, shifting worlds: human-non-human relations in Quechua storytelling

Based on an analysis of a Quechua storytelling performance recorded during fieldwork in the central Peruvian Andes, this paper examines how the relationship between humans and non-humans, and humans’ and non-humans’ understandings of that relationship, may be an emergent feature of a narration. Degrees of knowing and sources of knowledge are systematically marked in Quechua grammar. This story deals with the theme of social interaction between a male human protagonist and a female mountain guardian. It describes the human protagonist’s gradual realization of the

existence and nature of the mountain being, and grammatical markings in the text structure a transition from conjecture and supposition to direct witness. The analysis shows how the story's content and its grammatical structure are mutually entailing. Form and content taken together throw light both on how certain grammatical categories function in spoken interaction and on how Andean understandings of the relationship between humans and non-humans may be revealed through grammatical usage. This variety of Quechua is spoken in the province of Huamalíes (department of Huánuco), and falls into the Quechua 'I' dialect grouping (Torero, 1964), similar to that of Conchucos Quechua as studied by Diane and Daniel Hintz (2007; 2006).