Integration Projects in South America involve a complex dynamics due to the overlap of a diversity of territorialities from different geographical scales. The constitution of a large array of actor-networks involves disputes over the construction and the deconstruction of strategic places at stake. One of these regions was for so long known as the Bolivian Strategic Triangle by the South American Geopolitical thought. Much of this geographical discourse is noticed in the Integration Projects Rhetoric continuously portraying Bolivia as an strategic country due to its geographical position in the middle of South America and its natural resource wealth. A great part of this discourse looks forward to legitimize the overlap of the territorialities of the integration projects, transnational companies over the territorialities of indigenous peoples, peasant communities, non- governmental organization (NGO’s) and drug trafficking networks. Obviously, this process implies in an encounter of discourses and actions of integration and fragmentation such as the autonomic attempts from the Bolivian Oriental Departments. In order to mediate these processes, the president Morales government bestowed the indigenous and the peasant community land an autonomic status at the behest of the Departmental level during the approval of the last National Constitution, so that small territorialities hold more power in their hands than do the Departmental Governments. On the other hand, the national government supports the South American integration projects in Bolivia originating a contradictory response. The main aim of this paper is to verify how those encounters are constructing and deconstructing the integration and the fragmentation in Bolivia. For so, we have conducted a field work in Bolivia.

**Key-words:** South American integration, Bolivia, territorial fragmentation, geopolitical networks.

### 1. Introduction

Some years ago a paper entitled “South American Heartland: the Charcas, Latin American geopolitics and global strategies” was published by Leslie Hepple. At a first glance, what most stands out is the expression *Heartland*. Secondly, the title refers to a *South American* Heartland, while Makinder’s heartland was mostly used to designate the Eurasia *core* area. Therefore, Leslie Hepple discusses a classical geopolitical concept through an outsider issue to
the Anglo-Saxon academic context. The discussion of this matter is really relevant to a geopolitical revival and was not well approached among Anglo-Saxon geographers, reason that motivated us to further this debate.

It is clear that Hepple’s article lays out the point of view of a British Geographer in respect to an issue that was scarcely explored by the European geography before. However, since the 30’s the hypothesis of the Charcas Heartland has been a constant theme of foremost importance for the South American authors. Clearly, many of them were pursuing geopolitical reasons to legitimize the imperialistic practices of power in Bolivia.

The present study aims to bring forward the standpoint of a South American geographer regarding the matter of the Bolivian Strategic Triangle. For South American citizens, the contact with geopolitical reasoning, culture and practices was very close, particularly because for many years we have lived under the influences of military regimes and so I would dare to say that the military apparatus of state had a greater impact in Latin American countries’ everyday’s life than in the most part of the Western countries.

Currently the post-modern geopolitics undertakes a more accurate reflection of classical geopolitics, especially regarding geopolitical discourses and concepts. Agnew and Corbridge (1995) state that a geopolitical order is always guided by geopolitical discourses, which offer legitimacy to the materiality of a territorial arrangement. Other authors such as Dalby (1990) and Ó'Tuathail (1996) affirm that one should consider the geopolitical theories as theoretical constructs to legitimize hegemonic spatial practices. Although, the speeches are essential to understand these practices, we would say that discourses are a mean of legitimizing geopolitical diverse practices represented by the decisions and actions taken by different actors at different scales. Nevertheless, the converse is also true, because the practices can also transform the discourses (Muller,2008). Several territorial arrangements are set up from the constitution of those practices. Thus, what happens is an interaction between discourse, practice and territorial arrangements, without a preponderance of discourses on other categories (Kelly 2006; Taylor and Flint 2000, Dodds 2001), as some authors of postmodern geopolitics like to state. This way, since most of these geopolitical discourses seem to correspond to territorial arrangements in Bolivia, it is not worthy to simply exam how the geopolitics legitimized these social practices (Pfrimer and Roseira 2009).

It is clear that many concepts of the Classical Geopolitical thinking were gathered by some South American military authors, since Army schools were the main institutions to spread the European and the American geopolitical postulates to their national societies. One of the most pervasive concepts conveyed by these centers was based on the transposition of the heartland concept, coined by the geographer Halford Mackinder (1904) to the Bolivian geographical situation (Vega 1968, 1982; Gumucio and Weise 1978). Because of its geographical location in the center of the continent, the Bolivian territory was envisioned as a strategic region in South America. Of course most of these discourses were applied to justify the geopolitical practices and its ambitious projects in Bolivia. This can be demonstrated not only by the geopolitical discourses but also by the expansionist actions of various actors in Bolivia. Due to these
To this end, we reappraised the geopolitical discourses about Bolivia, through the concept of the Bolivian strategic triangle and other theories. We have compared them to the Bolivian territorial arrangements in order to elucidate their degree of territorialization. Were the geopolitical discourses about Bolivia only discursive strategies of power or the conceptual guidelines of these discourses have actually materialized in the Bolivian territory by the means of geopolitical practices? Taking this question forward, firstly, we classified the different geopolitical discourses about Bolivia in accordance with the historical context. So, we divided the time horizon of this study in: period of containment (until the late 70’s) and period of integration (from 1980 until the present time). Applying this classification, we did a judgment of the practices and the consequent geopolitical territorial arrangements in Bolivia, verifying their technical density, morphology and its transformation into each of these contexts. At last, we have analyzed the overlap of different territorialities that intend to take advantage of this territorial formation. So we have reflected about the intentions that lie behind the South American Integration Projects, the Bolivian Territorial policy, and many other networks. During this movement of reflection we tried to reconstitute the various networks involved in the processes of contention and agreement as far as their territorial strategies are concerned. Most of our reflection was based on data collected during a field work performed in 2011 and 2012.

2. Bolivia: a hiatus in the midst of geopolitical discourses

In this topic we aim to evaluate how formal geopolitics regarding Bolivia was structured, that is to say, how the geopolitical theories and discourses have been gradually framing an overview of Bolivia in the South American Geopolitical thought. Another point is to evaluate how these geopolitical discourses interacted with an Applied Geopolitics in South America.

In geopolitical manuals, you can find at least three points of view regarding the Bolivian territory (see Table 1). The first point of view has considered Bolivia as a geographic absurdity, a country squeezed between the greedy policies of Argentina, Brazil and Chile. To these authors, the presence of such diverse physiographic features, as shown by its varied topography, has prevented the integration of different regions in Bolivia, making it impractical to its very existence as a country. Classical authors such as Derwent Whittlesey and Badia Malagrida appraised the Bolivian situation as a "phantom" state. For the American geographer Bolivia was a "handicapped state" due to its difficulty of national integration (Whittlesey 1944: 545). The Spanish geographer, as well, categorically stated that Bolivia was "a geographic absurdity" (Malagrida 1919 apud Quiroga 1978: 88) once its territory did not match any of the physical regions of South America. According to the Spanish author, this was a sign of inconsistency between the Bolivian soil and its society. This type of position has been defended
mostly by authors from Geopolitical schools outside South America. Even after the transition from the containment to the integration period, this exogenous geopolitical position has sought to assert the Bolivian insignificance in the South American context, especially due to its geopolitical enclosure and lack of political unity (Glassner 1988; Lavaud 2000; Hepple 2004).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Geopolitical discourses on the Bolivian territory</th>
<th>Period of containment (until the late 70’s)</th>
<th>Period of integration (from 1980 until the present time)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Table 1. Main Geopolitical Theories regarding Bolivia during the period of containment and integration. Source – Organized by Pfrimer (2010).

A second group of authors sought to assess this issue from a different perspective. At a time when Argentines and Brazilians confronted each other for the hegemony in the subcontinent, the Bolivian territory was considered as the "axis of power vertebraion" in South America. Another remarkable aspect of this position was the phobia of the rise of communism in the region, especially after the upsurge of Ernesto “Che” Guevara’s guerrilla in the Bolivian Chaco (Dodds 2000: 169). Thus, much of the speeches addressed by Brazilians and Argentines during the period of contention characterized Bolivian territory as a strategic region to be controlled even if indirectly\(^iv\). One of the most significant geopolitical theories that expressed this discourse is that one of the Bolivian Strategic Triangle, put up by the General of the Brazilian Army, Mario Travassos, back in the 30’s.
Travassos argued that the major physiographic contrasts in the subcontinent revolved around the antagonisms between the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans, and between the Plata River Basin and Amazon River Basin. These physiographic contrasts meant as well, geopolitical contrasts. For the Brazilian officers, among the two antagonisms, the latter was the stronger and put at stake many of the interests of the two regional powers: Brazil and Argentina. In the Geopolitical theory of Travassos, both antagonisms materialized in full Bolivian territory, forming a triangle where Brazilian (Amazonian influences), Argentinean (Platini influences) and Bolivian (Andean influences) interests engaged one against the other. According to Travassos, "the key to this problem was the so-called Economic Triangle Cochabamba-Santa Cruz de la Sierra-Sucre, true sign of the Bolivian wealth" (Travassos 1935: 41). So, to this point of view, Bolivia ceased to be insignificant and turned out to be of a major importance to expansionist designs of semi-powers in South America.

Much of the South American geopolitical thought embodied many aspects of Travassos' theory in its analysis on the region and Bolivia. As for Brazilian Geopolitical thought, other authors also placed Bolivia as an area of confrontation between the Argentinean and the Brazilian interests (Kelly, 1988: 114; Hepple, 1986b). For instance, Lysias Rodrigues has put up his theory of “punctum dolens” based on Travassos' key concept. By this idea, Rodrigues sought to represent points of geopolitical tension in the sub-continent, the main one would be that crystallized in the Bolivian region of the Strategic Triangle (Rodrigues 1947: 65). Golbery do Couto e Silva, another important top military officer and ancient Minister of Communications also gave more background to the concept of Travassos, departing from the idea that the Bolivian territory was part of a "Continental Welding Area" (Couto e Silva, 1955: 127-128).

Even in the Argentinean Geopolitical schools such as Escuela Superior de Guerra, the work of Travassos was also promptly welcome (Dodds 2000: 160). Different Argentinean geopoliticians glimpsed "the Bolivian territory as an empty space to be filled" (Pittman 1981, Dodds 2000: 161) as well as a key issue of Argentina’s foreign policy (Russel 1988: 72; Dodds 2000, Carlos, 1950; Guglielmianni 1975; Romano apud Pereira 1974: 72; Machicote apud Mello 1997: 152). On the Chilean side, the spectrum of the Brazilian and the Argentinean geopolitical thought was also reflected on its military schools. Authors like Montalva (1959) and the General Augusto Pinochet Ugarte (1977) underscored that Bolivia was a strategic area for conservation of Chilean interests in relation to Argentina and Peru (Pittman, 1988). The most practical example of this vision on Bolivia can be gazed while analyzing the Alpaca Plan which aimed to expand the Chilean Army control on Bolivian lands.

After the transition to a period characterized by a preponderance of integration, this view held mainly by Argentineans, Brazilians and Chileans, was relegated to the background. In contrast to it, Bolivian authors extolled, still in the period of containment, their country's geographical factors as symbols of national identification (Mendoza 1935; Zavaleta Mercado 1967). This fact gave rise to a third point of view that characterizes Bolivia as an strategic area rich in natural resources. Another recalled geographical aspect was the location of South American watershed (Divortium Aquarium) in Bolivia. So the Andean natural landscape was a
factor of national identification, by building up a social imagery. Later on, other Bolivian authors have encompassed the idea that national integration of Bolivia was essential to the South American regional balance, thus, it became clear that the Bolivian territory was of foremost importance for the integration of the various territories in the subcontinent (Valencia Vega, 1968; Pareja 1978). This issue was also backed up because the integration between Bolivia and other small countries of the subcontinent would diminish the “enclosure” carried out by Argentina and Brazil. Although this thesis was well remarkable for its chauvinism, Paraguayan and Uruguayan geopoliticians subsequently came to defend the thesis that Bolivia, Paraguay and Uruguay urged to ally themselves in order face the advances of two semi-powers (Arréllaga 1982; Bellis 1988, 1990), It was not by chance that this initiative was the genesis of URUPABOL organization, founded in 1981. Previously, other attempts of regional cooperation had been organized such as the Community of Andean Nations (CAN), the Latin American Free Trade Agreement (ALALC), but without substantial progress due to sharp containment.

The crossing point from containment to integration preponderance was the formulation of the Financial Fund for the Development of the Plata Basin (FONPLATA). Soon after, other integration initiatives gained more space as the Latin American Integration Association (ALADI) and later the Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR). Clearly, from this period on, the geopolitical discourses of ABC countries took an opposite direction to that presented during the 60's. On the Argentinean side, Marini (1980) went on to defend the necessity of integrating Argentina and Brazil against the American presence in the region. For this purpose, Bolivia was important to integrate the two semi-power, especially with regards to the energy sector. We can argue that Brazilian geopolitical thought went through the same changes (Kelly 1988: 121; Egler 2006). For instance, Costa (1999) presents Bolivia as one of the key regions for the territorial articulation in the subcontinent, in order to promote the South American integration. Departing from the perspective of a meridionalist geo-economics, Martin (2007) treats the Bolivian territory as crucial to the field of railways and, therefore, to the consolidation of South America territorial integration.

In a general manner, one can observe that the exogenous geopolitical discourses were looking forward to characterize Bolivia as a meaningless area, especially at the global scale. However, it should be emphasized that Bolivia remains an strategic area in the range of South America, mainly for the purposes of regional integration projects. Obviously, much of these exogenous discourses also sought to legitimize positions of power. Therefore, many of them might be trying to underestimate the strategic position of Bolivia, in order to deter the projects for territorial integration of South America, which after all are presented as an alternative more advantageous for the South American countries than other regional integration projects such as the Free Trade Area of the Americas (ALCA).

On the other hand, we can observe that the geopolitical discourses of the ABC countries portray Bolivia as an area of substantial importance to the security of national interests and the preponderance throughout the subcontinent. However, the loosening of containment policies and the construction of a new scenario based mostly on integration purposes contributed to
judging the Bolivian territory differently in the context of the new regional agenda. A new function was assigned to the Andean country: the core of South American integration. Naturally, these discourses have also articulated intentions which have not only been benign to the interests of Less Developed Countries (LCD’s) of the region. The regional integration projects may produce economical and environmental asymmetries on the LCD’s territory. Therefore the concept of integration, in some cases, can mean anything but link national territories for mutual ends.

Setting up a third point of view on their own territory, Bolivian discourses sought to give it value by recognizing its strategic importance. Clearly, the acknowledged importance was not for the purposes of containment, but rather that of national and regional integration with a view to countering external interests. It is quite simple to verify that the Bolivian geopolitical imagery attempts to amalgamate its fragmented national territory by drawing attention to the issue of national identity based on physiographic characteristics. One great example was the “Bolivian Massif theory” (El Macizo Boliviano) upheld by Jaime Mendoza (1935). This theory addresses the idea that the Bolivian physiography was not a factor for disaggregation among its various regions, but indeed a factor of national cohesion through identification with the Andean landscape. Thus, it is clear that the geopolitical discourses about the Bolivian territory were determined to legitimize geopolitical practices.


On the third topic of this paper we would like to discuss the tensions involved in the transformation of the former territorial order in Bolivia. The intensification of flows due to the infrastructure set-up of new networks has transformed the former geopolitical order. Naturally this transformation was taken up not only in a material sense. The territorial order is also intertwined with geopolitical discourses (AGNEW AND CORBRIDGE, 1995). The new trends given by geopolitical discourses to Bolivia in certain manner legitimized new political practices, especially in the regional scale. However, the construction of this new array of relations and the Bolivian government contradictory responses has unleashed many tensions that we intend to analyze in this topic.

Since the beginning of the 1990’s, the Bolivian territory has been qualified as a strategic region to foster the South American integration. Even the Bolivian President, Evo Morales, claimed that Bolivia’s mainstream foreign policy should follow the Area of Contact policy (MORALES, 2006). Due to its location in the center of the subcontinent many plans of economic wealth and prosperity have arisen. Out of five Regional integration initiatives, Bolivia takes part in four of them: Andean Nations Community (CAN); South American Nations Union (UNASUL) and the Fund for Plata Basin development treaty (FONPLATA) and the Amazon Cooperation Treaty Organization (OTCA).
The recent plans for South American integrations, especially those taken up by UNASUL have promptly promised that Bolivia is going to be the Subcontinent economic hub and, therefore, most of their projects are said to improve Bolivian national integration. In order to achieve so, the Initiative for South American Regional Infrastructure Integration (IIRSA), one of the UNASUL’s organization, have planned that six of its ten axis of integration are going to cross over the Bolivian territory.

This shift in the South American geopolitical discourses has been accompanied by different geopolitical practices as far as the Bolivian territorial policies are concerned. In order to increase the articulation of its different regions during the 1990’s Bolivian government has put through what was called Plan para Todos. The main aim of this undertaking was to modernize the country and allow that new economical adjustments were put into practice. The furthering of national integration through the setting up of new infra-structure was considered a task to be executed by private enterprises. The main course of that policy was intended to push forward the neoliberal regime.

If on the one hand these new integration initiatives allowed a cooling of the confrontation between states, on the other hand it allowed the deployment of the globalization and neoliberalism vectors in Bolivia through the institutionalization of liberal democracy. The effects of these vectors could be remarked when the Law of Capitalization (BOLIVIA, 1994a) privatized almost all state enterprises, giving rise to transnational corporations in almost all sectors of the Bolivian economy, ranging from the basic needs sector to the hydrocarbon sector. If in one sense, the international economic actors moved inland territory, particularly in Santa Cruz and in the oriental portion of Bolivia, in another, the Bolivian government has scheduled a new land use planning through the Law of Administrative Decentralization (BOLIVIA, 1995) and Popular Participation Law (BOLIVIA, 1994b). The first of them municipalized rural areas, granting yet more autonomy to municipalities at the behest of the department’s governments. The second statute also offered the peasant communities, indigenous movements and neighborhood associations the opportunity to plead the figure of Territorial Base Organizations (OTB). In this new legal framework, the OTB’s comprise the Supervisory Board, a popular kind of council to oversee the city government and even having the right to dismiss the “alcalde” (the mayor). Furthermore, this council was to ascertain the mechanisms responsible for co-participation tax, thereby 20% of the tax revenues of the central state is directly transferred to the municipal administration (BOLIVIA, 1994b).

While this process has made progress regarding political participation and administrative decentralization, several authors are unanimous in stating that these transformations, pushed forward by the national state, has discharged the administration of the burden of offering most basic resources to which citizens were entitled. From that period on, OTB’s were to pursue that task. Moreover, the actors from larger scales than that of the states, such as transnational corporations and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) began to gain more autonomy over the territory planning (Becker, 1983). The effects of this process was manifested by an increasing territorial fragmentation due to lack of a regional planning taking
into account the national and municipal levels. The departments ended up with a figural function and performance. Thus, it was a question of time for the smallest and largest scales territorialities to construct and deconstruct the territorial display of forces, shattering the previous national territorial arrangement (KOHL, 2002, p. 465; MEDEIROS, 2001; BLANES, 1999, 2006; SUVELZA, 2002). Amidst this backdrop, the natural resources have become assets to be seized by the various territorialities. Thus, both the centrifugal and centripetal forces came face to face without the direct mediation of the state. This dynamic has been generating strong conflicts over the management and exploitation of natural resources. Instances of this phenomenon were the Water War (in 2000), the War of Coca (in 2002), the Gas War (in 2003) and the autonomist movements of the eastern portion (PFRIMER, 2009; Perreault, 2006; KOHL, 2002, in 2004).

MAP 1 – New Pioneer Fringes in Bolivia carried out by IIRSA
Source - Organized by Pfrimer, Matheus (2010).
Indeed, the government of president Evo Morales has sought to stretch the Bolivian State role through re-nationalization of industries of strategic sectors such as oil, gas (Supreme Decree no. 28,701), electricity and mining. However, by the means of the New Bolivian Constitution his government extended the rights and autonomies of indigenous communities, but did not extend the autonomy of the department’s governors, contributing somewhat to a new type of territorial fragmentation, this time in favor of indigenous territorialities. This step also kept the absence of territorial planning in the mesoscale. With regard to this scenario, it is quite unsure if the fixing of new infrastructure networks for regional integration purposes can really bind together such a shattered territory.

Departing from the idea that Bolivia is a strategic area for South American integration, IIRSA is committed to take forward a great range of projects in Bolivia, opening up new pioneer fringes in Bolivia. But in many senses these projects are raising tensions in Bolivia, for most of the infrastructure is going to be set in indigenous and traditional peasant communities. Therefore, there will be an overlap of contradictory territorialities which may in fact make tensions escalate. One instance of this process can be currently seen in the case of the construction of a road crossing the region of El Chapare in the Bolivian Amazon. This road is ancient plot to connect Bolivia to Brazil. The main contending aspect of the project is that the road was outlined to cross national parks and especially a region featured as Bolivia’s main.

In this context many other actor-networks are taking advantage of this situation in order to pursue their goals. So in this particular case, many native peoples from the national parks and green reserves are uniting themselves with other networks. We also should add to this relation that at the same time they are being outmaneuvered. This can be noticed by the alliance carried out by many indigenous people of the oriental portion of Bolivia with the agribusiness elite of Santa Cruz. In this movement, the theme of Bolivia’s oriental regionalism stands out. During the unrests against the construction of this road the regionalist movement called Nación Camba2 (Camba Nation) made appeal to the contend between those from the oriental portion of Bolivia (the Cambas) and those from the highlands (descendents of the Inca Empire, the Collas) and pro Morales government. The main complaint raised by the elite in Santa Cruz is that we should respect the status of untouchable territory given to the national reserves. But their contenders, especially the national government, claim that this is just another way of manipulate people in order to facilitate the oriental elite’s interest. Particularly, the point here is that if this new road comes off most of the intercontinental transportation flows will be diverted from the original way which passed by Santa Cruz and so, most of the revenue collected in its toll road and frontier checkpoints would shrink.

Another interesting connection between those assemblages of actors, objects and discourses is the fact that many drug smugglers and even coca leaf producers (cocaleros) fear the construction of those projects on the grounds that they will enable the Bolivian state to perform a more direct control of illegal plantations. It must be said that the Coca leaf production

2 The Cambas were the ancient contenders and enemies of the Inca Empire. They occupied the eastern of Bolivia whereas the collas, occupy most of the western region of Bolivia.
in Bolivia accounts for a substantial percentage of Bolivia’s GDP. During the 1990’s this same region became a militarized region controlled by the Bolivian Army and the U.S Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA). At that time, the production of a single coca leaf was illegal and this condition sparked off huge protests and unrests. It was during this time that the image of Evo Morales as the cocalero’s leader stood out. Now his image represents quite the reverse. Furthermore, it was claimed by president Morales that the U.S ambassador for Bolivia was supposedly supporting the training of paramilitary forces in the oriental portion of Bolivia. According to Morales a secessionist movement lied behind the presence of DEA and the construction of the military bases in the Bolivian Amazon. So, this array of objects, discourses, actors and natures have put up a long network assembling different such as Cocaleros-drug smugglers-Santa Cruz’ elite-agribusiness-natives of the oriental portion of Bolivia-deforestation –national park-USA.

Naturally, this same network has its counterparts such as many transnational companies that are really interested in the money making scheme possibilities offered by the infrastructure works taken up by IIRSA in Bolivia. Brazilian enterprises such as Camargo Correa and Odebrecht are taking advantage of this situation, particularly, as far as the construction of roads, power plants and bridges is concerned. It is certain that this infrastructure can offer many advantages. Communities can have an easier access to the most vital resources such as medical care, education and others. Other important aspect offered by those infrastructures relates to the transformations of the regional economy, especially the current activities involves precarious working conditions. According to IIRSA the infrastructures fixed on run-down areas can offer the possibility of development (IIRSA, 2008) and better life quality for those communities.

Other issue alleged by the integration actor network is the fact that these areas will benefit of a free market region, so they will be able to sell products and receive goods that at normal conditions they wouldn’t. So the integration process effects will affect those communities in a positive way promoting a "different way of life”. Most of the other countries are supporting the integration initiatives especially on the grounds that this is one way to countervail the exogenous influences in South America, especially the American ones. Brasil, Chile and Bolivia have formalized a cooperation agreement for the built-up of the South American Central axis, connecting the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans. In this way, many of the diplomatic practices indicate that the state’s goals are converging with those of the transnational companies and Bolivia’s western native communities that support the government of president Morales. So the South American Integration network is also composed of multiple actants, such as, corridors-Bolivian government-transnational companies-Collas-Bolivian Andes-autonomy and so on.
Map 2. Main Technical Networks in Bolivia and the Bolivian Strategic Triangle (Cochabamba-Santa Cruz-Tarija).

4. Conclusion

In this context of fragmentation and integration the Bolivian government adopts an original position. If on one hand it is supportive of the autonomy of the indigenous communities, for instance, by calling off the construction of some roads, on the other hand, it pledges strong efforts to take up South American integration initiatives. This second position is based on the argument that the Bolivian territory is a strategic area of contact among South American Countries. This perception is much influenced by the geopolitical idea of South American
Heartland, especially because nowadays Bolivia would perform the role of a “integrative player”. One analysis of the infrastructure set in the Bolivian territory shows that a triangular shape is easily spotted, but should it be considered the “Strategic Triangle”? Most of Bolivia’s statements tend to claim that this territorial arrangement can be the South American integration Hub. According to the former Bolivian Canceller, Siles del Valle (2004) Bolivia’s foreign policy should pursue integrative practices due to the fact that Bolivia is the “heart of the subcontinent”, in clear reference to the concept of heartland.

So the Bolivian government tries to balance the different interests of those networks. It has so far succeeded in its task. However, the relation between both networks remains unstable in a manner that any other actants, facts or discourses included in the networks can cause transformations and turmoil. In the short term we have watched many protests against president Morales’ support to the South American Integration projects. Although we could claim that the Bolivian government presents an ambiguous position we could as well assert that it balances and intermediates the relation between these two arrays of networks. So, living with difference is one policy taken up by president Morales that really contributes to integration is, understood as alterity.

Furthermore, we should not dismiss the Bolivian Heartland hypothesis, particularly because most of the South American Integration projects were designed by planners that continue to envision Bolivia as an strategic area. So, the intents of those projects are based on the idea that Bolivia continues to be the South American Heartland but, certainly, in a different context. This perception can be carried out due to the fact that the Bolivian territory features strategic aspects for the purposes of integration. Moreover, even the autonomous movements, and indigenous communities claim that Bolivia is a country endowed with important natural resources, this is reason for protecting the national territory against the exogenous territorialities.
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