

Formation of collective identities: the case of the water and gas wars in Bolivia

Formación de identidades colectivas: caso guerra del agua y guerra del gas en Bolivia

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Abstract

This article analyzes the form of collective action in front of the State, as well as highlights the demands that characterize their actions, which are reflected in the social movements of 2002 and 2003, the analysis is made from the bibliographic revision and the use of hemerographic sources, with the finality to describe the events that occurred in the Water War and the Gas War in Bolivia, makes emphasis specially in the repertoires of the two social movements, in this identify the collective identity of the popular urban sectors which participate in active form inside of the social movements.

Social movements, Collective identity, Water war, Gas war

Resumen

En este artículo se analiza la forma de acción colectiva frente al Estado, así mismo se destacan las demandas que caracterizan su accionar, lo cual se refleja en los movimientos sociales de 2002 y 2003, el análisis se realiza a partir de la revisión bibliográfica y el uso de fuentes hemerográficas, con la finalidad de describir los acontecimientos ocurridos en la Guerra del Agua y la Guerra del Gas en Bolivia, se hace énfasis especialmente en los repertorios de los dos movimientos sociales, en este se identifica la identidad colectiva de los sectores populares urbanos que participan en forma activa dentro de los movimientos sociales.

Movimientos sociales, Identidad colectiva, Guerra del agua, Guerra del gas

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Introduction

Bolivia is a complex country to study in terms of social movements, because there have been particular experiences of social movements of workers, peasants and indigenous people. This article aims to study two social movements that have marked the history of Bolivia in the 21st century. The first is the social movement of the year 2000 in Cochabamba, which everyone knows as "the water war", when the people of Cochabamba, led by the Coordinadora de Agua, achieved the reformulation of Law 2029 and expelled the privatising SEMAPA, Aguas del Tunari, and the second is the "gas war", where the level of participation of the FEJUVE of El Alto was what brought together all the social organisations to carry out the social movement of 2003.

The methodology chosen was qualitative, using the documentary review technique, where the basis for the analysis are newspaper sources, which are the newspapers La Razón (La Paz) and Los Tiempos (Cochabamba).

The article is divided into five sections: section 1 provides a theoretical outline of the definition and components of social movements; section 2 gives the historical and social background; section 3 describes the role of the Coordinating Committee during the water war in 2000 and describes the events in Cochabamba; section 4 describes and analyses the participation of FEJUVE in El Alto in the gas war of 2003; and section 5 presents the conclusions of the study.

Social movement

a) Definition of social movement

For Ortiz and Mayorga (2012) social movements undertake contentious actions where internal resources (solidarity, organisation, interpretative frameworks and repertoires) are brought into play, acting on the structure of political opportunities that inhibit or facilitate mobilisation, factors such as: the presence of influential allies, struggles between elites, increased spaces for participation and also, structural factors such as the strength or weakness of the state, forms of repression, the nature of the party system.

According to Giarracca and Mariotti (2012), the social movement becomes the convener of different actors with a greater or lesser degree of commitment to the central cause, but willing to emerge, providing actions and solidarity when required.

From these two definitions given by the authors studied, it can be said that a social movement tries to make ideas and interests known, which is why a social movement is active and attracts the attention of the people or a specific sector, and it is around the claiming action that a social movement organisation will exist, which is why it will have its structure, its aims and its functions. It should be clarified that a social organisation is not the same as a social movement, since a social organisation has specific objectives, whereas a social movement must be an action.

b) Collective identity.

Collective identity is formed in social movements, since according to Galafassi (2012) the resulting tensions, discontent, frustrations and aggressiveness lead the individual to engage in collective behaviour, characterised as non-institutional-collective behaviour, which from spontaneous mass action progresses to the formation of public opinion and social movements. In this sense, collective identity is constituted by different and various elements, these elements are formed according to the level of the actions of social movements, since the social movement groups together social sectors of Bolivian society.

So it can be said that social movements are generators of collective identities, because the social movement must try to make some ideas and interests known, so it must have an organisation, a slogan and methods with which it will fight to achieve its objectives, it is in the actions where identity plays a very important role in social movements, because it allows them to differentiate themselves from other groups.

Historical and social background

According to Spronk, Crespo and Olivera (2012) Latin America was, in many ways, the laboratory for many privatisation policies of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund in the 1990s. In this sense, neoliberalism imposes its structural reforms on oppressed nations, where the state is increasingly repressive against the people, and limits the state in the regulation of the economy; those who have economic power are the transnationals.

On the other hand, Ortiz and Mayorga (2012) point out that neoliberal governments have put three dimensions of the local societies of the countries under tension: (a) the sovereignty of national states, in the average in which local elites made decisions in agreement with global bodies according to internationally agreed formulas; democracy, given that political participation was reduced to voting for parties that increasingly distanced themselves from the interests and demands of citizens; (c) equality, insofar as neoliberal policies accentuated the social, ethnic and territorial inequalities characteristic of Andean societies.

In Bolivia, from 1985 onwards, structural adjustments were made to the state, and from 1993 onwards, basic services were privatised with the creation of sectoral superintendencies, as these superintendencies were responsible for the country's most important natural resources, such as water and sanitation. According to Chávez and Nokrani (n.d.), they point out that after the neoliberal economic reform measures implemented since 1985, the organisational structures that would serve the various social sectors of Bolivians to unite their interests and be represented before the state began to break down and weaken, becoming insufficient to face the change in the Bolivian labour map and incapable of confronting the thrust of the wave of neoliberal transformations.

Structural changes were made, a structuring towards neoliberal management in the case of natural resources, especially water resources, with the aim of commodification. These structural changes that took place over almost 20 years of privatisation measures, which made the population tired, and that is why they demanded the nationalisation of natural resources, "also strengthened other social organisations, such as the neighbourhood councils, which took on the indigenous demands as their own and became intensely politicised. The role they played in the October 2003 crisis, especially in El Alto, was of prime importance' (Quiroga, 2012: 33).

In Latin America and in Bolivia, "the subordinate classes gradually formed small resistances that matured and managed to put neoliberal hegemony in check. These resistances were accompanied by experiences of previous struggles, although in many cases the practices and ideals were redefined, finding new identities that are shaping the new social movements" (Parajón, 2011: 2). In Bolivia, new social movements are beginning to emerge, "these are popular mobilisations that develop new ways of articulating protest in the face of the tensions and conflicts generated by globalisation at the local level, as in the case of the water war and the gas war in Bolivia" (Argüello, 2011: 79).

On the other hand, Svampa (2008) points out that in Latin America, the new cycle of collective action, which signals a progressive accumulation of struggles against neoliberal reforms, began in 2000, with the Water War in Cochabamba. Quiroga (2012) also points out that the acute state crisis manifested itself in 2000, as the population decided to protest and raised their demands and demonstrations against the effects of the implementation of neoliberal economic policy, which increasingly increased the process of privatisation and commodification of natural resources.

The role of the Coordinadora during the Water War in 2000

a) Convening of the Coordinadora

The role of the Coordinadora was very important in the mobilisation processes, as it had the capacity to convene and organise the entire population of Cochabamba in the town councils and other types of social movements, but why did the Coordinadora have this great potential?

After signing the call for protest, the Coordinadora for the defence of water denounced that the government and the civic committee wanted to impose a contract and high tariffs against the interests of the population" (La Razón, 4/04/2000: 14-15). The Coordinadora was able to take advantage of the social capital and in this way took a firm stance on the conflict because it had the support of society.

The Coordinadora had called for a strike and road blockade until it achieved its objective, which was to make "Aguas del Tunari" leave the country. "It is not known for certain how the events of the day will unfold. However, the Coordinadora has called for a stoppage and blockade of roads and highways until the consortium "Agua del Tunari" leaves the country, tariffs are completely frozen and law 2029 is modified" (La Razón, 6/04/2000: 17).

The population of Cochabamba complied with the call or the summons, as they went to the seizure of the "Aguas del Tunari" building, while others blocked streets and avenues "Today (yesterday), Cochabamba experienced an intense day with the symbolic seizure of the Aguas del Tunari consortium building and the violent occupation of the Civic Committee headquarters in the midst of a growing blockade of roads, streets and avenues that paralysed the department for the second consecutive day" (La Razón, 6/04/2000: 17).

b) Statements by the actors

The Coordinadora is not backing down and the pressure measures to get the transnational company to leave the country continue. After seeing the streets blocked, the actors made their opinions known, which are taken from the newspaper Los Tiempos of April 6, 2000:

"I repeat, (dialogue) is the basis for us not to create an internal struggle, a war between us, a civil war, that is what I fear the most". Archbishop Tito Solari.

"If the government does not want Aguas del Tunari to leave, comrades, the people have to get Aguas del Tunari out. Oscar Olivera, Coordinator.

"The time has come for the people of Cochabamba to decide: either they take the path of the solution, or they follow the Coordinadora, which has no solutions". Luis Uzin, superintendent.

"They (the protesters) said that they would kick the police that they see, that is why we are not allowing the police to go out onto the streets, to avoid confrontations". Hugo Galindo, Prefect.

As can be seen, there are different positions regarding the measures, as there are others who say that the struggle should continue until the objective is achieved, others say that dialogue should be used to avoid confrontations. But in spite of everything, the people of Cochabamba decided to continue together with the Coordinating Committee until the objective set from the beginning was achieved, and this objective is to expel Aguas del Tuanari from Cochabamba.

c) Repression in the 14 de Septiembre Square

Cochabamba was at a total standstill since the Coordinadora's call, until the third day, which was a day of latent tension in the Plaza 14 de Septiembre, because so far there had been no solution to the water problem. So dozens of people gathered in the main square, and many of the protesters remained in vigil. "After four days of total paralysis of the city of Cochabamba, army troops and police last night repressed a crowd that had taken over the installations of the Plaza 14 de Septiembre, detained the leaders of the Coordinadora de Defensa del Agua and virtually installed a state of emergency in the capital of the valley" (La Razón, 7/04/2000: 13).

The repression surprised all the demonstrators, because the army arrived at night and evicted all those who were keeping vigil in the Plaza 14 de Septiembre, and not only evicted them but also took the leaders of the Coordinadora prisoner. It is because of this unjustifiable act on the part of the government that the people of Cochabamba will take to the streets, as a form of repudiation and repulsion of the repression.

d) After the repression, everyone takes to the streets

The police took a break after a night of great tension and the arrest of leaders, the repression was accompanied by the use of tear gas, "A group of police officers rested after having cleared the Plaza 14 de Septiembre - using tear gas - where a group of marchers had decided to set up a vigil to prevent the government authorities from leaving the interior of the prefect's palace. Another group of troops proceeded to arrest more than 10 people, most of them members of the coordinating committee" (Los Tiempos, 7/04/2000: B2).

The people of Cochabamba could not stand idly by after hearing of the repression, as they took to the streets of their own accord. In different streets and avenues of the city there was solidarity and support for the marchers and all the demonstrators in general.

We have the following testimonies from residents of the city who decided to take to the streets to offer support. Expressed in the newspaper Los Tiempos of 8 April 2000, pp. B3:

"Neighbours without any distinction offered some fruit or a glass of soft drink. "I want to help with pleasure because these people are fighting for what is ours, what belongs to the people. I was not born here, but I live in this wonderful city. Testimony

"I am voluntarily supporting the strike, the attitude of the government on Thursday night was cowardly. We elected him to govern and he should look for solutions without violence," said Emma de Vásquez.

According to the testimonies, it is understood that Cochabamba is showing signs of unity and solidarity, as neighbours took to the streets to offer something to eat, both to the peasants arriving from the tropics and to the demonstrators blocking the streets and avenues. The repression only succeeded in getting more people to join the struggle.

e) The confrontation leaves one dead

The 9th of April was a very intense and tense day for the people of Cochabamba, although the conflicts intensified in the morning, the city was totally paralysed. "The conflicts began at around 10:00 in the morning.

From that time until 12:00, police and military police kept the mass of demonstrators two blocks away from the main square. Meanwhile, the rest of the city was paralysed, the basic necessities in the markets were swept away by the population, who feared for the lack of supplies, upon hearing the government's decision to declare a state of siege" (Los Tiempos, 9/04/2000: C1). The state of siege did not stop the people from fearing and fighting; on the contrary, they took to the streets with more force and fury because of the state of siege declared by President Hugo Banzer.

By midday the streets were totally blocked and the clashes continued and escalated, the confrontation was harsh as one young man died from a bullet shot in the face. "The streets of the city were completely blocked by the citizens, who set up barricades on almost every block. It was impossible to travel by motorised vehicles. The conflict worsened at the stroke of midday, when the participants of the protest decided to take over the installations of the 7th Airborne Division. This confrontation resulted in the death of young Víctor Hugo Daza" (Los Tiempos, 9/04/2000: C1).

f) The martyr of the struggle for water

The result of the confrontations was a young 17-year-old student, who was called the martyr of the struggle for water, which is why the people of Cochabamba attended the burial: "The coffin arrived at the cemetery after a two-hour walk. The people did not want it to be placed in the hearse, which travelled all the way in front of the crowd" (La Razón, 10/04/2000: 8).

A large crowd accompanied in grief with white handkerchiefs and lighted candles, the thousands of people filled the streets and even the surrounding hills, "In the cemetery, thousands of people waited, not only on both sides of the street, but also on the surrounding hills. White handkerchiefs and flags bid farewell to Víctor Hugo, whom they called the "martyr of the struggle for water" (La Razón, 10/04/2000: 8).

The people of Cochabamba showed their solidarity with the young man's family by attending the funeral with flowers and candles in their hands, "(...) hundreds of people had to queue up at the temple of the Society of Jesus. Many of the mourners carried candles in their hands, others carried red and white flowers" (Los Tiempos, 10/04/2000: A6).

g) Bolivia joins the struggle

The struggle was not only of the people of Cochabamba but of the whole of Bolivia, in different cities they showed their repudiation of the acts committed by the government, and also took action with demonstrations against the government. See the following table from the newspaper La Razón:

Civil contempt for the emergency measure	
Easants	This Monday was the first day of strike in rural schools, agreed by the confederation of rural teachers and peasants, as an expression of repudiation of the state of siege. These sectors demand the release of their confined leaders, the reform of the water law and reject the increase in the price of gasoline.
Cochabamba	With the signing of an agreement, which confirms the rupture of the Aguas del Tunari contract, the conflict was partially resolved and they will only maintain road blockades while waiting for the congress to pass, until midday today, the water law with the reforms requested by the irrigation committee.
Unions	The inter-union pact of La Paz, which brings together several urban teachers, university workers, factory workers and others, confirmed a mobilised strike for Friday against the state of siege, the rise in gasoline prices and in demand for a wage adjustment.
Cities	<p>- the university students of Potosí, shouting "death to the government", marched yesterday in open defiance of the measure, exploding sticks of dynamite as they passed.</p> <p>- In La Paz, riot police repressed the university protest, transferring the conflict to the city, which had remained on the sidelines of the demonstrations.</p> <p>- In Santa Cruz, some 300 teachers marched demanding their owed salaries and the suspension of the state of siege.</p> <p>In Sucre, journalists marched against the silencing of the media in Cochabamba and some provinces of La Paz.</p>

Politicians
A deputy and eight leaders of the Movement Without Fear went on hunger strike in Congress yesterday, demanding the suspension of the state of siege.

Table 6 Bolivia mobilises
Source: La Razón, 10/04/2000

As can be seen in the table, the struggle was of the whole of Bolivia, of all sectors, with the participation of peasants, trade unions, the different cities and some politicians.

The Coordinating Committee had the capacity to bring together all these people, since everyone was in the struggle, so it can be said that this was a social movement that managed to mobilise everyone, since the Coordinating Committee was exceptional in its capacity to absorb and give roles, space and protagonism to all the sectors that were joining the struggle (professionals, peasants, factories, traders, etc.).

h) The price of the constant struggle

Of the constant struggle against neo-liberal policies in Cochabamba, which lasted from January to April 2000, the most intensive days were from 4 to 12 April, which resulted in one death, 21 serious injuries and many damaged buildings. Details are shown in the following table:

Killed: 1 Victor Hugo
Seriously injured: 21 (one case extremely serious)
Arrested: 17 (already released)
Confined: 17
Buildings damaged: prefecture, former Cordeco (which was burnt down), special burnt), special security group, Municipal Council and the Municipal Council and the Archbishopric
Vehicles burnt: two vehicles of the prefecture and nine motorcycles prefecture and nine GES motorbikes.
Streets: barricades were still in place.

Table 2 Results in figures

From the days of constant struggle, the unfortunate result of the confrontations was the death of Víctor Hugo, 17 people were arrested, the streets were left dirty and some buildings were burnt down.

But all this was not in vain, as the expulsion of "Aguas del Tunari" from Cochabamba and the reformulation of Law 2029 were achieved. The government had no choice but to take a step back and do what the general population was asking for, to get the transnational company "Aguas del Tunari" out of Bolivia. As a result, the social movement won the "Water War".

The social movement of 2000 was the key or the starting point for the new mobilisations that would be unleashed in Bolivia, as well as the coca war and the gas war. The events in Cochabamba were a reference point for the next social movements. The year 2003 saw another social movement that would mark the history of Bolivia, the so-called "Gas War", which broke out in the city of El Alto, led by the neighbourhood councils of the same city.

The Federation of Neighbourhood Councils of El Alto and the Gas War

a) Characteristics of FEJUVE in the city of El Alto

The city of El Alto is a complex urban space where neighbourhoods began to organise themselves, "this city is organising itself from its homes, through the heads of streets and blocks, through the council of each zone and neighbourhood, to the Federation of Neighbourhood Councils FEJUVE of El Alto" (Deledicque, 2008: 9). Neighbours from different social sectors of the city of El Alto began to organise themselves and thus the Federation of Neighbourhood Councils was born.

According to Neso (2013), FEJUVE is coordinated by an executive committee elected every two years during the Ordinary Congress. Its practical vocation is focused on solving mainly urban and local problems. The relationship between the grassroots (neighbourhood councils) and the "top" is more direct than in other trade unions, as each council has its own representative in the organisational structure.

It is because of these characteristics that the city of El Alto was the main scenario of the gas war, since according to Espinoza (2010) the FEJUVE of El Alto had its greatest participation in the events of October 2003, in what everyone knows as the "gas war", where the people of El Alto, led by the neighbourhood councils, fought for the non-sale of gas.

b) Actions of the FEJUVE of El Alto in the gas war

According to Neso (2013), the gas war took place in the midst of complex circumstances, both politically and militarily: it was supported by social and trade union movements opposed to the policies of the then president, Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada. In October 2003, the gas war broke out because the then president wanted to market and sell the gas through Chile, which the Bolivians did not agree with, and it was here that the city of El Alto decided to stage a popular revolt, led by FEJUVE.

In support of the peasants who are carrying out a voluntary fast in the Radio San Gabriel theatre, an extraordinary assembly of presidents of the neighbourhood councils of El Alto decided to hold a 24-hour civic strike on Thursday. Maurio Cori, president of the Federation of Neighbourhood Councils (FEJUVE) of El Alto, informed that the civic strike will include a blockade of the city's main avenues. FEJUVE is demanding the immediate resignation of the Minister of Defence, Carlos Sánchez. The leader said that the neighbourhood councils will insist that, before exporting gas to the USA via Chile, the energy must be installed in the homes of all the towns in the cities and in the communities. In order to establish the pressure measures to be implemented in support of the peasants, the representatives of the Alteña organisations will also hold a meeting in the city this morning (La Razón, 2 October 2003: A12)

The actions taken by FEJUVE are the strike, blockade and hunger strike with the intention of making their demands heard. It is in the war for gas that the demand for the nationalisation of hydrocarbons was born, and in this way to lift Bolivia out of poverty. The measures were enforced by force, as "in compliance with the civic strike called by the Central Obrera Regional and the Federación de Juntas Vecinales de esa ciudad, neighbours and students of the Universidad Pública de El Alto (UPEA) enforced the measure with sticks and threats to those who wanted to open their businesses or transport passengers" (La Razón, 3 October 2003: A8).

Grassroots territorial organisations are the entry point to political activity, as their proximity to the daily problems of the population makes them spaces where alternatives for action can be visualised and found. Although the only options that the people of El Alto have to express to the political authorities that they want a different city are the different collective actions: protests, marches, blockades. In this way, they formulate the need to be included in consultation and decision-making processes (Arbona, 2002, cited in Deledicque, 2008).

The social movement was joined by other sectors of the city of El Alto, as they listened to FEJUVE's call and all came to block streets and avenues, led by the neighbourhood councils "(...) they blocked streets and avenues to impede the transit of vehicles, trade unions and UPEA students, carrying sticks and other objects, appeared in the centres of informal commerce to force the owners to close their stalls and shops. Those who were caught with their doors open endured the tools of embedded antisocials who looted the places" (La Razón, 3 October 2003: A8). These actions demonstrated that FEJUVE had the backing of the grassroots, since everyone complied with the civic strike called by FEJUVE.

c) Demand from FEJUVE El Alto in the gas war

The FEJUVE of El Alto demanded that gas not be sold through Chilean ports, which in turn demanded the nationalisation of hydrocarbons.

"The uprising began on 8 October 2003, demanding that gas not be sold through Chilean ports, but this was followed by a request to modify the Hydrocarbons Law and opposition to joining the FTAA, ending with the demand for the resignation of President Sánchez de Losada and the nationalisation of oil" (Deledicque, 2008: 14).

The following table, taken from the newspaper La Razón, shows the demands and the situation of the FEJUVE of El Alto during the gas war:

Table 3 FEJUVE's request and situation
Source: La Razón, 6 October 2003 pp. A8

The neighbourhood councils played an important role, as they took over strategic places in the city of El Alto to paralyse the city, as it was in these places that the strongest resistance to the military repression took place.

An assembly of presidents of the neighbourhood councils of El Alto held last week determined the indefinite strike and warned that if the government does not meet the demands - defence of gas, rejection of the law on citizen security, annulment of the new tax code and rejection of the FTAA - they will radicalise the pressure measures that will be carried out in the southern part of La Paz. Domingo Buitre, leader of FEJUVE, said that the neighbourhood councils would congregate at intersections and strategic places to paralyse vehicular traffic (la razón, 8 October 2003: A9).

After several days of constant struggle, all the demands would become effective, given that the social movement would oust Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada from the presidency. This social movement was made up of those who lived in the marginal neighbourhoods of the city of El Alto, who were indigenous migrants, which is why some researchers call it a popular rebellion.

d) Organisational capacity of El Alto's residents

The civic strike called by FEJUVE was successful, since from very early in the mornings of 2 and 8 October 2003, there was a mobilisation from the neighbourhoods of El Alto to take over the avenues, streets and squares, thus mobilising the whole city.

Each territorial cell is independent and free to organise itself as it sees fit, from the hierarchical arrangement to the management of problems and the administration of justice. It should be noted that this independence on the one hand, combined with the close correlation linking the various cells on the other hand, was the basis for the events of the 2003 mobilisations (...) (Neso, 2013: 229).

This indicates the level of capacity of the neighbours to organise themselves and achieve their objectives by applying their methods of struggle, because "(...) the fact of not having a leader or a directory (in the field of practical mobilisation, in the territory and on the streets) that would present points of reference to the enemy, means that once the focal point of the protest has been eliminated, another parallel one is created with the same functions, which sustains the others during the actions" (Neso, 2013: 229-230).

In the city of El Alto, during the gas war, there was a collective takeover of urban spaces, because the residents of each sector organised themselves, since each neighbourhood became a mobilisation committee, as the people of El Alto had stopped believing in the neoliberal economic and political model. Thus, "(...) the conflict over gas is converted by the historical social inequality in Bolivia, generating in the national imaginary the idea that gas is a national patrimony (...)" (Hinojosa and Hennermann, 2011: 37).

Conclusions

Based on the literature review and the description and analysis of the work, the following conclusions were reached: The water war and the gas war were unleashed because the population realises its condition, the social reality, the weariness of the economic measures of neoliberalism, due to issues of privatisation and commercialisation of natural resources.

The social movements of 2000 and 2003 had clear objectives: in the water war it was to expel the transnational company "Aguas del Tunari" and to demand the nationalisation of natural resources, and in the gas war it was to expel Gonzalo Sanchez de Lozada from the presidency and to demand that he not sell gas to Chile and the nationalisation of natural resources.

Both the Cochabamba Water Coordinating Committee and the FEJUVE of El Alto had an incredible capacity to involve the whole population in the solution to the conflict, as the two social movements included university students, neighbourhood councils, organisations, peasants, trade unions, private individuals, irrigators, professionals, etc. These social movements managed to include all strata and levels of Bolivian society.

The social movements fulfilled all the components required to be considered a "social movement", since they had a mobilisation structure, an organisational structure, because they had decision-making and task definition (coordinating body and FEJUVE), another very important component is the collective identity, since the social movements identified themselves with the entire population that agrees to improve the conditions and quality of life. The last component is the use of means of struggle, the methods used by the social movements in 2000 and 2003 were: town meetings, blockades, strikes and the occupation of buildings.

Both the water war and the gas war were of national significance, as the whole of Bolivia joined the struggle.

The two wars marked a historic milestone in Bolivia's history, since these movements changed the course of Bolivia's state policies, and showed the strength and capacity of social movements to change the political structures established by the state.

The movements showed their capacity for confrontation and struggle around demands. Finally, it remains to be said that a social movement has great strength and potential to achieve its objectives and even has the capacity to change the system, the social structure, and thus achieve social change, be it of substance or of form.

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