PERFORMING TRANSNATIONAL CITIZENSHIP: BOLIVIAN MIGRATION
AND THE POLITICAL CLAIMS OF CULTURE IN SAO PAULO

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the Bolivian Independence Day celebration.
With the tri-color Bolivian and the pan-indigenous *wiphala* flags leading their way, the vibrant colors of dancers’ outfits stand in stark contrast to São Paulo’s monotonous sea of grey concrete and high-rise buildings. After months of preparation and some alcohol to calm the nerves, the Bolivian dance fraternity of *Tinkus Jaira* stands atop a pedestrian bridge, prepared to descend into the throngs of spectators celebrating the 189th anniversary of Bolivian Independence. *Tinkus Jaira* is one of more than a dozen Bolivian migrant fraternities that dance at the annual weekend-long celebration in São Paulo, Brazil. At the center of the crowd beneath them is a monumental concrete hand, fingers outstretched to the sky, red veins coursing through it in the shape of Latin America. The group’s serpentine path through a majority Bolivian audience leads to the main stage and the altar for the Virgins of Copacabana and Urkupiña, the patron saints of the two primary sending cities of Bolivian migration, La Paz and Cochabamba. Like each of the other dance fraternities before them, members of *Tinkus Jaira* anxiously approach
the honorary guests seated above the altar on the main stage. With a meticulously prepared performance, Tinkus Jaira hopes to impress the honorary guests that include representatives from migrant associations, the Bolivian consulate in São Paulo, the Bolivian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the São Paulo municipal government including the current mayor.

Since 2006, this annual celebration has been held in the open-air complex of the Memorial da América Latina. Located next to one of the largest transportation hubs in São Paulo, the Memorial is a strategic site for Bolivians to garner public visibility. The Memorial, given its historical background and symbolism, is part of a migrant strategy to garner rights and recognition by emerging as an ethnic group in contemporary Brazil. Designed by renowned Brazilian architect Oscar Niemeyer, the Memorial was inaugurated in 1989 following the Brazilian military dictatorship. Like its signature statue evoking Eduardo Galeano’s metaphor of the open veins of Latin America, the Memorial emphasizes Brazil’s shared cultural and historical linkages with other Latin American countries. Through cultural programming, a research library, and multiple rotating and permanent exhibits, the Memorial offers an inclusive space for Latin American cultural, artistic, and scientific manifestations. The “Pátria Grande” envisioned by Simón Bolivar, José Marti and San Martín, was, according to the Memorial’s website, “forgotten in the past.” Yet, “during the 1980s, especially the Brazilians needed to rediscover America. Hispanic America also seemed to have forgotten its historical, linguistic, and cultural proximity with its Portuguese-speaking neighbors. It was necessary to remember who we
Although São Paulo’s celebrated history of European, Middle Eastern, and Japanese immigration emphasized Brazil as the so-called “country of the future,” contemporary Bolivian migrants highlight indigenous cultural forms and “millennial” traditions. As Brazil reorients itself to countries in Latin America and as Bolivian migrants negotiate citizenship in São Paulo, Brazilian democratization grapples with the historical legacies of racism and colonialism as part of a new vision for its future.

By performing Bolivian ethnonational culture in São Paulo public space, migrants reflect municipal government priorities of social inclusion and multiculturalism to emerge as meritorious citizens and subjects in São Paulo. Alongside cultural displays, migrants leverage new institutional channels of political participation to negotiate their relationship with São Paulo municipal and Bolivian state representatives as they demand greater rights and recognition in the city. Since the 1980s, the majority of Bolivians have come to São Paulo as undocumented labor in informal and exploitative garment workshops. Migrants’ precarious labor, characterized by media and government accounts as “slave labor,” has been a defining characteristic of the dominant Brazilian public image of Bolivians. Cultural performances in São Paulo are part of a migrant strategy to transform this public image. However, these cultural performances are limited to migrant elite participation. By performing a unified and homogenous migrant “community,” a migrant elite claims to represent Bolivians of diverse regional, cultural, and economic backgrounds while masking forms of intra-community labor exploitation in the garment industry. Indeed, the very display of a seemingly unified “community” is dependent on migrant elites’ ability to generate sufficient funds to participate in cultural events, often

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through the exploitation of recent migrants in the garment industry. Yet, cultural performances bolster migrant claims to rights and recognition, opening new and increasingly accessible spaces of democratic participation to Bolivian migrants. This thesis explores the complicated intersections between class and nationalism as Bolivian migrants mobilize ethnonational culture as a vehicle for social and political inclusion in São Paulo.

The Historical Context of Bolivian Labor Migration to São Paulo

In Brazilian media and scholarship, Bolivian migrants have come to epitomize precarious labor under neoliberal globalization and became the “representative phenomenon of new migratory trends, from and to Brazil.” In the wake of neoliberal structural adjustments and the Bolivian mining crisis of 1985, the height of Bolivian migration to São Paulo coincided with the garment industry’s outsourcing of jobs to small-scale workshops and the precipitous rise in the informal sector. According to official statistics, Bolivians are the largest foreign-born population after Portuguese migrants with 63,454 residents in São Paulo. Estimates by the Bolivian consulate and the São Paulo municipal government, however, suggest an even larger population of closer to

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The majority of Bolivian migrants are employed informally in an exploitative garment industry where migrants work for little more than food and lodging. Living and laboring in the same locale, Bolivians work exhausting hours in appalling conditions of poor ventilation and overcrowding, which often lead to serious health complications. In some cases, employers withhold migrants’ documents to restrict their mobility. Given these working conditions, Bolivian labor is frequently regarded as “slave labor” in media coverage and government reports.

Geographically, Bolivian migrants are concentrated in the ring of immigrant working-class neighborhoods surrounding São Paulo’s historic center in neighborhoods like Bom Retiro, Brás, Mooca, and Pari, as well as peripheral zones, including surrounding cities of Guarulhos and Osasco. Although spatially separated by wealthier neighborhoods, these areas are economically similar. Despite their strong presence near the spatial center of the city, Bolivians are still on the economic margins of the city. In areas whose immigrant population is more than 35 percent of the total population, rent is half the cost of the city average.6

6 Ibid.
Figure 1: Map of São Paulo including major avenues, metro stations, and railroad lines.

Figure 2: Map of migrants as percentage of total district populations in São Paulo.

Source: IBOPE and Estadão Dados, “A metrópole e sua gente,” accessed on 2 March, 2015, https://historiasdopari.wordpress.com/2013/05/05/pari-tem-indice-grande-de-imigrantes/
Figure 3: Map of average household income by district in São Paulo.

Bolivian settlements in the city center were the site for earlier waves of migration that began with the opening of the railroad station in Bom Retiro in 1867. By 1887, the government founded Hospedaria dos Imigrantes in Brás to temporarily house immigrants and facilitate their acquisition of employment. Today, the old Hospedaria and its grounds house the Museu da Imigração and stand as a testament to a historical moment of active state involvement in immigrant recruitment and integration, as well as the continued importance of European immigration to Brazilian national identity. The height of immigration to Brazil was at the turn of the twentieth century between 1890 and 1930, with over one million immigrants entering the country in the last decade of the nineteenth century. Of the 5.5 million immigrants who arrived in Brazil between 1872 and 1972, 2.5 million came to the Hospedaria in the heart of Brás. Close to the railroad station and with easy access to the downtown, first Italians and then Jews consolidated both commercial and production activities to transform these neighborhoods into São Paulo’s garment district.

At the turn of the twenty-first century, the garment industry continues to be a key point of migrant labor insertion in São Paulo. Despite historical continuities in labor practices, including small-scale production in sweatshops and households, scholars and media frequently indicate that Bolivian labor in São Paulo’s garment industry is a new phenomenon associated with neoliberal globalization. Although outsourcing and the use of informal labor have always been a significant part of the industry, such practices have intensified since the 1980s. While the number of registered workers in São Paulo’s

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garment industry in 1981 was 180,000, in 2000 this number dropped to 80,000.\textsuperscript{9} However, estimates of 200,000 garment workers in 2000 suggest that, at the turn of the twentieth century, over fifty percent of garment workers were employed informally.\textsuperscript{10} With the closure of large-scale garment factories utilizing Taylorist production processes, São Paulo’s garment industry has remained internationally competitive by employing flexible labor practices. Whereas factories, garment workshops, and retail shops were clustered in Bom Retiro and Brás, today production is dispersed in a circuit extending into the peripheral neighborhoods of São Paulo. These flexible labor practices are the backbone of an industry that represents one-third of all national production and is one of the largest clusters of clothing manufacturing worldwide.\textsuperscript{11}

In addition to the contemporary intensification of outsourcing, subcontracting, and the use of informal labor, as well as the industry’s shifting spatial distribution in São Paulo, there has been a significant transformation in the public discourse regarding garment labor. In particular, the metaphor of “slave labor” is now widely used to describe Bolivian exploitation in the garment industry. Brazilian sociologist Carlos Freire da Silva argues that flexible labor practices should be regarded as “newe” given the contemporary framework of labor regulations. He also warns against regarding the São Paulo garment industry and its labor practices as “backwards” or anachronistic since such practices are indispensable to remaining globally competitive. Moreover, according to Silva, these practices are prevalent in both developing and developed countries. However, in

\textsuperscript{10} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{11} Ibid., 23.
addressing the “new” phenomenon of precarious labor, the metaphor of “slave labor” emphasizes Bolivian labor exploitation as anachronistic. By associating Bolivian labor with black exploitation prior to Brazil’s First Republic, as opposed to immigrant exploitation during São Paulo’s industrialization, the metaphor of “slave labor” places Bolivians outside of Brazilian modernity.

During the early 1990s, Brazilian media focused on Korean exploitation of undocumented Bolivian workers. Beginning in the 1970s, Koreans dominated the industry by reducing prices by upwards of 40 percent, primarily with wage cuts to Korean and Bolivian workers.\textsuperscript{12} Despite widespread denunciations of Korean employers for labor exploitation, during the late 1990s, Koreans gained significant social recognition for their financial success in the industry.\textsuperscript{13} Koreans produced one-third of all clothing articles sold in Brazil, netted thirty million dollars monthly, and employed seventy thousand workers.\textsuperscript{14} Korean workshops in the neighborhoods of Brás and Bom Retiro produced 40 percent of sales in the state of São Paulo for the industry.\textsuperscript{15} Given this success, Koreans began to transition from manufacturing to design and distribution, while facilitating Bolivian, among other migrant, “access to space, credit, machines and equipment in advantageous conditions” and promoting their social mobility since at least the 1990s.\textsuperscript{16}

\textsuperscript{12} Buechler, “Sweating It in the Brazilian Garment Industry,” 108.
\textsuperscript{13} Freitas, “Imigração boliviana para São Paulo e setor de confecção,” 160.
\textsuperscript{14} Buechler, “Sweating It in the Brazilian Garment Industry,” 108.
\textsuperscript{15} Freitas, “Imigração boliviana para São Paulo e setor de confecção,” 160.
Today, Bolivians increasingly run their own small workshops and recruit compatriots through transnational social networks of family and friends. Bolivian workshops specialize in blazers, as well as women’s clothes, baby clothes, and Bermuda shorts. The majority of these products are sold to lower middle-class Brazilians in Korean-owned stores. While Bolivians may still work directly or indirectly for Koreans, there are an estimated ten thousand to fifteen thousand Bolivian-owned small-scale garment workshops in São Paulo, many of which are family-run affairs. Family-run, small-scale workshops and overlapping spaces of production and residence are not unique to the contemporary Bolivian migration but rather, have been constitutive part of immigrant economic insertion in São Paulo’s garment industry. For example, in 1946, there were six thousand garment establishments in São Paulo employing more than twenty-eight thousand workers, the majority of which had no more than four employees. As with previous migrants, Bolivians have used pre-existing networks to facilitate continued undocumented migration and consolidate the industry as an ethnic economic niche. Migrants frequently express a sense of gratitude and respect for workshop owners who, despite the exploitation and exhausting labor regimes, are regarded as creating an important avenue of social mobility accessed through national identification.

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17 Buechler, “Sweating It in the Brazilian Garment Industry,” 110.
18 Luis Vasquez, Conselheiro Participativo and President of ASSEMPBOL, interview with author, July 14, 2014; According to Bolivian respondents in the 2000 Brazilian census, 51.5 percent are self-employed as defined as working for themselves, alone or with a business partner, and may include the use of unpaid laborers. See Souchaud, “A confecção,” 88.
19 Ibid., 12.
20 Other significant populations of Latin American migrants include Argentine, Paraguayan, Peruvian, and Chilean populations. Paraguayans are most frequently
The profile of Bolivians migrating to São Paulo since the 1980s diverges significantly from the profile of Bolivians who migrated prior to the 1980s and continue to reside in the city today. Pre-1980s migrants were largely “students and liberal professionals, who left Bolivia for political reasons and to professionally ascend or to obtain some specific training.”

Early migration began principally in 1956 with a Brazil-Bolivia cultural and educational exchange program. For early migrants who stayed in Brazil, the growth in lower-class Bolivian migration alongside negative media portrayals highlighting Bolivians’ linkages to informal networks as drug traffickers or undocumented “slaves,” became a source of embarrassment and contention.

Over time, these early migrants founded numerous associational organizations in order to promote Bolivian culture in the city and as a response to Brazilian perceptions of Bolivians. As the profile of migrants transformed from professional migrant of the pre-1980s period to one of undocumented worker post-1980s, cultural organizations and their activities grew in number. Founded in 1969, the first such organization was the Associação de Residentes Bolivianos or the Association of Bolivian Residents (ADRB). Others, founded in the late 1990s and 2000s, include the Associação Gastronômica Cultural e Folclórica Boliviana Padre Bento or the Association of Bolivian Gastronomy, Culture, and Folklore of Padre Bento, which currently organizes the weekly ethnic market in Praça Kantuta, and the Associação Cultural de Grupos e Conjuntos Folclóricos Bolívia/Brasil or the Cultural

referenced as another significant Latin American migrant population working in the garment industry.

Freitas, “Imigração boliviana para São Paulo e setor de confecção,” 156.

Association of Folkloric Groups and Ensembles Bolivia/Brazil, an umbrella organization for thirteen Bolivian dance fraternities in the city.²³

Through cultural organizations, a Bolivian migrant elite performs an ethnic group identity that is disassociated from negative associations with poverty in the garment industry. Such groups “organize cultural manifestations of the community for an outside audience” using spaces that “create a channel of dialogue with the local context, in general, averse to everything they see in poor immigrants and with indigenous phenotypes.”²⁴ Don Carlos Soto, founder of the ethnic market in Praça Kantuta, notes:

I am fed up because when I came to Brazil, a Bolivian was known as a drug trafficker, they spoke of Bolivians as drug traffickers. That passed. Now it is garment worker, slave of the garment industry. They never talk about the doctors. Go to any hospital in São Paulo and ask if they have a Bolivian doctor, they do! In every hospital in São Paulo, there is a Bolivian doctor… The newspapers talk poorly of Bolivians, I want to transform this negative image that they have of Bolivians and through what? The market!... I want to revitalize the market in these ways [through more folkloric performances] and continue attracting people, showing them that Bolivians are not just garment workers, not just traffickers, way more than that. Bolivians have millennial traditions.²⁵

Similar to other long-term Bolivian resident migration stories, Don Carlos was an engineering student who migrated in 1970 to flee oppression under the Bolivian military dictatorship. From one dictatorship to another, Don Carlos moved to São Paulo to reunite with his uncle who had migrated through the cultural exchange program to study dentistry. The work of Don Carlos and the Associação Gastronômica in Praça Kantuta is part of a self-conscious strategy to transform public perceptions of Bolivians as, to use

²³ The name “Padre Bento” in the associational title of Praça Kantuta’s market vendors refers to the first location of the ethnic market in a nearby locale. In Chapter One, I discuss more fully the market’s relocation to Praça Kantuta from Padre Bento following resident complaints of the weekly market.
²⁵ Don Carlos Soto, founder of Praça Kantuta and market vendor, interview with author, June 20, 2014.
the words of Sidney da Silva, “people who are descendants of ‘Indians’, ‘poor’ and of ‘little culture,’” by showcasing cultural traditions. By focusing on Bolivian professionals and “millennial traditions,” in opposition to garment workers, Carlos betrays the class bias of cultural associations and their motivations to erase Bolivians’ association with lower-class and informal occupations.

The majority of Bolivians in São Paulo, however, are still involved, directly or indirectly, in the garment industry. The social mobility of workshop owners, however, is precarious and dependent on the exploitation of other workers. Increasingly, economically-successful Bolivian migrants, including workshop owners, have joined Bolivian cultural associations. For example, nearly three hundred workshop owners founded the Fraternidad Morenada Bolívia Central in 2002. As noted by a recent Bolivian migrant that I shall call Verónica, for Bolivians in São Paulo, participation in folkloric dance is an indicator of social class due to the cost of entry fees. “How much [the dance] costs, is how much you are worth. If you have money, you have to show it and they show it in this way.” Although class is often difficult to discern among Bolivian migrants, especially in the context of the garment industry, participation in cultural performances and associations is one strong indication of migrants’ financial resources and status.

Throughout this study I will refer to a “Bolivian migrant elite” for analytical clarity in foregrounding issues of class and labor. This migrant elite does not simply

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27 Ibid., 168.
28 Verónica (pseudonym), recent Bolivian migrant and former garment worker, interview by author, July 6, 2014.
indicate a division between pre- and post-1980s migrants. Indeed, a number of post-1980s Bolivians migrated for work or education opportunities outside the channels of the garment industry. Additionally, many have achieved economic success through the garment industry or in other small businesses. Despite their different migration histories, this migrant elite has attained a level of financial stability. For many, this financial stability facilitates their expenditure of either time or money participating in associational life that includes, but is not limited to, dance fraternities. Migrant elites tend to originate from urban areas in Bolivia where they likely completed a college education. By contrast, the majority of garment workers migrate from rural, indigenous areas in Bolivia, have attained a middle-school level education, and likely acquired Spanish as a second language. The category of “Bolivian migrant elite” does not just indicate their socioeconomic standing in either Bolivia or Brazil but rather refers to a very specific stratification among Bolivians residing in the city of São Paulo.

The Historical Context of Bolivian Migrant Transnational Politics

Until recently, Bolivian migrants have remained on the sidelines of local and regional politics, however, changes in both Brazil and Bolivia over the last fifteen years has led to greater migrant activism and visibility. The elections of Luiz Inácio “Lula” da Silva of Brazil’s Workers’ Party in 2002 and Evo Morales Ayma of Bolivia’s Movement for Socialism in 2005 are critical to understand the emergence of Bolivian migrant politics in São Paulo. Often framed as part of Latin America’s so-called pink-tide, these elections represented a significant regional and national rupture with market fundamentalism and the expansion of participatory democracy and social inclusion. Rather than a causal relationship between leftist governance and migrant politics, I
suggest that Bolivians’ mobilization of an ethnonational identity to access institutional channels of political participation is strengthened in the contemporary context of Brazilian social inclusion and Bolivian plurinationalism.

In Brazil, the Workers’ Party emerged in opposition to the Brazilian dictatorship and as part of the country’s process of democratization. Founded in 1980, the center-left Workers’ Party brought together groups including union organizers, social movement activists, and practitioners of liberation theology. As noted by historians John French and Alexandre Fortes, the Workers’ Party eschewed ideological definitions and, rather, “was united by its radical devotion to a bottom-up style of participatory politics that rejected limited and formalistic notions of democracy.”

Lula, as a union leader born in rural poverty in Brazil’s Northeast, became a symbol of the national fight for democracy and social equality. Since he took office in 2003, the Workers’ Party has governed Brazil at the federal level and has implemented a wide range of social policies to alleviate poverty as well as, in the words of sociologist Edward Telles, “eliminate or reduce class, racial, gender, and other discriminations that bar citizens from access to social justice.” These policies are part of a changing government discourse that, unlike the now-discredited myth of racial democracy, acknowledges racism and promotes, in the words of Yvonne Captain, “racial healing and strength through diversity.”

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Federal representatives highlight Bolivian migration in the context of two initiatives that exemplify Brazil’s new approach to domestic and foreign affairs – slave labor eradication and Latin American regional integration. In 2003, in his first year in office, Lula launched the National Plan for the Eradication of Slavery. As discussed in further detail in Chapter One, this ambitious initiative has, since its initiation in 2003, liberated over forty-three thousand workers. Garnering significant national and international media coverage, the discourse of “slave labor” has entered into popular usage. “Slave labor” discourse effectively condemns modern worker exploitation by evoking Brazil’s legacy of slavery as the importer of 3.5 million slaves and the last country in the Americas to abolish slavery. Government and media frame the persistence of modern slave labor as incongruent with Brazilian modernity and, as such, a national moral imperative. According to the non-profit Repórter Brasil, “slave labor and human trafficking were phenomena that seemed to only take place in remote regions of the country. In the last few years, crimes are increasingly found in urbanized and industrialized cities; exploitation has adapted to the mold of the economic activities of these locales.” As indicated in this quote, rather than just a byproduct of a “backwards” rural sector, the existence of slave labor in cosmopolitan cities like São Paulo emphasizes the national dimension of contemporary exploitation, as well as its challenge to Brazil’s modernity. While Bolivian slave labor constitutes only 1 percent of all cases that are

primarily concentrated in Northeast agricultural sectors, media and government highlight Bolivian migrant labor in the garment industry as the prime urban example of slave labor practices. As such, Bolivian migrants are at the heart of national discussions over the limits of Brazilian modernity and initiatives for social inclusion.

Likewise, Bolivian migrants in São Paulo are noted in discussions over Latin American regional integration through Mercosur and Unasur. As described more fully in Chapter Two, Bolivian cultural events are explicitly linked to regional integration efforts. Culture, according to government representatives and event organizers, is a universal medium of communication and transcendence. Moreover, given the large population of Latin American immigrants, São Paulo has become a microcosm and social laboratory for regional integration. Brazilian scholar Ubiratan Silva Alves argues that the Brazilian prioritization of political and economic relations with Europe and the United States inhibited cultural valorization of Bolivian migrants. However, I suggest that there has been an attendant valorization of Bolivian culture alongside significant shifts in domestic policies of social inclusion and foreign policies emphasizing south-south regional collaboration. What French and Fortes characterize as the party’s “activist approach to foreign policy,” Captain argues is integrally tied to domestic priorities of social

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34 According to reports by Repórter Brasil, between 2003 and 2014, of all liberated slave laborers, only 398 or 1 percent were in the garment industry. In 2010, forty-five workers were liberated from garment workshops. The majority of these cases were in small workshops in São Paulo. For more information, see ONG Repórter Brasil, “Trabalho escravo contemporâneo” and “Trabalho escravo urbano,” last modified 2012, accessed March 5, 2015, http://www.escravonempensar.org.br/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/upfilesfolder_materiais_arquivos_fasciculo_trabalho_esc c_urb_web01.pdf.

As Brazil hopes to emerge as global power through its leadership in the region of South America, the government promotes social, cultural, economic, and political integration both on an international level and in the city of São Paulo.

In São Paulo, Bolivian cultural associations proliferated in the early 2000s, most notably with the foundation of Praça Kantuta by the *Associação Gastronômica Cultural e Folclórica Boliviana Padre Bento* in 2002. Additionally, with the election of Mayor Fernando Haddad, a Workers’ Party candidate, in 2012, Bolivian migrants gained significant new channels for political participation, as well as municipal government support for national voting rights. Bolivian business associations supported Haddad’s campaign in return for the inclusion of immigrant initiatives on his platform. In the most recent 2014 federal and state-level elections, the Workers’ Party suffered a tremendous defeat in the city of São Paulo where, as noted by Brazilian journalist Guilherme Balza, “the periphery, for the first time since Lula came to power, was not with the Workers’ Party.”

President Dilma Rousseff, Lula’s successor and former chief of staff, won in only ten of fifty-eight electoral zones in the city of São Paulo, with significant percentage decreases across the board since the last elections in 2010. As the Workers’ Party loses support in strategic cities like São Paulo, immigrants may prove to be an important ally and, if granted the right to vote, a significant new voting bloc. Since 2012, the municipal government under Workers’ Party leadership has dedicated itself to expanding migrants’ local political participation. Lula himself indicated in his statement at a 2015 Bolivian

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36 French and Fortes, “Another World Is Possible,” 28; Captain, “Brazil’s Africa Policy under Lula.”
38 Ibid.
cultural event in São Paulo, “as long as the Workers’ Party governs São Paulo and the
country, Bolivians will be treated like Brazilians.”

Literature on Bolivian Migration to São Paulo

The legacy of European, Middle Eastern, and Japanese immigration to São Paulo at the turn of the twentieth century is a constituent part of the city’s cultural imaginary. As such, there is an abundance of scholarship and memorialization of this immigrant history. Since the turn of the twenty-first century, however, there has been a shift in scholarship to less-studied migrant populations in Latin America, focusing on issues of ethnicity and self-representation. In Brazil, the influential work of historian Jeffrey Lesser on non-European and non-African migrants examines the interrelationship between migrant ethnicity and national identity. Lesser argues that, “immigration was and is about creating a future, superior Brazil,” wherein newcomers would replace the “local indigenous, African, and mixed-descent inhabitants who made up the majority.”

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43 Ibid., 3 & 5.
While ethnicity as a ‘hidden-hyphen’ acted recurrently as a migrant strategy to become Brazilian, their success was dependent on their immediate “racial, social, and political separation from those of African” and indigenous descent.\textsuperscript{44} The case of Bolivian migration, however, complicates the historical pattern Lesser sets forth. Of significant import, Bolivian migrants are regional migrants from the poorest country in Latin America. Moreover, rather than distance themselves from an indigenous ethnic identity, Bolivians actively display indigenous cultural heritage, albeit privileging Andean, over Amazonian, indigenous traditions. While Lesser suggests that immigration is part of Brazil’s imaginary as the “country of the future,” Bolivian labor is racialized and linked to the limits of Brazil’s modernity. Therefore, it is yet to be seen how Bolivians, as regional and indigenous migrants, fit into a historical trajectory of immigration to Brazil.

Over the past decade, numerous Brazilian studies were published on Bolivian migration to São Paulo. Given this extensive attention, in 2012, the Núcleo de Estudos de População at UNICAMP published an anthology entitled \textit{Imigração Boliviana no Brasil} with articles by fourteen scholars. As noted by Szilvia Simai and Rosana Baeninger in the anthology, “Bolivian immigration to São Paulo represents, currently, the wave of international migration with the most visibility and studies in the city.”\textsuperscript{45} This scholarly interest is, in part, the result of significant government and media coverage of Bolivian labor exploitation, as well as migrants’ increasing public visibility through the organization of ethnic spaces such as Praça Kantuta and cultural events. Moreover, researchers frame Bolivian migration as representative of a new topography of south-

\textsuperscript{44} Ibid., 7.

south migration in the context of neoliberal globalization. Sociological analyses of Bolivian work in the garment industry are in dialogue with, in the words of Patrícia Tavares de Freitas, “an international literature on the emergence of ‘new’ informality in the contemporary context, keeping in mind the ‘new’ necessities of capitalist accumulation, which combined with the context of economic recession in the 1970s and 1980s.” Given the significance of the garment industry as an historical avenue for migrant social mobility, Bolivian migrants offer a case to interrogate whether, as suggested in the above quote, contemporary labor relations and capitalist accumulation in the garment industry are entirely new.

Although Brazilian scholarship principally focused on Bolivian labor and spatial insertion into the city, there has been a shift to focus on sociocultural characteristics and Brazilian reception. The latter focus on new ethnic spaces like Praça Kantuta as sites of intercultural dialogue with *paulistanos* and where Bolivian migrants emerge as a publically visible, ethnic group. As I more fully describe in Chapter One, this scholarship on a whole is divided between fatalistic studies of labor in the garment industry and optimistic analyses of Bolivian cultural visibility. Anthropologist Sidney da Silva, perhaps the most cited Brazilian scholar on Bolivian migration, argues that to gain social recognition Bolivians must deconstruct the negative image associated with slave labor

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and human trafficking.\footnote{Silva, “Bolivianos em São Paulo: entre o sonho e a realidade,” 166.} Given what Sidney da Silva notes is the “existence of shared cultural elements between Bolivians and Brazilians, noted in their customs, beliefs, music, gastronomy and in aesthetic and corporeal styles that have been incorporated and resignified throughout the history of Latin American communities,” he argues that Bolivian cultural performance may facilitate mutual recognition and local valorization.\footnote{Silva, “Bolivianos em São Paulo. Dinâmica cultural,” 32.}

A number of articles also analyzed Brazilian reception of migrants through analyses of newspaper articles or dialogue of focus groups. These studies generally indicate the existence of racism and prejudice, alongside negative associations of Bolivians with informality, despite a prevailing discourse of Brazilian receptivity and São Paulo’s cosmopolitanism.\footnote{For example, see Simai and Baeninger, “Discurso, negação e preconceito” and Manetta, “Bolivianos no Brasil e o discurso da mídia jornalística.”}

Like government and media reports on urban slave labor, the predominant scholarly focus on Bolivian migrants tends to reify migrants as a bounded community and ignore any substantive analysis of other Latin American migrant groups. Sylvain Souchaud notes that “by focusing on an ethnic group… by isolating the group from the rest of society, we transform them into something that is in essence different and, at the same time, we tend to deny the possibility that the supposedly specific characteristics of this population would exist among other groups.”\footnote{Souchaud, “A confecção,” 77.} Souchaud’s argument illuminates how scholars, by taking Bolivians as the sole subject of analysis, presuppose the existence of a

\footnote{The most successful study linking Bolivians to other migrant nationals was written by American urban planner, Simone Buechler. In her article, Buechler explores the relationship between sweatshops and industrial restructuring by historically tracing the migration and labor insertion of, principally, Bolivian and Korean migrants to São Paulo. See Buechler, “Sweating It in the Brazilian Garment Industry.”}
Bolivian community. Importantly, these essentialist scholarly representations reflect and bolster a Bolivian migrant elite’s strategic self-essentialism as they garner visibility and make claims to rights and resources in the city. My analysis of class dynamics diverges from essentialized representations in current scholarship. While recognizing the strategic utility of migrant self-essentialisms, I interrogate class and migrants’ differential access to power and resources given the context of persistent labor exploitation. Although most articles note the pre-1980s Bolivian migration as part of a historical background, they do not include class as a dominant unit of analysis. By extrapolating the experience of labor exploitation to all Bolivian migrants, they suggest shared motivations and equal participation in transcending negative Bolivian images through cultural events. While garment workers are frequently spectators at cultural events, due to their class position, they are highly unlikely to be active participants. In this way, this thesis offers an important new dimension of analysis with significant repercussions for migrant mobility and social inclusion, while avoiding the essentialized representations that dominate Brazilian scholarship and popular discourse on Bolivian migrants.

Further, this thesis expands the literature on Bolivian migration by explicitly analyzing the intersection between cultural performance and migrant politics. Current scholarship regards cultural performance as a way to transcend negative images while garnering public visibility and social recognition. In this scholarship, Bolivian migrants’ sociocultural insertion in São Paulo is framed in relation to a paulistano public, while an analysis of migrant relations with state representatives, whether Brazilian or Bolivian, is
largely absent. Yet, as demonstrated in Chapter Two and Chapter Three, migrant claims-making of Brazilian and Bolivian state representatives facilitates their local insertion in São Paulo. Given migrants explicit demands for institutional channels of political participation, this study focuses on culture as a political resource and emphasizes the persistence of national identification and the state as central to migrant politics.

Rearticulating Nationalism and Citizenship: A Theoretical Framework

This thesis is indebted to and in dialogue with anthropological scholarship on nationalism and citizenship, specifically in the context of accelerated globalization. While citizenship and nationality defined membership in a territorially-bounded nation-state, the deterritorializing processes of globalization challenge scholars to address emergent, or recurrent, forms of citizenship and group identification. As noted by Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson, globalization disturbs the “assumed isomorphism of space, place, and culture” and facilitates the visibility of imagined communities “as displaced peoples cluster around remembered or imagined homelands, places, or communities in a world that seems increasingly to deny such firm territorialized anchors in their actuality.” The concept of “imagined community,” famously coined by Benedict Anderson, refers to the nation-state as a cultural product, reified as a natural collectivity. According to Anderson, the nation-state is imagined precisely because its members “will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them.” Moreover, “it is imagined as a

52 In this case, paulistano refers to a resident of the city of São Paulo. Paulistano generally refers to the city of São Paulo, while paulista refers to the state of São Paulo.  
community, because, regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship.” Given the hidden script of class, scholars on nationalism highlight what Gupta and Ferguson describe as the “process through which such reified and naturalized national representations are constructed and maintained by states and national elites.”

In the reterritorialized space of São Paulo, migrants imagine a Bolivian national community. Bolivian migrant elites, the São Paulo municipal government, and the Bolivian consulate reify a national migrant “community” as a homogenous and bounded group connected through shared culture. I avoid referring to a Bolivian “community,” and thereby reinforcing its reification. Rather, a migrant “community” was made visible only through iterative articulation and performance, reinforced through the support of elite and state actors. The persistence of Bolivian national identification is incongruent, however, with the very discourse of “global flows” that figures globalization as a homogenizing process through which the nation-state and its barriers to mobility are eroded. Yet, just as the nation-state was imagined, so too is globalization structured by cultural imaginaries that, to use Néstor García Canclini’s words, “express the ways individuals and collective subjects represent their place and agency in said processes.” Bolivian migrant demands of the Bolivian state and their primary identification as Bolivians indicate that national

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55 Ibid., 7.
origins remain a principal component of migrants’ cultural imaginaries as the Bolivian nationhood is reterritorialized in São Paulo. Globalization, as argued by Néstor García Canclini, is a process of fragmentation and recomposition where difference and inequality is reordered rather than eliminated. By maintaining sight of class and production, despite the performance of a homogenous national community, this thesis attempts to account for the rearticulation of difference and inequality in São Paulo under the framework of Bolivian national identification.

Influenced by scholars of performativity, I analyze the logics and political effects of Bolivians’ mobilization of an ethnonational identity. Theories of performativity analyze how, to quote political scientist Lisa Wedeen, “the iterative character of speech and bodily activities constitute individuals as specific kinds of social beings or ‘subjects.’” Although this thesis focuses primarily on folkloric performances in specific cultural events, I do not suggest that the performance of migrant identity is limited to the stage. While performativity encapsulates a much broader spectrum of iterative speech and bodily activities than those largely under analysis in this thesis, this theoretical framing remains of critical importance in my attempt to de-essentialize migrant identity while tracing and valorizing the political effects of ethnonational discourse. By undertaking this line of inquiry, I do not negate Bolivians’ internal sense of belonging to an ethnonational community nor bring into question migrants’ “authenticity” in their display of indigenous cultural forms. Rather, as argued by Wedeen, to analyze the logics of discourse and their political effects illuminates “identity not ontologically as what people are, but politically

in terms of what they do.”60 This approach acknowledges the impossibility of knowing, accessing, or measuring such internal emotional attachments. Even in the absence of such measures, the iterative use of ethnonational identification indicates that the idiom of nationalism is a powerful form of claims-making. As sociologist Rogers Brubaker argues, “we should think about nation not as substance but as institutionalized form, not as collectivity but as practical category.”61 Regarding the Bolivian nation and Bolivian national identity as practical categories, I indicate the locally-situated contours and effects of Bolivian nationalist discourse and performance.

Importantly, in the cosmopolitan urban space of São Paulo, a Bolivian migrant elite is actively producing a Bolivian identity as relational to other migrant identities in São Paulo. As Richard Handler states in his work on Québécois nationalism:

Like a thing, the nation or ethnic group is taken to be bounded, continuous, and precisely distinguishable from other analogous entities. Moreover, from this perspective, what distinguishes each nation or ethnic group is its culture, which provides the ‘content’ of group identity and individuality.62

The emphasis on cultural performance among Bolivian migrants, then, is a primary means of establishing collective particularity. Just as every individual has a nation, every nation has a culture. Therefore, since national belonging is imagined to be universal, culture makes nations and their nationals distinguishable and relational.

Like nation-states, migrants utilize objectified culture to legitimize demands and enact a visible group. In this way, migrants lay claim to their nation’s sovereign power and demand to be recognized not as a peripheral community but, rather, as national

60 Ibid., 221.
61 Rogers Brubaker, “Rethinking Nationhood: Nation as Institutionalized Form, Practical Category, Contingent Event,” Contention 4, no. 1: 8
subjects. Manuela Carneiro da Cunha notes that “culture” is a “weapon for asserting identity, dignity, power, and other precious things vis-à-vis states of the international community.” Likewise, George Yúdice indicates that cultural difference is increasingly deployed as a resource in group claims to social and political inclusion. Rather than a negative evaluation of the instrumentality of culture or its lack of authenticity, Yúdice asserts that, “a performative understanding of the expediency of culture, in contrast, focuses on the strategies implied in any invocation of culture, any invention of tradition, in relation to some purpose or goal.” This thesis, then, contributes to scholarship on culture as a political resource for marginalized groups, while cautioning against its assumed progressive nature. Bolivian national identification is deployed by migrants and sponsored by migrant elites and state agents to support migrant inclusion in São Paulo and garner rights. However, it simultaneously masks class dynamics and labor exploitation. The logics of such discourse and performance cannot be analyzed in isolation from the underlying economic reality of Bolivian labor in the garment industry.

The findings from this case study complicates current literature on emergent forms of citizenship in accelerated globalization that theorize the erosion of the nation-state and institutionalized channels of political participation. According to Brazilian political scientist Evalina Dagnino, concepts of citizenship have expanded “far beyond the acquisition of legal rights, requiring the constitution of active social subjects

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65 Yúdice, The Expediency of Culture, 38.
identifying what they consider to be their rights and struggling for their recognition.”

Likewise, Holston and Appadurai argue that, given the disjuncture between substantive rights and political inclusion in countries transitioning to democracy in Latin America, Asia, and Eastern Europe, “formal membership in the nation-state is increasingly neither necessary nor a sufficient condition for substantive citizenship.” Contesting these arguments, Bolivian migrant demands for political voting rights are at the heart of demands for citizenship. The state, the nation, and institutional channels of political participation remain central to Bolivians’ demands for rights and recognition.

The disjuncture between these case findings and this literature, in part, stems from the lack of theory-building on cases of south-south migration. Importantly, Holston’s theorization of “insurgent citizenship” relies on the case of formal, albeit marginalized, members of the Brazilian nation-state. While Holston and Appadurai cite immigrant reluctance to naturalize as evidence of the diminished importance of formal membership, they rely on surveys of immigrants in the United States. In contrast to the proliferation of scholarship on immigration to the United States and Western Europe, relatively few studies focus on south-south migration. Furthermore, unlike in the United States, open borders and a relatively receptive host country characterize regional migration to Brazil.

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70 With the adoption of the common intraregional market of Mercosur, there has been increased dialogue regarding the shared responsibility of governments to regularize migration along with the flow of capital. In 2002, Mercosur participants, including Brazil and Bolivia, approved the “Free movement and residence agreement” in order to grant all
For Bolivian migrants, emigrating from a poor and ethnoculturally diverse country, the disjuncture between formal and substantive rights, as well as between nation and state, has long defined individual and group relations with the state. However, rather than withdraw from formal political mechanisms, as suggested by theorists like Holston and Appadurai, migrants demand recognition of voting rights locally in São Paulo and transnationally in Bolivia. In her ethnography of urban, Aymara residents in Bolivia, Sian Lazar notes that citizenship is highly physical and enacted through practices of nested affiliations, yet, although, “citizenship can be experienced despite normative institutional politics… [It is] necessarily, in negotiation with that sphere.”

Bolivians’ mobilization of an ethnonational identification demands new transnational citizenship rights, rooted principally in enfranchisement, in negotiation with the Bolivian state and the São Paulo municipal government.

**Methods and Structure of Thesis**

This thesis is based largely on the ethnographic field research I conducted for two months in São Paulo from June to August of 2014. Like any researcher interested in Bolivian migration, I headed to the best-known Bolivian space in the city, the weekly Sunday market in Praça Kantuta. As described more fully in Chapter One, in addition to a majority of Bolivian attendees, Praça Kantuta now attracts Brazilians and other foreigners with what Brazilian journalist Gabriela Longman calls “anthropological curiosity.”

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Once identified as a researcher, I was immediately introduced to Don Carlos Soto who, as a founder of the market, has significant experience in fielding questions from university students, as well as local and international media. Don Carlos and other market vendors were well aware that Kantuta had become, in the words of Don Carlos, “a real social phenomenon” and had, through repetitive interactions with researchers, consolidated a particular image and history of the market.\(^3^3\) When I asked Don Carlos for other contacts of interest, he exclusively pointed me towards Bolivian professionals. While I actively sought Bolivians from varied backgrounds and perspectives, I had a distinct sense that I was being offered a packaged and well-rehearsed version of my research topic predominantly informed by the perspective of what I see as a Bolivian migrant elite.

Undeniably, the lack of recent migrants’ voices in this study is a significant limitation. Without these voices, I am not able to gauge the extent to which the majority of Bolivian migrants’ visions for the path towards and substance of integration and citizenship align with the politics enacted by a migrant elite. Moreover, I cannot address the effect, positive or negative, of migrant elite politics on recent migrants’ livelihood. Given exhausting labor regimes, undocumented status, and dispersal in small-scale workshops, recent migrants are not easily accessible to researchers. This research challenge is reflected, albeit largely without comment or critique, in Brazilian scholarship on Bolivian migration.\(^3^4\) However, the absence of recent migrant voices in scholarship

\(^3^3\) In reading my interview with Don Carlos alongside interviews conducted by other researchers, the same stories consistently appear, sometimes told with the exact phrasing and inflections.

\(^3^4\) In their article, “A comunidade boliviana em São Paulo: definindo padrões de territorialidade,” Renato Cymbalista and Iara Rolnik Xavier discuss some of the difficulties in researching Bolivian migrants. According to them, these difficulties include
also indicates a constitutive aspect of the Bolivian migrant population: elite migrants consistently represent and speak on behalf of garment workers. Rather than adopt wholesale Bolivian migrant elite discourse as representative of a migrant national “community,” I critique migrants’ supposed homogeneity and attempt to highlight informants’ positionalities.

Of my seven hour-long interviews, the majority were with Bolivian migrant elites. In addition to Don Carlos, interviewees included two Bolivian political representatives, one of whom is also the president of a Bolivian business association, the director of a Bolivian media network in São Paulo, a Bolivian representative at the Catholic Church affiliated non-profit Centro de Apoio ao Migrante or the Center for the Support of Migrants (CAMI), a recent Bolivian migrant, and a Brazilian sociologist who has written several articles on Bolivian migration. Additionally, I had an hour-long informal interview with the Municipal Director of Migration Policy. This interview critically informed my analysis of relations between the municipal government and Bolivian migrants, as well as emergent initiatives to extend migrants’ political participation.

As the most recent migrant of those I interviewed, and as a previous worker in a garment workshop, Verónica provided critical insight for my analysis. After losing a secretarial job in La Paz, Verónica emigrated in 2013 to work for a cousin who had migrated ten years earlier and was the owner of a garment workshop. Verónica notes that in her cousin’s shop, she worked “like any other worker... Well it is just like this, it has to be like this. Even though it is your family, it has to be employer and employed. Family

the lack of migrant presence in public space, low participation in mobilizing efforts, and the lack of governmental efforts to increase the visibility of the group.
comes after.”

After six months, Verónica left the garment workshop for employment with a Korean family as the live-in caretaker of an elderly woman, against the advice of other Bolivians who warned her of Korean exploitation. Although her decision has created a rift between her and her cousin, Verónica notes that “[her employers] act like I was part of the family. They tell me ‘we adopt you’... I have had a lot of luck. I no longer have family here but they are my family.”

In order to meet other Bolivians, Verónica recently joined Tinkus Jaira, a relatively cheap dance group, even though she had no experience dancing in Bolivia. Through her invitation, I joined Tinkus Jaira and participated in the annual celebration of the Bolivian Independence Day at the Memorial da América Latina. This experience was invaluable in understanding the dynamics of an individual dance fraternity, the motivations of dancers, as well as how class and social hierarchies are embedded in Bolivian cultural performance.

The interviews with two Bolivian political representatives also significantly informed my analysis of migrant politics and claims-making of the municipal government and the Bolivian consulate. In a significant expansion of political rights in São Paulo, migrant residents in São Paulo, regardless of legal status, gained the right to vote and be elected to the Conselho Participativo Municipal in 2014. The Conselho Participativo Municipal is a civil society body of elected members providing oversight and recommendations for government projects on the district level. Each district, depending on population size, has between nineteen and fifty-one conselheiro positions. Of the thirty-two districts in São Paulo, nineteen were given additional spots for immigrant conselheiros as determined by the immigrant presence of a predetermined

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75 Verónica, interview with author.
76 Ibid.
percentage of the districts’ general populations. According to the municipal government, the Conselho Participativo “opens an innovative space for immigrants,” and Rogério Sotilli, Municipal Director of Human Rights and Citizenship, noted that through the election “these people who were always treated like a second class will be treated like any other citizen… They need the right to vote or they will never be respected.”

Bolivian conselheira Monica Rodriguez Ulo regards immigrant elections in the Conselho Participativo as “just one small step… one step only,” but argues that it is leading to a larger step which will occur when there is “reform to the law itself and when one day Bolivians, the immigrants, are able to vote.”

Over 1,700 immigrants voted in the inaugural elections, the majority casting votes for Bolivian candidates.

Luis Vasquez and Monica were two of the seven Bolivian conselheiros elected and, with over four hundred votes, Luis was the most voted candidate of any immigrant group. Both Luis and Monica migrated from La Paz in the mid 2000s, were university-educated, and, unlike the majority of post-1980s Bolivian migrants, were never employed as garment workers. Luis migrated in 2000 with the intention of continuing post-graduate studies in business administration. Currently, Luis is the president of a business association and the owner of Fiolandia, a supply store for garment workshops.

Additionally, he offers training courses on running small businesses. Monica migrated in 2005 to live with her sister and found employment as a radio host. Although her sister, as

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78 Monica Rodriguez Ulo, conselheira participativa, interview with author, August 6, 2014. In 2013, constitutional amendment PEC 347 was proposed in order to allow foreign legal residents living in Brazilian territory for more than four years the right to vote in municipal, state, and federal elections.
well as her extended family, was employed originally as garment workers, her sister gained relative financial success and is now working as a fashion designer. Luis links the beginning of his political engagement to the election of current mayor Fernando Haddad of the Workers’ Party. While Haddad was initially unpopular in Luis’ district, Bolivian business owners organized to support Haddad’s campaign and, according to Luis, were largely responsible for putting immigrant initiatives onto Haddad’s campaign platform. Since then, Luis became convinced that the “only possible way to help and change the community is through public power, through politics… [and] that in the political world, the vote matters a lot… The vote is an important currency in the political world.” Luis and Monica, among other migrant representatives, frame their relationship with the municipal government as a strategic and mutually-beneficial partnership, one that is bolstered through access to the common currency of the vote.

In addition to ethnographic data, this thesis draws on secondary literature, newspaper articles, blogs, immigrant advocacy newsletters, and government documents. I am indebted to a significant body of Brazilian scholarship on the Bolivian migrants in São Paulo published over the last decade. In order to understand the dominant representations of Bolivian migrants available to the public and as a gauge, albeit an imperfect one, of public opinion, I used newspaper articles principally from São Paulo’s two largest papers, *Folha de São Paulo* and *O Estado de São Paulo*. Since the majority of newspaper coverage has focused on Bolivian labor exploitation, the use of immigrant advocacy newsletters and blogs offered an important vantage point to analyze ongoing migrant politics and cultural events. Finally, reports from the municipal government, the

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79 Vasquez, interview with author.
Federal Police, the Brazilian census, and the Bolivian *Tribunal Nacional Supremo*, provided necessary data on the characteristics of Bolivian migration, the extent of migrant political engagement, and the relations between migrants and state representatives.

Each chapter in this thesis explores migrant mobilizations of Bolivian national identification to negotiate inclusion in São Paulo. Chapter One explores the two dominant spaces associated with Bolivian migration in São Paulo – the garment workshop and the weekly ethnic market of Praça Kantuta. Whereas the workshop is a primary source of Bolivian insecurity and invisibility, Praça Kantuta is a public site of leisure and consumption. By foregrounding spatial representations of the workshop, I indicate how market vendors strategically construct Praça Kantuta as a contained space of exchange and consumption cleansed of any negative associations to labor exploitation in the informal garment industry. I argue that market vendors highlight national identification and leisure, over class and production, to strategically align Praça Kantuta with municipal government regulations and attract *paulistano* consumers and, therefore, to demand public recognition and valorization. Through the market, vendors emerge as representatives of a Bolivian collectivity, paper over intra-community class dynamics, and divert attention from exploitative labor practices in the garment industry. This chapter is an important frame for the analysis in subsequent chapters. The garment industry and the public image of Bolivian labor exploitation, even when not stated explicitly, continue to structure and inform migrant insertion in São Paulo.

Chapter Two analyzes Bolivian cultural celebrations as an interface for negotiating their position vis-à-vis the municipal government since the election of a
Workers’ Party administration in 2012. By displaying indigenous cultural heritage, a Bolivian migrant elite mirrors government priorities of social inclusion and multiculturalism in order to emerge as meritorious citizens and subjects in São Paulo. The display of Bolivian cultural forms is increasingly sponsored in collaboration with the municipal government and mobilized in support of political agendas including the expansion of the migrant vote and Latin American regional integration. However, given the high costs of participation in dance fraternities, Bolivian cultural celebrations paper over intra-community class dynamics in order to highlight migrant unity through national identification. Ironically, even as cultural celebrations display social inclusion, they are made possible through capital accumulation from the exploitation of poor Bolivian migrants.

Chapter Three analyzes emigrant relations with the Bolivian government and, in particular, the Bolivian consulate in São Paulo. As in the prior chapter, national identification continues to be the discourse of claims-making despite different tactics employed with Bolivian state representatives. Since the election of Evo Morales, Bolivian emigrants gained the right to vote for presidential and vice-presidential candidates, representing a radical expansion of both the imagined nation and institutionalized channels for political participation. As emigrants leverage their new political influence, they are able to make significant demands of the Bolivian state to facilitate integration in São Paulo. By critiquing the absence of Bolivian state protections in São Paulo, emigrants reassert Morales’ anti-neoliberal political project as a moral imperative that is, as of yet, unrealized. Additionally, through the discourse and performance of indigenous cultural patrimony, Bolivian migrants contest consulate
employees’ authenticity as “truly Bolivian.” Ironically, the deployment of Bolivian national identification, rather than “plurinational,” flattens cultural diversity into an essentialized version of the Bolivian nation. Yet, by effectively utilizing new institutional channels of political participation, alongside the performance of national identification, Bolivian emigrants embed themselves within the political imaginaries of both Bolivia and Brazil.
Chapter One
The Sweatshop and the Ethnic Market: Social Spaces of Bolivian Migration in São Paulo

The two dominant social spaces for Bolivian migrants in São Paulo are the garment workshop and the ethnic market – spaces of work and leisure. The ethnic market of Praça Kantuta challenges the dominant Brazilian perception of Bolivians as an invisible community working in “conditions analogous to slave labor.” In contrast to recent migrants who work in small-scale garment workshops or “sweatshops,” market vendors are part of a more established and economically secure Bolivian migrant elite in São Paulo.¹ Rather than distance themselves from new migrants, market vendors perform a unified ethnonational identity with market attendees, the majority of whom are recent Bolivian migrants working in the garment industry. Bolivian market attendees, in the words of Ubiratan Silva Alves, “meet up with friends, have fun, enjoy traditional food, find work, flirt and live some of the customs of their country.”² Yet, simultaneously, market vendors self-consciously use the market to transform the image of Bolivian “slaves” while curating the market for Brazilian consumers and the municipal government. In this chapter, I argue that vendors cleanse the market of the migrants’

¹ I employ the term “sweatshop” when referring to Brazilian media and Brazilian public perceptions in order to accurately reflect the negative connotations of “slave labor” discourse. However, given Bolivian contestation of such discourse, I will employ the term “workshop” in all other instances. For an example of “slave labor” discourse applied to Bolivian garment workers, see Câmara Municipal de São Paulo, “Relatório final da comissão parlamentar de inquérito para apurar a exploração de trabalho análogo ao de escravo,” Câmara Municipal de São Paulo (2006).
negative associations to informality and exploitation. The market’s emphasis on leisure and nationality occludes issues of class and labor. In this way, Praça Kantuta and its commodification of a Bolivian ethnonational identity economically and politically benefit Bolivian market vendors and a Bolivian migrant elite by diverting attention from the larger community’s labor configurations in an exploitative garment industry.

Informed by Lefebvre’s theories of social space, this chapter analyzes the garment workshop and the Bolivian market in order to interrogate the social relations inscribed within the sweatshop, as well as their relation to emergent forms of Bolivian claims-making and subject formation in Praça Kantuta. According to Lefebvre, more than just a “product to be used, to be consumed [space] is also a means of production.”

As a set of relations between things, space can never become absolute and, therefore, “never quite emancipates itself from activity, from use, from need, from ‘social being.’” In the case of Praça Kantuta, Bolivian migrants appropriate urban space to transform social relations and to create new Bolivian subjects.

The chapter is thematically divided into two interconnected sections on the sweatshop and the market. Given my inability to visit garment workshops during my field research, the first section on the sweatshop solely analyzes media exposés and government “slave labor” eradication campaigns in comparison with migrant characterization of labor practices. For many migrants on record, “slave labor” discourse, at best, misrepresents labor practices in an ethnic economic niche and, at worst, propagates Brazilian prejudice and discrimination. Even so, Bolivian migrants in

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4 Ibid., 83.
conjunction with Brazilian media and municipal government condemn the sweatshop as the site and source of Bolivian invisibility and insecurity. In opposition to the sweatshop, the ethnic market is a site for Bolivians to emerge as visible and active subjects in Brazil. The second half of the chapter attends to the ethnic market of Praça Kantuta and is subdivided along Lefebvre’s tripartite formulation of representational space, representations of space, and spatial practices – as the planned, the perceived, and the used. In this case, I examine market vendors’ strategic planning of the market, Brazilian media perceptions, and recent migrants’ use of the market. As market vendors cleanse the market of associations to informality and exploitation in order to transform migrants’ public image, recent migrants’ use of the market suggests that Praça Kantuta reproduces, rather than transcends, labor exploitation.

Even as sociologist Iara Rolnik Xavier and urban planner Renato Cymbalista suggest that the “collective privacy” of the sweatshop critically weakens Bolivian visibility and presence within the Brazilian public sphere, other scholars more optimistically indicate the liberatory potential of Bolivian ethnic spaces like Praça Kantuta. They present Praça Kantuta as a site of cultural resistance and as space to refashion Bolivians’ public image. Scholars’ focus on Bolivians as an ethnic or national community ignores how ethnic commodification papers over intra-community class dynamics. Rather than a universally liberatory space for the “Bolivian community,” I argue that Praça Kantuta benefits a Bolivian migrant elite by hiding recent migrants’ precarious labor and exploitation in the garment industry. Moreover, even as scholarship on Bolivian social life functions as an important counterpoint to an exclusive focus on

labor and marginality, often in the discourse of “slave labor,” it often does so at the expense of a nuanced analysis of spaces of production, namely the “sweatshop.” Rather than analyze the sweatshop and the market as two separate spheres of Bolivian migrants’ lives in São Paulo, this chapter draws these two spaces into dialogue. Studies that isolate one from the other morally privilege the “culturally-enriched,” public space of Praça Kantuta, while ignoring its interconnections with the sweatshop. Despite market vendors’ desire to mask such interconnections, Praça Kantuta and the sweatshop are inextricably linked. Instead of the fatalistic studies of Bolivian “slave labor” or the liberatory studies of Bolivian public spaces, this chapter explores the dialectical relationship between Praça Kantuta and the sweatshop in order to trace Bolivians’ complicated negotiations for citizenship in São Paulo.

The Bolivian Sweatshop and “Slave Labor”

Migrant labor in informal garment workshops is exploitative and poorly remunerated. Bolivians work six days a week for upwards of sixteen hours a day. Unlike Brazilian workers in informal workshops, Bolivian migrants’ wages are discounted for the cost of food and lodging. Buechler argues that the increase in unregistered Brazilian workers in the garment industry makes their situation comparable to Bolivians. However, since Brazilians are not directly connected to employers through the provision of food and lodging, their exploitation appears less severe.

\[6\] Buechler argues that the increase in unregistered Brazilian workers in the garment industry makes their situation comparable to Bolivians. However, since Brazilians are not directly connected to employers through the provision of food and lodging, their exploitation appears less severe.
US dollars during high production. This confirmed my own field research findings that migrants make six hundred reais or approximately two hundred US dollars.⁸ According to 2010 Brazilian census data, this compares to an average household income of $2,853 reais in the state of São Paulo.⁹ Given their work regime, migrants spend long hours in a workshop owned by their employer, living, working, and eating in dangerous and unhygienic environments. According to a 2005 city council report on Bolivian slave labor in São Paulo, garment workshops often have “inadequate electrical connections, piles of flammable material next to cords and the constant risk of accidents” amplified by worker exhaustion.¹⁰ In her article on Bolivian labor in the São Paulo garment industry, Simone Buechler indicates that “workers develop respiratory problems from breathing clothing particles, tuberculosis, and problems with their eyes, their kidneys, and their backs.”¹¹ Migrants’ economic and linguistic dependency on workshop owners, as well as their limited mobility, exacerbates the possibility of severe forms of exploitation. Even after migrants pay off their initial debt for the cost of migration, Buechler found that “the provision of food and lodging continues the dependent relationship.”¹² In more extreme cases, there are confirmed reports of workshop owners withholding migrant documents and restricting their mobility.

Media and government exposés of Bolivian sweatshops frame the insulated space of the sweatshop as the source of Bolivian invisibility, exploitation, and insecurity. In

⁸ Verónica (pseudonym), interview by author.
¹¹ Buechler, “Sweating It in the Brazilian Garment Industry,” 111.
¹² Ibid., 112.
particular, these accounts highlight the dual use of the sweatshop for Bolivian labor and residence. The 2005 city council report notes that “labor conditions are, generally, precarious and degrading; the site of work is the same as where they eat, they sleep, where children are raised, and adults interact.” The report goes on to note that, following a work day of more than twelve hours, “they lay out mattresses underneath the sewing machines where sometimes you find children sleeping during the day.” Further, sweatshop owners “keep windows shut – sometimes even covered over with wood or bricks… [And] in order to disguise the sound of sewing machines, employers play loud music” with the dual effect of impeding worker conversations. According to the city council report, the sweatshop erodes any public presence of Bolivian workers while undercutting internal sociability. However, as noted in scholarship and other news articles, garment workers often listen to pirated Bolivian radio stations in São Paulo that often air information on upcoming cultural events, local and national politics, and political protests. However, media and government exposés highlight the overlapping spatial spheres of labor and residence in an insulated sweatshop to highlight Bolivians’ limited mobility in the city as an indicator of their curtailed freedom.

The city council report expresses concern that sweatshops hide Bolivians workers from the Brazilian government, debilitating state protection of workers’ rights under Brazilian labor laws. According to the report, “the problem is hidden in these small sweatshops which, in conjunction with their illegal status... makes them even more

14 Ibid., 26.
15 Ibid., 26-27.
16 For example, see Antônio Gaudério, “O preço de um vestido,” Folha de São Paulo, 16 December, 2007.
vulnerable and at the same time invisible to the eyes of State.” Indeed, the sweatshop is strategically constructed to avoid detection and circumvent labor laws. Sweatshops are dispersed throughout the city in small apartments or hidden behind façades of false establishments. As noted in the report, even if Bolivians have some forms of social life outside of the sweatshop, it only “reduces the impression of work analogous to slavery, but does not undo it – workers who do not have guaranteed rights are not really free.”

According to the municipal government, the sweatshop is the source of Bolivians’ invisibility, exploitation, and limited access to the Brazilian public sphere.

Since the turn of the twenty-first century, “slave labor” discourse has become a ubiquitous term in Brazil. And while the majority of “slave labor” cases are in the rural agricultural sector, Bolivians in the garment industry are frequently cited as the urban example. The “National Plan for the Eradication of Slavery,” launched in the first term of Lula’s presidency in 2003, actively promotes public and media dialogues on the issue, alongside eradication campaigns and greater punitive measures against offenders. In

18 Although many argue that the rigid labors laws enacted under Getúlio Vargas are responsible for the growth in the informal economy since employers are unable and unwilling to comply, as noted by Buechler and John French, these labor laws were initially created to aid capitalist development by appeasing social grievances. See Simone Buechler, “Introduction,” In Labor in a Globalizing City: Economic Restructuring in São Paulo, Brazil (New York: Springer Publishing, 2013); John D. French, Drowning in Laws: Labor Laws and Brazilian Political Culture (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004); Michael Reid, Brazil: The Troubled Rise of a Global Power (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014).
20 Câmara Municipal de São Paulo, “Relatorio final,” 27.
2014, the Brazilian senate approved a constitutional amendment that enables the
government to expropriate properties being used for slave labor and redesignate
properties for agrarian reform or housing programs. In addition to legal channels, the
program mobilizes media coverage and a publicly-accessible black-list to apply consumer
pressure to companies using slave labor, either directly or through subcontracting. In
2011, media coverage of slave labor practices in the production of clothes for the
multinational clothing retailer Zara turned public attention to urban cases of slave labor
and, specifically, Bolivian migrants.22

“Slave labor” discourse nationally is a captivating condemnation of contemporary
forms of labor exploitation given Brazil’s legacy of slavery. A contemporary news article
lamented that, even in the twenty-first century, “after more than 115 years since the
abolition of slavery in Brazil and after the evolution we have had with respect to human
rights and the prerogatives of citizenship, there are still remnants of slavery, evidenced by
the 25,000 victims of this type of exploitation.”23 By suggesting the limitations of
Brazil’s “evolution,” media and government frame the eradication of forced labor as a
moral imperative. Similarly, as noted in the introduction, reports disproportionately
highlight urban examples of slave labor to reinforce these issues as a national, not just
rural, phenomenon. According to these reports, the existence of Bolivian “slave labor” in
urban, cosmopolitan São Paulo is incongruent with Brazilian modernity. However, by
linking the urban labor of a Bolivian national group to rural black and indigenous labor
through a metaphor that highlights the limits of Brazilian modernity, “slave labor”
discourse racializes Bolivians and reinforces their alterity as anti-modern and indigenous.

22 ONG Repórter Brasil, “Trabalho escravo contemporâneo: 20 anos de combate.”
Media and government exposés of Bolivian “slave labor” increasingly analyze the nuances of intra-ethnic relations of recruitment and employment. By comparison, early articles focused primarily on exploitation as Bolivians “work quietly, accepting their exploitation” in “dark sweatshops where they eat and work, day in and day out.”

In order to gain access to these hidden spaces, Brazilian photojournalist Antônio Gaudério published an undercover report in 2007. His report on human trafficking and slave labor in the case of Bolivian migrants instigated renewed government and media attention. In Gaudério’s article, “O preço de um vestido,” he recounts travelling from La Paz, Bolivia to São Paulo under a verbal contract to work three months without pay and in exchange for food and lodging. After six days working upwards of seventeen hours per day, he “fled” the sweatshop, “to never again return.” Describing his employer, Gaudério notes how he worked for years only to save enough to buy used sewing machines and offer work for new migrants. “He never saved enough to buy a car or a house. His dream is to be able to pay the 600 reais for rent.” Similarly, Márcia Ruiz, a representative of the São Paulo committee on human trafficking, argued that Bolivian “slave labor” cannot be addressed solely by police action since “it is a complex social question because undocumented Bolivians do not want to return since they say that here they do not starve. It is necessary to educate those being exploited and all parties involved must work together.”

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25 Antônio Gaudério won the “Grande Prêmio Folha de Jornalismo de 2007” for this report.
26 Gaudério, “O preço de um vestido.”
27 Ibid.
28 Rolli and Fernandes, “Até 1.500 bolivianos chegam por mês.”
reference from the Brazilian context. Both media and government coverage increasingly offer a nuanced analysis of labor relations wherein the line between exploiter and victim is not clearly delineated.

Scholarly and migrant critiques of “slave labor” discourse often revolve around the question of migrant agency. French sociologist Dominque Vidal argues that to represent Bolivian labor through the metaphor of “slave labor” contributes to an essentializing process that negates their capacity for agency."^{29} Despite working conditions, migrants view work as a matter of rational and informed choice, not force. Migrant salaries of approximately six hundred reais per month, an equivalent of two hundred US dollars, is three times the amount they could earn in Bolivia.\(^{30}\) When compared to those living in Bolivia, Bolivians in São Paulo have very low rates of unemployment. While media and government reports suggest migrants are misled about working conditions and the amount of remuneration in São Paulo, of the fifty Bolivian migrants interviewed by urban planner Renato Cymbalista and sociologist Iara Rolnik, only four reported being misled while only one claimed to have experienced labor conditions analogous to slavery.\(^{31}\) Additionally, with the relatively low cost of sewing machines, Bolivians view the garment industry as a viable option for social mobility. Yet, the dream of one day owning their own workshop is not only dependent on their exhausting labor regimes but also on the future recruitment of undocumented compatriots and engagement in the same cycle of labor relations. Buechler notes that, “if workers


\(^{30}\) Cymbalista and Rolnik, 125; Verónica (pseudonym), interview with author.

\(^{31}\) Ibid., 124-126.
were registered, labor costs would increase by about 54 percent to cover the minimum wage and benefits, and at that level of remuneration many workshops might have to close because of competition from cheap Asian imports.”

Bolivian garment workers, therefore, regard their labor in the Brazilian garment industry as a necessary alternative to a dearth of economic opportunities in their home country and a potential avenue for social mobility. Moreover, in order to maintain competitive prices, their employment is, in many ways, dependent on continued informality.

Bolivian migrant elites largely reject the slave labor discourse for, in the words of Cymbalista and Rolnik, “denigrating the community’s image and reinforcing their discrimination.” The more aggressive stance of a Bolivian migrant elite indicates their intent to divert government attention from Bolivian labor in the garment industry, as well as the classed nature of migrant contestation of “slave labor” discourse. For example, Luis Vasquez dismissed “slave labor” discourse by saying that, “the Brazilian media is sensationalist and does not publish anything good about the community… I am not saying [slave labor] does not exist. It might exist but it is the exception, not the rule.”

Although an elected immigrant representative, Luis is not an impartial party. Previously the owner of garment workshops, Luis now owns a lucrative thread business and is the President of the Associação de Empreendedores Bolivianos da Rua Coimbra (ASSEMPBOL). Like many Bolivians in São Paulo, he is deeply imbricated in the garment industry. For Luis, as long as the focus is on Bolivian “slave labor,” government action jeopardizes the estimated ten thousand to fifteen thousand Bolivian-owned

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32 Buechler, “Sweating It in the Brazilian Garment Industry,” 112.
33 Cymbalista and Rolnik, 125.
34 Luis Vasquez, President of ASSEMPBOL and conselheiro participativo, interview by author,
garment workshops that form the material base of the Bolivian community in São Paulo, as well as his economic prosperity.\footnote{Ibid.}

Although Bolivian migrant elites, like Luis, divert attention from “slave labor” discourse, they simultaneously adopt government and media discourse vis-à-vis the sweatshop. In particular, Luis highlights the perverse nature of overlapping spheres of residence and production as congealed in the garment workshop. Luis argues that:

Since the majority live inside the houses of other Bolivians, the house where they work, they do not have the same convenience and comfort of living in their own homes. Even though many people have tried to stop working at six o’clock…. what happens is that they stop working and they do not know what to do… Are they going to sit there lying in bed, looking at the ceiling? … They prefer to work and gain some more money… For me, this is not slave labor. When a Brazilian has two jobs, he works in the morning and works at night, no one says it is slave labor. Quite the opposite… Only when it is a Bolivian they say it is slave labor.\footnote{Ibid.}

Here, Luis expresses workers’ choice in submitting themselves to exhaustive work regimes. Additionally, he strongly critiques the sole application of the “slave labor” designation to Bolivian labor despite what he sees are commonalities with Brazilian work regimes. Although he reiterates the negative repercussions of the garment workshop, he emphasizes the pejorative connotations of “slave labor” discourse that reinforce the stigmatization of the community. In his elected position, one of Luis’ goals is to increase Bolivian access to public spaces of recreation.\footnote{In his successful election campaign to be the conselheiro participativo for Bresser-Móoca district in central São Paulo, Luis promised to address three issues – access to public space; bullying and discrimination; and education opportunities.} In order to supersede the negative associations with the garment workshop, Luis suggests that Bolivians must access public space and garner public visibility. For Luis and other Bolivian migrant elites, migrants’ social mobility is tied to their public visibility as an ethnic group. In their analyses of the
sweatshop, both the municipal government and a Bolivian migrant elite promote migrants’ visibility in the public space.

In the two interviews where Bolivians recurrently referred to the existence of “slave labor” practices in the garment industry, they promoted an alternative vision for migrant social recognition. Primarily, they highlighted the need for social aid, often in opposition to migrants’ current focus on cultural events. Verónica, for example, regarded her six months working in her cousin’s workshop as “slave labor.” Verónica noted that, in addition to poor pay, her cousin withheld employees’ documents and limited employees’ mobility outside the workshop. In our interview, Verónica recurrently focused on Bolivians’ capacity to take advantage of their “own people” for economic gain. Discussing market vendors and dance fraternity organizers at Praça Kantuta, Verónica disdainfully stated, “Where is their patriotism? You are eating from your flag… The majority of people here make money. Patriotism is to do something for your homeland, not by making money on its back or with its name.”

Rather, Verónica wants Bolivians to be recognized by Brazilians not for their folkloric performances but for social services like “opening a center to help Bolivian and other immigrants. That would be beautiful. But who is interested in that?” Similarly, Monica, an elected immigrant representative with no experience working in the garment industry, recurrently mentioned the existence of “slave labor” in order to highlight Bolivians need to provide social services for other migrants. Despite her constant reference to Bolivian “slave labor,” she simultaneously complained that Brazilian media is always “so ready to talk about all the bad things” like migrant “slave labor,” even though “they never talk about Bolivian

38 Verónica (pseudonym), interview by author.
39 Ibid.
Yet, like Verónica, Monica noted that Bolivians turn a significant profit from folkloric performance and never give back through social services. According to Monica, Bolivians “are very closed, they only think of themselves,” and complained that, “we have people who neither know how to speak or write and they come here, sexually violated, people who work in slave labor over the course of three years and do not receive a salary, where are they [Bolivian migrant elites] then?” Among Bolivian migrants, “slave labor” discourse is a subject of significant debate. However, those who most readily deploy “slave labor” to describe migrant labor practices have a different vision for Bolivian emergence in the public sphere – one that highlights social services over and above cultural performance.

Creating “un pedacito de Bolivia”: Vendor Strategies in Praça Kantuta

Since its foundation in 2002, the Bolivian ethnic market of Praça Kantuta has become an important space for Bolivians to garner public visibility and emerge as “appropriate” subjects in São Paulo. The name of “Kantuta” highlights the space as a Bolivian national space by referring to a flower found in the Bolivian altiplano with the same colors as the Bolivian national flag. Open only on Sundays, garment workers’ day off, Praça Kantuta serves as a central locus of sociability for both new migrants and older Bolivian residents. The weekly Sunday market is comprised of approximately 100 stalls selling “traditional” dishes, dry foods, and handicrafts, as well as calling cards, pirated

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40 Rodriguez, interview by author.
41 Ibid.
video games, and hair services. Stalls surround a concrete plaza that is the site of frequent folkloric dance performances and civic celebrations. However, in addition to attracting Bolivian migrants, vendors at Praça Kantuta also curate the market for an audience external to Bolivian migrants. Since its formalization in 2003, Praça Kantuta has attracted a significant number of Brazilian attendees, including researchers. Indeed, Don Carlos, a market founder and vendor, hopes that vendors, through the market, may transcend the negative public image of “Bolivian as drug trafficker and now as garment worker, slave of the garment industry.” Scholars regard Praça Kantuta as a site of migrant visibility and an avenue for migrant dialogue with local Brazilians.

In its origins, Praça Kantuta was an eminently economic endeavor. Don Carlos indicates that market vendors had the “simple intention of selling something, gaining some money” without “any pretense of being a social service” for Bolivian migrants. However, Don Carlos notes that charity raffles are the central part of vendors’ new social orientation. At several events throughout the year including Mother’s Day and Children’s Day, market vendors organize raffles for household appliances like televisions, refrigerators, and stoves. Children can win items like soccer balls and dolls. Entry into the raffle is free and even those who do not win one of the larger raffle items, receive small presents. Wealthy Bolivians and market vendors donate the raffle items and presents distributed at these commemorative events. This type of charity, rather than address Bolivian poverty, insecurity, or exploitation in the garment industry, promotes

42 Although the majority of the market vendors are Bolivians, other nationalities represented include Brazilian and Peruvian. According to my field research, to the consternation of some market vendors, the current president of the association is Brazilian.
43 Soto, interview by author.
44 Ibid.
Bolivian migrants’ access to consumer goods through the patronage of Bolivian migrant elites.

Charity raffles, according to Don Carlos, both distinguish Praça Kantuta from other ethnic markets in the city and garner municipal government support. When vendors began the tradition of charity raffles, transforming the market from purely economic to socially-oriented, was when Don Carlos “went to the association [of market vendors] and said that our market could be better than Liberdade’s market… Now we cannot stop hosting these celebrations, we have to uphold our commitment. Now it is a part [of the market].”

Liberdade refers to both the weekly “Oriental” market and historically Japanese neighborhood in the center of São Paulo. The municipal government officially inaugurated Liberdade as an “Oriental neighborhood” in 1974, investing heavily in neighborhood development to, as noted in a contemporary news article, “intensify the Oriental ambience” as part of a strategy to promote tourism. By the 1980s, the weekly Feira Oriental had over 350 stalls, and in 2007 a newspaper article compared the large crowds at the Sunday market with the streets of Salvador during Carnaval. Don Carlos’ comparison of Praça Kantuta to Liberdade indicates how vendors take cues from other upwardly mobile migrants in the city. Bolivians perceive Japanese immigrant success in Brazil as a product of their ability to spatially inscribe their ethnic identity in São Paulo’s urban space and leverage municipal government resources.

45 Ibid.
Featured in local and international tourism and gastronomy guides, Praça Kantuta is now part of an identified genre of “ethnic-food-sold-in-little-stalls-in-the-street” in São Paulo. By offering weekly folkloric performances and traditional handicrafts, market vendors in Praça Kantuta appeal to the multicultural tastes of paulistanos. Don Carlos notes that, while recent migrants “do not consume much… [only] the minimum necessary,” Brazilians “are the ones who really spend a lot, the Brazilians are the ones who buy handicrafts.” In this way, while Bolivians continue to represent the majority of market attendees, vendors take cues from other upwardly mobile migrant groups in order to attract both Brazilian consumer and municipal government support through the performance of an ethnic Bolivian identity.

Prior to the formalization of Praça Kantuta in 2003, market vendors associated with the Associação Gastronômica Cultural e Folclórica Boliviana Padre Bento ran an informal market in the Plaza of Padre Bento that was shut down in response to neighborhood complaints. As related by Sidney da Silva, neighbors accused Bolivians of “dirtying the locale, attracting criminals and drug trafficking.” Residents posted a sign that read, “The plaza is ours! We demand respect. We have been here for more than 100 years.” Neighbors noted that the space already had an “‘owner’ and the ‘legitimate’ users had decided to re-establish the ‘order’ and ‘tranquility’ that ‘they’ (Bolivians) took away.” This episode highlights resident prejudice against Bolivians given their association with informality. The neighborhood has long been associated with Italian

49 Soto, interview by author.
51 Ibid.
migration since the turn of the twentieth century. Padre Bento, in fact, was formerly the locale for Italian immigrants to reunite on the weekends and dance the tarantella, a folk dance from southern Italy. Importantly, neighbors contest Bolivians’ use of the plaza not through the discourse of Brazilian nationality but rather, by claiming their own legitimacy as long-time European immigrant residents in the neighborhood. As Bolivian vendors moved the market, they were concerned with becoming the “legitimate” owners of an ethnic space. Baptizing the plaza in the name of “Kantuta” was one of several strategies for vendors to construct a Bolivian ethnic space in the city.

The deliberate strategies adopted by vendors in the transition to market formalization offer a unique opportunity to examine the construction of space in which Bolivians could emerge as “appropriate” subjects in the city. In the central neighborhood of Pari, Praça Kantuta is located a half mile from the Armênia metro stop, a short ride from Praça de Sé, the city’s central plaza. Neighborhoods like Pari, once the leisure space of 19th century paulistano elites, are now a destination for newer migrants seeking cheaper rent and are easily accessible through public transportation. In addition to its location in a neighborhood with a significant Bolivian population and its proximity to the metro station, Bolivian market vendors chose the site of Praça Kantuta because it was removed from residential buildings and any neighbors that might contest Bolivians’ presence. At the end of a lightly-trafficked corridor, the ethnic market no longer suffers from interferences by traffic or neighbors. Yet, the neighborhood is also run-down and, during the week, a homeless population inhabits the plaza. Consequently, although market vendors successfully installed a long-standing market in the plaza, the space itself limits their ability to attract a larger Brazilian public and other would-be consumers.
Praça Kantuta’s isolation is in stark contrast to the location of Rua Coimbra in the bustling multicultural garment district easily accessible through the Bresser-Mooca and Brás metro stops. Rua Coimbra’s weekly market was only recently formalized in 2014. In order to attend Rua Coimbra, visitors must pass through heavily-congested streets and the commotion of a constantly fluctuating hive of working-class consumers, informal street vendors, and patrolling policemen. Rolnik notes that Praça Kantuta is intended more for an outside audience, while Coimbra is oriented toward Bolivians. However, both Brazilians and Bolivians perceive Rua Coimbra as a dangerous locale connected to a number of recent violent episodes including stabbings, rapes, and murders. The isolation of Praça Kantuta, by contrast, facilitates both a physical and imagined separation from urban spaces of squalor, violence, and informality. In this neutral and controlled space, a seemingly intangible Bolivian identity may congeal into a commodity easily and safely accessed by Brazilian consumers.

In his work on UNESCO cultural heritage sites, John Collins describes a process of enclosure whereby intangible identity congeals into a “composite, alienable good” that may be appropriated and exploited. Defining culture as an object possessed by a community, heritage projects, according to Collins, “fuse peoples, in the form of symbolic yet living human ancestors, and restored landscapes as one tightly packaged resource.” Similarly, vendors fuse Bolivian bodies and cultural practices within the enclosed space of Praça Kantuta in order to commodify a profitable ethnonational

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53 Iara Rolnik Xavier, Brazilian sociologist, interview by author, June 23, 2014.
54 Rodriguez, interview by author.
56 Ibid., 124.
identity for Brazilian consumption in the multicultural marketplace. In his work, Collins cautions against regarding culture as “a panacea that masquerades as a form of property.” Rather, commodified culture masks a set of relations, “that reflect and condense existing political economic systems,” and is open to appropriation and alienation. In the case of Bolivian migrants, even as they strategically deploy a commodified ethnonational identity to emerge as citizens in São Paulo, Praça Kantuta diverts attention from the migrants’ connection to the informal market and, thereby, conceals migrants’ social relations of production.

Despite the significant number of Latin American migrants in São Paulo, market vendors in Praça Kantuta have dismissed opportunities to form a Latin American market and, rather, continue to emphasize a unified Bolivian ethnonational identity. Indeed, Don Carlos notes that to mix the Bolivian market with, “Mexicans, Peruvians, Colombians, Ecuadorians would undo the market, it would lose its identity.” Despite vendors’ unwillingness to form a pan-ethnic market, vendors of different national origins are allowed to sell in the market. According to the market association’s constitution, in lieu of restrictions on vendors’ national origins, they must demonstrate commodities sold are Bolivian. According to Don Carlos, “if it is food, it needs to be Bolivian food. If it is handicrafts, it needs to be Bolivian because our market is of Bolivian things. [Market vendors] could be Brazilian, Chinese, or Japanese but the product sold must be Bolivian.” Vendors’ prioritization of Bolivian commodities over market vendors’ national origins is important in two primary regards. First, the national identity of the

57 Ibid., 130.
58 Soto, interview by author.
59 Ibid.
market is, ultimately, recognized through consumption. Second, although Bolivian migrants are central to garment production for Brazilian consumption in São Paulo, market vendors specifically link market commodities to their production in Bolivia. In this way, by emphasizing commodities’ production in Bolivia, vendors uncouple the Praça Kantuta from the migrant community’s local production in São Paulo’s informal market.

Likewise, vendors’ attention to hygiene practices facilitates Brazilian consumption and cleanses the market’s associations with informality. Don Carlos claims that the standardization of vendor hygiene training and practices was the single most important transformation since the market was legalized in 2002. According to Don Carlos, “now no one gets sick at the market… so it has improved for market visitors, for the client, for those who consume.” Additionally, he notes that the expanded size of standardized stalls accommodates consumers and the sale of traditional Bolivian foods like *salteñas*, soup-filled empanadas. In Praça Kantuta, food vendors have two units – one to prepare food and one to seat clients. As seating overlooks the central square, consumers are encouraged to spend time eating while enjoying frequent folkloric performances in the central square. With these changes, market vendors “improved the space, hygiene, presentation, [and] control of food quality.” Vendors’ attention to market uniformity and hygiene is indicative of anxieties over the community’s association with informality and is a strategic attempt to construct a public space cleansed of negative associations and marketed to Brazilian consumers. In this way, through Praça Kantuta, Bolivians become simultaneously visible and neatly contained.

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60 Ibid.
61 Ibid.
Visible to the majority of stalls, leisure activities in the central square are at the heart of the market. The frequent folkloric dance performances, Bolivian civic celebrations, and annual festivals attract Bolivian and Brazilian spectators alike.

According to Don Carlos, market vendors assumed a moral responsibility through the market to show “our cultural trajectory… performances of music, folklore, and dance are strong in our plaza and the Brazilian public and people from all over the world come to see our plaza.” In addition to attracting consumers, market vendors use cultural performances to leverage government funds. Describing his proposals to district government, Don Carlos says:

> With all the folkloric performances, it is worthwhile to invest, [the deputy mayor] will invest, he will redevelop the plaza, he will redevelop, he will move [the homeless] to another location…. the municipal police will take care of the plaza because [now] every Sunday we arrive with a truck filled with water to wash the mess that smells bad. You have to wash it because a plaza that serves food has to be hygienic… I believe that the municipal government will clean it every Sunday.

Market vendors use culture as a resource to be leveraged for financial investment. While private investors and market vendors covered market costs, vendors now are specifically attracting local government funds. Moreover, Don Carlos imagines an active role for local government. In addition to the provision of a range of services supporting infrastructure and hygiene, the state would provide security services to control who can access the plaza. Here, Bolivian market vendors use performances of an ethnonational identity to attract Brazilian consumers and the municipal government for economic and

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62 Ibid.
63 Ibid.
political profit. Vendors hope to emerge as “acceptable” citizens governed by the São Paulo municipal government. To do so, they align the market with government standards, emphasize an ethnic identity, and sanitize the space from negative associations of informality.

**Representations of Space: Praça Kantuta and the Brazilian Gaze**

Since Praça Kantuta’s foundation, increased media coverage has greatly diversified market attendees. By 2006, one article notes that Kantuta, the “piece of Bolivia in São Paulo’s capital,” has now “turned into a tourist attraction.” Often Brazilian articles on Praça Kantuta are published in gastronomy or tourism sections and target an audience with, in the words of Brazilian journalists Maurício Moraes and Gabriela Longman, “adventurous palates” and “anthropological curiosity.” Likewise, published in a number of online guides, Praça Kantuta was featured in the local complement to one of the most important national weekly magazines, *Veja São Paulo*, in a tour guide of “the São Paulo the tourist does not know.” As part of an identified genre of “ethnic-food-sold-in-little-stalls-in-the-street,” published articles attract Brazilian

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65 Ibid.
consumers by focusing on ethnic difference as reflected in commodities, bodies, and space.  

Media coverage frames Praça Kantuta as a Bolivian national territory, “a little piece of Bolivia installed in the heart of São Paulo,” and market vendors joke that Brazilians “are the foreigners here.” As noted in one article, “if São Paulo cannot go to the Andes, the Andes will come to São Paulo,” where all products sold are from Bolivia and all food is prepared according to “ancient” practices. Appealing to the multicultural tastes of paulistanos, news articles emphasize the market’s ability to transport consumers to Bolivia where they can “obtain the Bolivian diploma.” One article describes the spatial transition into the market:

Heading towards Rua Pedro Vicente, where the market begins, the air is full of the sweet smell of boiling mocochinche, a beverage made with dried peaches, cloves, cinnamon, and sugar. Fried chicken on grills in the street erects a smokescreen that dissipates to exhibit the movement of Andean faces. The visitor must traverse a spatial, albeit transitory, boundary demarcated by smoke, the smell of strange food, and racialized faces in order to enter into a Bolivian territory. Similarly, as one journalist describes his emergence from the nearby metro stop, he notes that, “all around him are people with slightly slanted eyes, dark skin, dark and shiny hair. All of them speak Spanish. Here, I am the foreigner.” The significant number of

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68 Longman, “Comida.”
71 Longman, “Comida.”
Bolivians who attend the weekly market bolsters the authenticity of this space. Articles note that nearly two thousand Bolivians attend the weekly market day and that 90 percent of market attendees are Bolivian.\textsuperscript{74} Interestingly, this figure differs markedly from Don Carlo’s estimate that 40 percent of all weekly visitors are Brazilian. While market vendors focus on the attendance of Brazilian consumers, Brazilian media gauges the market’s authenticity based on the concentration of racialized bodies.

**Beyond the Planned Market: Bolivian Migrant Spatial Practice**

The presence of recent Bolivian migrants is necessary to the economic and political projects of the market vendors. Praça Kantuta appeals to both the São Paulo municipal government and the Brazilian consumer public by offering a privileged window into the life of an ethnic community that has come to epitomize precarious labor in the global economy. Importantly, however, while the consumption of “traditional” goods facilitates Brazilian attendees “authentic” experience, recent Bolivian migrants do not have the same capacity to consume. Indeed, although the presence of recent Bolivian migrants is essential for the market, recent migrants do not have the same access as Brazilian consumers, nor do they gain the same economic and political dividends as market vendors. In this way, recent Bolivian migrants are made visible to the Brazilian public through their enclosure in the space of Praça Kantuta and, in turn, market vendors exploit the value of culture embodied by recent Bolivian migrants.

Yet, rather than solely a folkloric performance for an outside audience, recent migrants actively use the space of Praça Kantuta to meet their own needs and desires. Recent migrants can buy dry goods from Bolivia, international calling cards, and pirated

\textsuperscript{74} Ibid.
videos, as well as participate in activities like foosball and soccer games. Although joining a folkloric dance group is generally limited to wealthier Bolivians, with yearly entry fees upwards of one thousand US dollars, such performances, annual festivals, and civic celebrations offer recent migrants a place to, as noted by Don Carlos, “reminisce about Bolivia, feel like they are in Bolivia… and to meet girlfriends, fiancées.”75 In this way, Praça Kantuta strengthens social networks and the incidence of marriage based on national identifications for recent migrants. Although market vendors specifically engage recent migrants through leisure activities, Praça Kantuta is a critical site for recent migrants to find employment in the informal garment industry. Seeking new employees, a mass of workshop owners congregate directly outside the entrance to the plaza. Flanking the exit, workshop owners selectively disperse the job announcements hidden behind their backs to those who physically appear Bolivian. Despite the commotion caused by a congregation of bodies, activities linked to the informal garment industry are hidden to non-Bolivian market attendees. Even as market vendors attempt to cleanse Praça Kantuta from its connections to informality, recent migrants and garment workshops appropriate Praça Kantuta in order to facilitate informal labor configurations in the garment industry. Indeed, market vendors’ focus on leisure activities and national performance diverts attention from, rather than transforms, the material base of the community.

Conclusion

A conjoined analysis of the two dominant Bolivian migrant social spaces in São Paulo – the sweatshop and the ethnic market – highlights both the opportunities and

75 Soto, interview by author.
limitations of the ethnic market as a space for Bolivian migrant emergence in São Paulo. Media and government exposés since the launch of the National Plan for the Eradication of Slavery have highlighted the existence of modern labor exploitation and generated important public dialogues on the issue. While “slave labor” discourse is a powerful critique of exploitation, the disproportionate focus on urban Bolivian “slave labor” may reinforce migrants’ alterity as indigenous and anti-modern. However, by and large, migrant contestation of “slave labor” discourse also appears to uphold a Bolivian migrant elite discourse that attempts to erase issues of labor and production from Bolivians’ public image. Despite these discordant voices, migrant criticism of the sweatshop aligns with the interests of the municipal government to make Bolivians visible to the state. To this end, a Bolivian migrant elite consolidates a new space of Bolivian subject formation – the ethnic market.

In comparison to the fragmented and insulated space of the sweatshop, the ethnic market offers Bolivians an opportunity to insert themselves in the Brazilian public sphere. While Bolivian sweatshops came to epitomize precarious labor in the global economy, Bolivian market vendors fashion visible and active Bolivian subjects through the ethnic market of Praça Kantuta. As vendors garner visibility through Praça Kantuta, Brazilian consumers, researchers, and the municipal government perceive Bolivians as a unified group with collective interests. Market vendors’ emphasis on displaying an ethnonational identity through folkloric performance, takes cues from other upwardly-mobile migrant groups in utilizing ethnicity to garner municipal government resources and recognition.
However, the market has its own limitations. For market vendors to profit economically and politically, they designed a space that appeals to the tastes of paulistano consumers and aligned with government regulations. To do so, market vendors pursued a diverse set of strategies in tandem with the market’s formalization in 2002. These strategies included the market’s relocation to a relatively isolated urban space, the regulation that commodities sold are produced in Bolivia, and the adoption of a standardized set of hygiene practices. In tandem, these strategies construct a contained space of exchange and consumption that is cleansed of any negative associations to Bolivian labor exploitation in the informal garment industry. Additionally, these strategies facilitate the enclosure of a seemingly intangible Bolivian cultural identity within Praça Kantuta. Market vendors, then, are able to exploit this commodified Bolivian ethnic identity for political and economic profit.

Yet, as illustrated by the hidden practice of garment worker recruitment in Praça Kantuta, political and economic profits accrue differentially to the established Bolivian migrant elite versus the recent migrant garment workers. Indeed, as a Bolivian migrant elite sheds migrants’ negative associations to informality, Praça Kantuta strengthens and reproduces recent migrants’ labor configurations within São Paulo’s exploitative garment industry. Therefore, as the market consolidates economic and political power for market vendors through the spatial insertion of Bolivians in the Brazilian public sphere, the larger community’s labor exploitation is masked rather than superseded.
Chapter Two
The Claims of Bolivian National Patrimony

This chapter analyzes the intersection between Bolivian cultural displays and migrant political agendas in order to address the emergence of migrant ethnic political subjects in São Paulo. In the previous chapter, I analyzed how market vendors mobilize national identification to paper over intra-community class dynamics and divert attention from exploitative labor practices in the garment industry. While this chapter examines public displays of an ethnonational identity as a point of departure to interrogate migrant politics, class remains integral to this analysis. Event organizers and dance group participants are more established and financially-secure than Bolivians working in the garment industry. Like market vendors, they are invested in changing the Brazilian public image by emphasizing national culture and leisure activities over issues of labor and production. By displaying indigenous cultural heritage, a Bolivian migrant elite upholds municipal government priorities of social inclusion and multiculturalism in order to emerge as meritorious citizens. In this chapter, I argue that national identification is the privileged form of migrant elite claims-making and that culture, as the objectified content of a national community, is mobilized as the vehicle for migrant citizenship in São Paulo.

Informed by scholarship on culture as a political resource for marginalized populations, this chapter demonstrates how migrants mobilize culture to bolster claims for political and social inclusion in São Paulo. As accelerated globalization pluralizes the contact between people, George Yúdice argues that, “culture is increasingly wielded as a
resource for both sociopolitical and economic amelioration.”¹ According to Yúdice, as group assertion of cultural difference becomes politically expedient in claims for recognition and resources, “the content of culture recedes in importance as the usefulness of the claim to difference as a warrant gains legitimacy.”² Yet, this chapter indicates how, rather than an unqualified resource for “community” empowerment, culture is managed by a migrant elite for strategic interests. Ironically, the very cultural displays that reflect ideals of social inclusion are financed in large part by money generated in the exploitative garment industry. Despite the high incidence of intra-community labor exploitation, cultural displays consolidate migrant elites’ claim to represent Bolivian migrants in São Paulo. By maintaining sight of how class is embedded in cultural displays, this chapter explores how culture may simultaneously expand migrant access to political participation while reinforcing inequalities.

Beginning with an historical analysis of Bolivian national patrimony, I focus on the mobilization of indigenous identities by marginalized communities to garner greater political inclusion in the Bolivian nation-state. Moving my analysis to the context of São Paulo, I explore contemporary immigrant activist and municipal government discourse, as well as current initiatives, to expand migrants’ access to institutional channels of political participation. Migrant demands are often made through the discourse of universal citizenship. Rather than a juridical status, universal citizenship is based on concepts of universal human rights and, in practice, demands that migrants are afforded equal rights regardless of legal status while emphasizing local contributions to the city. The next two sections explore the discourse and performance of migrant ethnonational

¹ Yúdice, The Expediency of Culture, 9.
² Ibid., 23.
identities. In discourse, advocacy organizations frame culture as a medium for intercultural dialogue, mutual recognition, and communal transcendence. Through cultural events, Bolivian migrants mobilize an ethnonational identity to negotiate their relationship with the municipal government and support political projects of migrant voting rights and Latin American regional integration. As Bolivians garner greater visibility, Bolivians become the public face of regional immigration and Bolivian migrant elites become interlocutors between the municipal government and migrants. Finally, I address the limitations of mobilizing an essentialist, traditional Bolivian indigenous identity as a vehicle to produce modern Bolivian citizens in São Paulo.

**Bolivian National Patrimony in Historical Perspective**

Over time, Bolivian indigenous communities have strategically used their symbolic status in the national imaginary to negotiate greater political inclusion. Indigenous communities were indispensable to nation-building, as well as a source of elite anxiety over the limits of national development and modernity. In the aftermath of Bolivia’s 1899 Civil War, Creole elites constructed an ideal Indian identity that simultaneously upheld an Incan national past and marginalized contemporary Aymara communities. In this context, Aymara elites adopted an Incan identity to negotiate a space for themselves within the liberal political project and emerge as “authentic” representatives of the nation.³ Anthropologist Daniel Goldstein demonstrates how, under the military government of General René Barrientos Ortuño (1964-69), the Bolivian state nationalized popular culture in order to “extend national dominion over the most public

and performative elements of indigenous popular culture, thereby fostering national consolidation and defining the Bolivian state itself as the legitimate representative of that totality. In fact, Presidential Decree 08396 declared folk music property of the state and founded the Department of Folklore. As indigenous communities gained symbolic status by being incorporated into Bolivian national patrimony, they simultaneously became, “our Indians” – perceived as an object under the purview of the Bolivian state.

Yet, the nationalization of popular culture facilitated indigenous communities’ claims to rights and resources through the display of national patrimony. During the 1970s, the rise of indigenous-based political parties in Bolivia mirrored the rise of Aymara highland cultural forms in national folkloric performance. The growing popularity of indigenous dances associated with Oruro’s Carnaval among a Bolivian urban elite was bolstered by the 2001 UNESCO designation of Oruro as a Masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity. Since UNESCO’s designation, the annual festival has become a strategic site for state-sponsored displays of national unity through indigenous cultural diversity for an international audience, increasingly performed by an

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4 Daniel Goldstein, “Performing National Culture in a Bolivian Migrant Community,” Ethnology 37, no. 2 (Spring 1998), 117. Subsequent decrees outlined the role of the Department of Folklore in documenting popular culture and sponsoring folkloric performances.


6 Kuenzli, Acting Inca, 125-126.
elite class.\(^7\) Even so, with the election of President Evo Morales, indigenous peoples gained unprecedented access to political office and were key agents in the radical reconfiguration of state and citizenship under the 2009 Constitution. In plurinational Bolivia, anthropologist Carwil Bjork-James notes, “indigenous peoples have joined the agenda, but they continue to also be the folklore.”\(^8\) Even as the performance of indigenous identities historically has served to legitimize state power, it also created a space for indigenous political claims-making.

Within this historical trajectory, migrants’ decontextualized mobilization of Bolivian culture for political ends in São Paulo functions under a parallel logic. In lieu of a claim to national patrimony, Bolivian migrants appeal to national belonging within a Latin American region. With the “pink tide” of post-neoliberal governments in Latin America, regional integration is framed as an ethical priority and counter-strategy to Latin American dependency and the capitalist US empire.\(^9\) While the institutionalization of regional cultural policies have lagged in relation to the adoption of economic integration through Mercosur, Bolivian migrants frame cultural performances as part of both local and regional projects of integration.\(^10\) Appealing to a politically propitious regional identification through the performance of indigeneity, migrants simultaneously

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\(^7\) Ibid., 124. With high fees to join dance groups, as well as the cost of elaborate costumes, participation today is largely limited to Bolivians with higher socioeconomic status despite the festival’s roots as a popular street festival. University students and wealthy merchants are a significant constituency of participants in indigenous cultural events.

\(^8\) Carwil Bjork-James, “Claiming Space, Redefining Politics: Urban Protest and Grassroots Power in Bolivia” (PhD diss., City University of New York, 2013), 256.

\(^9\) Ibid., 245.

\(^10\) For more on the contemporary politics of cultural integration in Latin America, see Néstor García Canclini, _Consumers and Citizens_.
map themselves onto the coordinates of Brazil’s African/European/Indian racial triad as they negotiate their social and political inclusion in São Paulo.

“Aqui vivo, Aqui voto”: Migrant Demands for Citizenship Rights

Current immigrant rights’ political campaigns emphasize migrants’ universal human rights and local contributions to São Paulo. The Social Forum of Human Rights and Migrant Integration, a coalition of civil society organizations, launched the “Aqui vivo, Aqui voto” or “I live here, I vote here” campaign in 2014. The campaign supports the proposed constitutional amendment PEC 347 granting immigrants with more than 4 years residency the right to vote in federal, state, and local elections. Further, the campaign demands a paradigm shift from national security to universal human rights with the overhaul of the comprehensive immigration law adopted during Brazil’s civil-military dictatorship. Manifest in its slogan, the campaign argues that migrants’ right to vote is gained through their committed interaction with and contributions to local space.

In their attempt to expand migrant access to formal political mechanisms, immigrant activists utilize and strengthen democratic channels of political participation with the municipal administration. The First Municipal Conference on Immigrant Policy held in 2013, a coordinated effort between the municipal government and community groups, delineated policy proposals for implementation at the municipal, state, and federal levels. The 57 final proposals were the result of a laborious process beginning
with the submission of 463 proposals in public forums held throughout the city.\footnote{Documento final da 1ª Conferência Municipal de Política para Imigrantes de São Paulo,” (São Paulo: 1ª Conferência Municipal de Política para Imigrantes de São Paulo, December 2013).} The final report notes:

The city of São Paulo was and is constructed by migrants of diverse origins. That cosmopolitan history needs to translate into effective public policies that recognize all of its inhabitants as full citizens… Citizenship defines who has rights within a particular country… Even if immigrants have their economic, social, and cultural rights guaranteed it is only the right to vote that would enable them to be effectively recognized as full citizens.\footnote{Ibid., 51.}

In this way, citizenship is gained through contributions to the local space of the city and is defined by the recognition of rights, chief among them the right to vote. The employed concept of citizenship does not imply sole allegiance to the Brazilian state as demonstrated through naturalization. Here, citizenship focuses on securing state protection of pre-existing universal human rights that transcend the nation-state.

While immigrant services, activism, and policy recommendations were long under the purview of non-profit organizations funded by the government, the current administration is increasing contact between the municipal government and immigrant activists. Elected in 2012, Mayor Fernando Haddad of the Workers’ Party and his administration delineated a series of goals to strengthen civil society participation in public policy deliberations. In 2013, the administration instituted the City Department of Human Rights and Citizenship with an office for migration policy whose mission is to articulate public policy and, according to their website, “work closely with social movements, universities, and various levels of public administration in order to build a
city that strives towards universal citizenship." These new offices are undertaking a number of new initiatives including the coordination of the First Municipal Conference on Immigrant Policy. Luis Vasquez, president of a Bolivian business association, notes that, “there is no other part of political power in Brazil where there exists a part of government that is the interlocutor between immigrants and public power.”

In 2014, the Haddad administration gave immigrant residents the right to vote and to be elected for positions within the Conselho Participativo Municipal, a civil society body of elected members providing oversight and recommendations for government projects on the district level. As noted in the introduction, with over four hundred votes, Luis Vasquez was the most voted candidate in the elections. Of the twenty elected immigrant conselheiros, the majority was Bolivian. Although immigrant conselheiros only represent a very small percentage of the 1,113 conselheiros citywide, it is the first time immigrants, documented or otherwise, were given the right to vote for elected office in the city. The simultaneous launch of “Aqui vivo, Aqui voto” with the first election of immigrant conselheiros indicates activists’ strategic use of new local political spheres to garner national rights. As immigrant activists and the municipal government collaborate in these initiatives, they are fully aware of their role in pioneering migration policy nationally. In order to garner public recognition of collective rights, community organizations like the Centro de Apoio ao Migrante (CAMI) and the municipal government promote the cultural contributions of migrants to the cosmopolitan city of

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14 Vasquez, interview by author.
São Paulo in displays of ethnonational identification. Migrants’ ethnonational culture becomes a legitimizing vehicle for claims to citizenship in the city.

**Ethnonational Culture as Communal Transcendence**

Immigrant activist discourse in São Paulo strives toward creating an inclusive immigrant community with collective demands while fostering ethnonational particularities. Indeed, immigrant-serving organizations regard ethnonational culture as the medium through which migrants perceive and foster communal bonds. Organizations, like CAMI, promote universal citizenship and immigrant integration through services, political organizing, and cultural events. In addition to integration services of legal aid and Portuguese-language, professionalization, and computer classes, CAMI organizes an annual march and the Festival of Immigrant Music and Poetry. The stated mission of CAMI’s bimonthly newsletter, “Nosotros Imigrantes,” is to provide “a means of communication that can be the voice of the communities and that… will continue to work towards the integration of the immigrant community. The idea is to print in these pages the essence of [migrant] community life.” In their newspaper, CAMI relates the existence of an immigrant community and, through the self-conscious creation of a collective readership, attempts to enact an immigrant collectivity. Throughout the newsletter’s thirteen editions, universal citizenship as a goal is recurrently mentioned to emphasize immigrant commonality and frame government bureaucracy and political borders as illogical. In an article on an event called “Faith and Life,” Father Alfredo

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15 CAMI was founded in 2005 by the *Serviço Pastoral dos Migrantes*, an organization connected to Scalabrinian Fathers, a religious congregation originally founded in Italy.
Gonçalves of the *Serviço Pastoral dos Migrantes* addressed an audience of seventy Latin American migrants, including “Argentine, Chilean, Paraguayan, Peruvian, and a majority Bolivian youths,” asking the crowd, “Was anyone here born with a passport? No, so, we are all children of the same God because for Him there does not exist a foreigner.”\(^{17}\)

Often employing a universalist discourse based on religion, the CAMI newsletter denaturalizes the nation-state and national differentiation. With clear political intentions to enlarge the rights and resources available to immigrants, this discourse also performs and enacts an immigrant community with collective interests.

The coverage of CAMI’s 2012 Festival of Immigrant Music and Poetry in the organization’s newsletter highlights a tension between critiquing the nation and national identities while essentializing migrant ethnic identity, performed as national. The article states:

> To confront being uprooted [immigrants] are clinging to their traditional music in order to preserve their identity in a foreign country... music like migration... upsets the supposed ‘certainties’ of national cultures and ethnicities from the margins of these cultures. Music is an audible example, along with language, of collective solidarity and of common ascendancy. Whatever happens with music, migrants are able to retain through it their distinct ethnic identities.\(^{18}\)

Conflating concepts of nation and culture, the article suggests that music and cultural performance is a universal language that enables intercultural and transnational mutual recognition and collective solidarity. While the article proposes that migrants are actively contesting the foundations of a Brazilian national culture, it also implies that migrant identity is something possessed – an innate essence to be displayed and preserved. Music


and cultural performance, then, simultaneously solidify migrant nationalized ethnic identity while demonstrating the possibility of communal transcendence.

Bolivian migrants display an essentialized ethnonational identity linked to a naturalized territory of the Bolivian nation-state and imbued with the discourse of cultural diversity. Likewise, Bolivian culture is made relational to other migrant cultures while unified identification draws energy from the contiguous territory of Latin America. In an article celebrating the 187th anniversary of Bolivian national independence, the Bolivian nation is territorially rooted in relation to other nations, “next to Chile, the northern [border] with Brazil, the eastern [border] with Paraguay and Brazil, the southern [border] with Argentina and very close to Peru, in the center, of our America morena.”

The article goes on to celebrate and root Bolivian diversity in the landscape of a national territory:

In the very heart [of Latin America] there exists a people who are gente buena, humble, and hard-working, a courageous people with natural wealth unlike anyone else, a people with an immense Amazon, beautiful valleys and forests, imposing snow-capped mountains like Illimani, admirable resources like our Salar de Uyuni, a country of fertile and productive earth, of an immense culture… a land of myths, legends, and traditions, where aymaras, quechuas, chipayas, guaraníes, mosetenes, araoñas, cambas, kolas [sic], chapacos are FREE and enrich our history.

In this article, Bolivian cultural diversity – a mix of indigenous and regional identities – is mapped onto and draws energy from national geographic and ecological diversity. The territorialization of a Bolivian national identity, moreover, is done relationally to other nation-states. At the heart of a geographic and racialized space of Latin America,

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20 Ibid.
Bolivians emphasize their cultural particularity to assert their inclusion within, as well as centrality to, a larger cultural imaginary of a Latin American identity.

**Ethnonational Culture as Political Resource**

Despite the wealth of literature on the symbolic meanings and historical roots of Bolivian cultural performances and rituals, fewer works address the contemporary political effects of Bolivian cultural performance. Instead, this literature has emphasized group cohesion as enacted through the “collective effervescence” of dance and performance, while suggesting a continuity of cultural traditions between the pre-colonial and post-colonial period. In so doing, literature on Bolivian cultural performance has contributed to the reification of essentialized notions of indigenous community and identity. Interjecting into this body of scholarship, anthropologist Sian Lazar analyzes dance as an embodied practice of citizenship among urban Aymara migrants in El Alto. Indicating how dance enacts a “relational self” that is imbricated in networks of social relations, Lazar notes that “even at the most intense time of collective effervescence individual vecinos experience their collective identity through distinctiveness and hierarchy.”

In addition, rather than a continuity of traditions, anthropologist Sidney da Silva notes that the performance of *Alasitas*, a precolonial Aymara religious tradition, transforms with rural to urban migration. Over time, *Ekeko*, the central figure of *Alasitas* and the god of abundance, has adopted the clothes of a *cholo*, an urban Indian, and gained powers as a provider of consumer goods.

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21 Lazar, 130.
Likewise, in the case of São Paulo, even as Bolivian cultural displays portray a unified national identity and claim authenticity through tradition, they reinforce intra-community social relations and transform alongside contextual exigencies. Prior to 2006, a Bolivian migrant elite organized devotional and commemorative events in collaboration with the Serviço Pastoral dos Migrantes at the Igreja Nossa Senhora da Paz. In 2006, “successful Bolivians, small business owners, men of initiative and leadership” founded the Associação Cultural de Grupos e Conjuntos Folclóricos Bolívia/Brasil to organize cultural events in public spaces like Praça Kantuta and the Memorial da América Latina. According to Sidney da Silva, the change in space “divided the opinions of Bolivians.” For some, events lost their devotional character and became simply a folkloric spectacle and, for others, the new space enabled migrants to garner greater visibility as events, in the words of Silva, “were created for an outside audience… to create a channel of dialogue with the local context.” Additionally, festivals associated with regional groups, previously celebrated on different dates and by different constituencies, unified as events occupied São Paulo public space. For example, as noted by Silva, while the celebration for the Virgin of Copacabana, the national patroness, previously reunited pACEñOS, “the majority of them owners of garment workshops,” the celebration for the Virgin of Urkupiña, the patroness of Cochabamba, reunited cochABAMBINOS, “generally, liberal professionals and small business owners.” Although Silva argues that the unification of festivals in the celebration of Bolivian independence

25 Ibid., 22.
26 Ibid., 25.
“had an equalizing effect from the social point view, since, in theory, all Bolivians are invited to participate,” participation in dance fraternities remains socially segmented and accessible to those with financial resources to pay expensive entry fees.
Figure 4 Morenada dance fraternity during the dress rehearsal for the 2015 Bolivian Independence Day celebration held at the Memorial da América Latina. Photo taken by author.
Figure 5: New member of *Tinkus Jaira* is initiated into the fraternity before her first performance in the Bolivian Independence Day celebration. Photo taken by author.
Currently, the Associação Cultural de Grupos e Conjuntos Folclóricos is comprised of fourteen dance fraternities. These dance fraternities, each connected to a fraternity in Bolivia, represent a number of popular dances including Caporales, Diablada, Morenada, and Tinku. The most popular dance in the association is the Morenada, regarded both in São Paulo and Bolivia as the most prestigious and expensive dance. The Morenada dance is most frequently interpreted as representing the march of African slaves or morenos to the mines of Potosí. In addition to dancers wearing bejeweled suits and large masks of exaggerated black faces, other male and female dancers use the matraca, a noise-making machine whose shape represents an aspect of group identity. For example, garment workshop owners might have a matraca in the shape of a sewing machine.\textsuperscript{27} According to my informant Verónica, the cost of participation in established Morenada or Caporales dance fraternities in São Paulo is upwards of three thousand reais or, approximately, one thousand US dollars. While Verónica indicated that the Morenada has become “the dance with the most economic power,” social class also segments participation in other dances.\textsuperscript{28} For example, Verónica notes that participants in Caporales, representing the dance of slave overseers, are largely from the “upper middle-class.”\textsuperscript{29} While all Bolivian migrants are now invited as spectators at these events, participation in folkloric dance fraternities is an indicator of social class in São Paulo. Indeed, as a Bolivian migrant elite organized cultural events in São Paulo public space, they performed a unified national, over regional, identity.

\textsuperscript{27} Alicia Carmona, “Bailaremos: Participation in Morenada Dance Fraternities among Bolivian Immigrants in Argentina,” (PhD diss., New York University, 2008), 213. 
\textsuperscript{28} Verónica (pseudonym), interview by author. 
\textsuperscript{29} Ibid.
Moreover, social class remains embedded within the articulation and structure of national performances.

The cultural and social significance of dance fraternities and folkloric performance is not wholly new to the São Paulo context. In El Alto, Bolivia, Lazar notes that, “when dancing, the women wear their best and most expensive gold earrings and brooches. In their new polleras and shawls and dripping with gold, the Morenada dancers underline their commercial success.” 30 Since the 1980s, elites in Bolivia have increasingly participated in national folkloric performances, most notably in the annual Carnaval in Oruro. Historian Gabrielle Kuenzli indicates that, “while the university student population makes up the majority of these new ‘indigenous’ folkloric dance groups, wealthy merchants constitute a significant part of the others.” 31 Further, he argues that through folkloric performance and the presentation of an idealized indigenous culture, a Bolivian migrant elite constructs and defines “preferred” Indian identities. 32 Moreover, just as is the case with Bolivian migrants in São Paulo, the social organization of dance fraternities reinforces social networks and, as noted by anthropologist Alicia Carmona in the case of migrants in Buenos Aires, enables individuals to “insert themselves into leadership positions, becoming brokers that ‘represent’ their and other ‘Bolivian’ groups before state organisms.” 33

Certain dance fraternities in São Paulo, like Tinkus Jaira, offer lower entry fees and, therefore, are accessible to greater diversity of Bolivian migrants. Tinku, through dancers’ outfits and dance movements, is thought to be more characteristically “Indian”

30 Lazar, 134.
31 Kuenzli, 124.
32 Ibid., 122.
33 Carmona, 204.
and represents a ritualistic battle from the region of Potosí. In my field research, members of Tinkus Jaira, a new dance fraternity in São Paulo affiliated with a group in Oruro, expressed their motivation to dance as a way to express cultural pride and as a diversion from a heavy workload. Like many members of Tinkus Jaira, Verónica had no prior experience dancing Tinku in Bolivia but chose the group based on financial cost and despite her aesthetic preference for the more popular Morenada. However, the entry fees of close to one thousand US dollars for Morenada groups ensure that class and professional occupation delimit participation. Comparing Tinkus Jaira to other fraternities, Verónica notes the cost of participation and the physical appearance of dancers who are, “tall, skinny, very beautiful… You see the difference between groups not only based on skin color but also on the color of their bills.” Here, Veronica addresses overlapping race and class markers by emphasizing the differential buying power of the US dollar, the Bolivian bolivianos or the Brazilian reais.

In São Paulo, the Aymara religious festival of Alasitas and the Bolivian Independence Day festival have gained important local significance in garnering new spheres for migrant political participation. In fact, the celebration of Alasitas aligns with the anniversary of São Paulo and, in 2015, was officially sponsored by the municipal government. While the Bolivian Independence Day Festival was first included in São Paulo’s official calendar of events in 2007, Alasitas was only recently included in 2014. A blog post written in anticipation of the 2014 celebration notes that, on the eve of the anniversary of Sao Paulo, Alasitas offers “a beautiful opportunity to know a bit of the

34 Kuenzli, 124.
35 Verónica (pseudonym), interview by author.
past and the present of migrants who helped construct the capital.” Reporting on *Alasitas*, the Center for Human Rights and Immigrant Citizenship (CDHIC) notes, “we believe that culture plays an extremely relevant role in its ability to bring together immigrants and Brazilians that live in the city, in a way that promotes a true multiculturalism and, therefore, avoids instances of xenophobia, prejudice, and discrimination.” According to CDHIC, these public performances create a space for interaction and dialogue that promotes inclusion.

The 2015 *Alasitas* celebration highlighted the use of ethnonational culture as a venue for aligning migrant and state politics. Given the attendance of consulate representatives from Bolivia, Ecuador, and Peru, alongside a number of significant Brazilian politicians, Bolivian cultural performance has, in many ways, become emblematic of a regional Latin American identity in São Paulo. Most notably, former president Lula da Silva attended the celebration and gave a short speech. A news article noted that *Alasitas* was an opportunity to “celebrate the integration of the peoples of Latin America and reaffirm the fight for human and immigrant rights.”

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immigrants mobilize essentialized national identities, they transform São Paulo into a microcosm of and social laboratory for Latin American integration. In his short speech, Lula addressed the forty thousand in attendance and reiterated the importance of regional integration under left-leaning governments. He stated that, “we will construct a strong Latin American nation, a people living in harmony, working, studying, and with access to culture… Not only did the victory of President Dilma here in Brazil make me happy, I am happy that Evo is the most voted president in the history of Bolivia.” Following his speech, the emcee referred to Lula as the “father of the social integration of Latin America” while the crowd chanted “Aqui vivo, Aqui vote.” As noted in the introduction, Lula’s speech came at a politically significant moment directly following the Brazilian presidential elections in which the Workers’ Party lost significant support in São Paulo. Bolivians, if granted the right to vote, represent an important new electoral bloc in electoral districts that have recurrently voted in favor of the opposition party, the Brazilian Social Democracy Party (PSDB). In this context, through cultural performance and the promotion of a regional identity supported by left-leaning governments, the interests of migrants align with those of the Workers’ Party both on a municipal and on a national level. Just as objectified culture is the content of national identity and the legitimizing basis for the inherently sovereign and limited political community of the nation-state, migrant cultural displays are employed to garner attention and to legitimize their own demands.

The Limitations of Mobilizing Bolivian Ethnonationalism

As was the case with market vendors in Praça Kantuta, event organizers and dance fraternity members’ use of national identity in Bolivian cultural performances paper over intra-community class dynamics. Likewise, the benefits of performing a unified Bolivian identity in São Paulo public space accrue differentially to a Bolivian migrant elite who is taken as the legitimate representative of a bounded and homogenous Bolivian community. Although recent initiatives like the *Conselho Participativo Municipal* offer unprecedented space for migrant political participation, the focus on cultural events and leisure activities diverts attention from labor exploitation in the garment industry. Moreover, performing a marginalized indigenous identity through dance is limited to those with the financial capital to pay the annual fee. In the space of the performance, as well as in terms of political engagement, garment workers continue to be spectators. These dynamics are particularly important given intra-community exploitation and the centrality of the garment industry to the material base of the larger community. For example, while Luis Vásquez serves as a *conselheiro participativo* and has cultivated a close relationship with municipal government representatives, he is also the president of a Bolivian business association and the owner of a sewing supply shop. With Bolivian workshop owners constituting 90 percent of his clientele, his economic interests are deeply entangled in the garment industry even as he claims to serve as a political voice for Bolivian garment workers.\(^{42}\)

Moreover, Bolivian migrant elite performances of an essentialized identity rooted in a pre-colonial past may help consolidate, rather than alleviate, stereotypes of Bolivians as anti-modern Indians. Luis, like other *conselheiros participativos*, is concerned with

\(^{42}\) Ana Lis Soares, “‘Também sou SP’: imigrantes falam da experiência na cidade,” *Noticias Terra*, 23 January, 2015.
combating stereotypes of Bolivians, even as he reinforces essentialized notions of Bolivian identity. In an interview published in *Terra Portal*, an online Brazilian news site, celebrating the 461st anniversary of São Paulo, Luis is both victim and perpetrator of racial essentialisms. The journalist characterizes Luis as the “typical Bolivian: slanted eyes, medium build, and black hair.” Noting racial discrimination as one of the primary obstacles to Bolivian integration, Luis states:

A Bolivian is shy, small, *moreno*. He has the face of an Indian – the opposite of you, Brazilians, who are a mixed people, white, with habits of self-care and beauty centuries ahead of us. Frequently, when we get on a bus, people move away from us as if they were afraid, nauseous. And to feel this hurts your soul deeply. Some doctors refuse to attend us, schools do not accept our children and, when they accept them, they are the victims of bullying. I ask myself, you know? Are Brazilians unable to remember their indigenous origins?43

Here, Luis emphasizes Bolivians’ phenotypical features in opposition to Brazilian. Although Luis condemns Brazilian prejudice, he also maps racial characteristics onto an evolutionary timeline where Bolivians remain in a precolonial era and Brazilians are part of a civilized modernity. For Luis, Brazilian whiteness is an ideal achieved through Bolivian migrant integration. Despite essentialized difference, Luis appeals to a shared heritage of indigeneity as a source of mutual recognition. Self-consciously highlighting this communal past, the mobilization of indigeneity in Bolivian cultural performances is a vehicle for Bolivians to become citizens in Brazil.

Rather than facilitate mutual recognition by emphasizing indigenous cultural forms from the Bolivian Amazon, cultural performances privilege traditions from the Andean highlands and, specifically, the Department of La Paz. Since the majority of Bolivian migrants come from that department, a predilection towards performances of

43 Ibid.
highland cultural traditions in São Paulo is by no means surprising. Likewise, this preference is also notable in Bolivia. Yet, despite the strong and divisive regionalism of Bolivia, migrants frame Paceño culture as national rather than regional. The preference for an ethnonational identification, over regional or pan-indigenous, points to common Latin American heritage while allowing a Bolivian migrant elite to assert their legitimate representation of the Bolivian nation in São Paulo.

In inter-ethnic micro politics of the garment industry and city neighborhoods, essentialized notions of identity and community, along with attendant racial prejudice, is a significant challenge to migrant integration. In particular, there has been significant media coverage of conflicts, violent or otherwise, between different migrant nationalities, with an emphasis on Paraguayan and Bolivian conflicts. Although Bolivians have lived and worked alongside other Latin American migrants for decades, recent media coverage suggests that a growth in the larger Latin American migrant population challenges Bolivian livelihood rooted in the garment industry. The Folha article, “Paraguayans challenge Bolivians space in Bom Retiro,” relates that while many Paraguayans are coming to work for Bolivians in garment workshops, interviewed Paraguayans “affirmed that the labor conditions offered by their own compatriots are different. Because of the exhausting work days and the infrequent days off, they say that having a Bolivian or South Korean boss is worse.” Ignoring the communities’ similar patterns of migration, labor insertion, and social mobility, the article suggests that exploitation occurs between national groups and is ameliorated when migrants maintain ties to their compatriots. The emphasis on national groups simultaneously valorizes national over class identifications

while intimating that violence and exploitation arises out of competition over labor and space.

As reported in news articles, Latin American migrants perceive inter-ethnic violence as a result of cultural differences, as well as job competition, between national migrant groups. A nineteen-year-old Bolivian victim of eight stab wounds noted five Paraguayans attacked him “because of culture, jealousy of work.” After being refused entrance to a Bolivian nightclub, a group of Paraguayans murdered a Bolivian in retaliation. One of the victims of the attack is quoted as saying, “[The Paraguayans] called the Bolivians ‘negritos’ the entire time. They think they are better than us.” In 2011, there were seventy-one reported cases of violence between Bolivians, Paraguayans, and Peruvians in the central regions of São Paulo. According to a Peruvian migrant quoted in the same news article, inter-ethnic violence is the result of a “cultural war between the Latin American peoples.” Police investigators from the Departamento de Homicídios e da Proteção a Pessoa (DHPP) confirmed the conflict between Bolivians and Paraguayans, regarded by police as two “ethnicities.” Fabiana Sarmento de Sena, a representative of the DHPP, noted that according to several testimonials given by Bolivians, “Paraguayans regard themselves as a superior race, white, and fight a lot, make fun of them, seek to harm Bolivians.” In these investigations, the DHPP “concluded that Bolivians are the preferred victim of Paraguayan assailants for the fact of being culturally peaceful, they do not have the habit of reacting and they are not

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47 Ibid.
48 Ibid.
accustomed to filing complaints." To the extreme of fatal violence, Latin American migrants in São Paulo are self-consciously contesting, consolidating, and protecting claims to spaces of work and leisure through national identification. As national identity is iteratively reinforced through Latin American migrants’ interaction with the São Paulo public sphere, the specter of an essentialist identity to be affirmed and defended is an obstacle to projects of integration.

Additionally, migrants and paulistanos perceive inter-ethnic violence through the lens of historical and contemporary regional politics. A professor of History at the University of São Paulo situated this contemporary violence within the historical context of national conflicts between Bolivia and Paraguay during the Chaco War (1931-1935) and between Bolivia, Peru, and Chile during the War of the Pacific (1879-1884). In the blog, “Histories of Pari,” a neighborhood resident wrote a post titled “Chaco War in Pari?” In this entry, the author details Bolivian and Paraguayan competition over jobs in the garment industry, noting that “the authorities must pay close attention to a situation that, if we are not careful, could transform into an even greater tragedy.” Similarly, reports on police investigations of inter-ethnic violence in the central neighborhoods in São Paulo were republished on the same blog “Histories of Pari” in a post entitled “Mercosur at war in Pari.” While folkloric dance performances are part of a strategy to mobilize ethnonational cultural performance for migrant integration and mutual

49 Ibid.
50 Ibid.
recognition, migrants, local residents, and police investigators perceive cases of migrant violence through the lens of cultural and historical conflicts between nation-states and their nationals.

Conclusion

Like the ethnic market, Bolivian cultural performances in São Paulo public space are part of a Bolivian migrant elite repertoire to transform the predominant Brazilian public image of Bolivians. Highlighting national identification and leisure activities over exploitative labor and production facilitates the construction of an essentialized community. Yet, given the high costs of participation in dance fraternities, Bolivian cultural performances reinforce intra-community class dynamics despite their display of unity. In public performances, as well as in local politics, recent Bolivian migrants and Bolivian garment workers are spectators, not participants. As Bolivian migrant elites perform Bolivian nationality in São Paulo, they claim to be the legitimate representatives of a Bolivian community, despite critical class differences and practices of intra-community exploitation in the garment industry.

In the cosmopolitan city of São Paulo, migrants emphasize their cultural contributions in their negotiation of greater inclusion. Likewise, a Bolivian migrant elite has expended significant resources on cultural events in order to garner public recognition and government support. Under the Haddad administration, annual Bolivian festivals are now promoted and sponsored by the municipal government. Simultaneously, the Haddad administration has opened significant channels for local migrant political participation that, in turn, are being leveraged to garner national citizenship rights. Through these channels, Bolivians have become the public face for a new wave of
regional immigration. As indicated by the 2015 Alasitas celebration, Bolivian cultural performance is imbued with national and regional significance as municipal officials, alongside a Bolivian migrant elite, explicitly connect migration to projects of Latin American integration. Framing themselves at the heart of a Latin American identity, Bolivians mobilize indigenous cultural forms to highlight a shared regional history. For the municipal government, Bolivian cultural performance facilitates intercultural dialogue and, therefore, Latin American cultural integration. For a Bolivian migrant elite, performing Bolivian identity is the vehicle for citizenship in Brazil. For recent migrants, essentialized ethnonational identities, while a potential source of valorization, also inform the violent confrontations between migrant national groups over access to spaces of work and leisure. While cultural celebrations display social inclusion and align migrant and government interests, cultural events are made possible through capital accumulation from the exploitation of poor Bolivians.
Chapter Three
Emigrant Citizenship: Contesting Bolivian State Negligence in São Paulo

Despite their celebration of a Bolivian ethnonational identity in annual festivals and ethnic markets, Bolivian emigrants’ tense relations with the Bolivian consulate in São Paulo have escalated into several recent protests against Bolivian state negligence. Yet, under President Evo Morales, the Bolivian state has significantly expanded Bolivian emigrant citizenship rights. In particular, the 2009 Constitution of the Plurinational State of Bolivia gives Bolivian citizens residing abroad the right to vote for presidential and vice-presidential candidates. In this way, Bolivians in São Paulo are utilizing new institutional channels for political participation locally in the city and transnationally in Bolivia. Leveraging their new political power as a significant electoral bloc, emigrants simultaneously engage in contentious politics against Bolivian state representatives in São Paulo to demand greater rights and state protection in São Paulo. As was the case with migrants’ engagement with the municipal government, national identity is the privileged discourse of claims-making. Rather than indicate an inability or unwillingness to integrate in São Paulo, Bolivians utilize Bolivian emigrant citizenship, as well as contentious politics against Bolivian state representatives in São Paulo, to improve their livelihoods in the city.

While Chapter Two explored how Bolivian migrants access the municipal government, in this chapter I specifically address how emigrants access Bolivian state institutions. Although, in both cases, Bolivian national identification is the discourse of
claims-making, Bolivian migrants mobilize different tactics when accessing the municipal government versus local Bolivian state representatives. Rather than solely focus on relations with the municipal government, migrants are expending significant time and energy protesting Bolivian state institutions in São Paulo, regardless of their length of residency in the city or plans to return to Bolivia. Therefore, this chapter’s principal focus on Bolivian emigrant relations with Bolivian state institutions in São Paulo is a significant counterpoint to prior chapters’ analysis of Bolivian migrant engagement with the municipal government. Emigrant demands of the Bolivian state articulate a set of transnational citizenship rights while strengthening migrant livelihood in Brazil.

Additionally, this chapter challenges scholarship that suggests the diminishing importance of the nation-state and institutional channels of political participation for substantive citizenship. By leveraging new institutional channels of transnational politics, Bolivians are able to increase non-institutional forms of contentious politics and enlarge their claims of the state. Moreover, while emigrant participation in Bolivian elections may be constrained by labor regimes, mobility in the city, or access to information, the universal extension of emigrant voting rights significantly expands avenues for migrant inclusion. While prior chapters focused more exclusively on a migrant elite, this chapter indicates the importance of institutionalized channels of political participation in opening enfranchisement to a larger population of Bolivian emigrants.

The first section of the chapter will address Bolivian emigrants’ relationship to the Bolivian state and, more specifically, consular representatives in São Paulo. Leveraging new forms of transnational politics, emigrants demand state protection by reasserting Evo
Morales’ “cultural and democratic revolution” and anti-neoliberal political project as moral imperatives that are, as of yet, unrealized. In the new language of the Plurinational State of Bolivia, both Bolivian emigrants and local Bolivian state representatives in São Paulo deploy the discourse and performance of indigenous patrimony to assert their legitimacy as Bolivian citizens. The second and third sections of the chapter analyze two critical moments of Bolivian migrant mobilizations against Bolivian state institutions. In the summer of 2013, Bolivians mobilized to remove the Bolivian consul general following the murder of a five year-old Bolivian boy. Community members invoke this event, referred to as “el caso del niño Brayan,” as a clear reflection of Bolivian insecurity and the unconscionable absence of the Bolivian state. This case also highlights the different tactics deployed by Bolivian migrants in their engagement with the Bolivian consulate as opposed to municipal government, as well as the state institutional responses. In anticipation of the Bolivian presidential elections in October 2014, Bolivians protested the faulty voting procedures implemented by the Tribunal Supremo Electoral (TSE) that threatened the exercise of migrants’ newly-acquired citizenship rights. An analysis of these two episodes illuminates how Bolivians articulate demands, how they define rights, and how emigrant citizenship is locally effective in São Paulo.

“Estamos huerfanos”: Migration and Bolivian State Absence in São Paulo

Bolivian labor migration for work in São Paulo’s garment industry grew exponentially following the adoption of neoliberal economic policies in Bolivia during the 1980s. In addition to post-1980s labor migration, professional migration began in the 1950s with a Brazil-Bolivia cultural exchange program and political refugee migration began during the Bolivian dictatorship of the 1970s. Despite these varied migration
experiences, Bolivians from diverse backgrounds self-identify as economic refugees. Whether due to poor higher education, restricted political rights, or dwindling economic opportunities, Bolivians in São Paulo today frame their migration as the result of a weak and absent Bolivian state. Migrants’ sense of abandonment is only further exacerbated by their labor insertion in an industry that epitomizes flexible production in a global market erodes state regulations and worker protections.

While the circumstances of post-1980s Bolivian labor migration are connected to neoliberal globalization, contemporary Bolivian migrant politics in São Paulo resonate with Morales’ anti-neoliberal political rhetoric and the “refounding” of Bolivia as a plurinational state. In 2007, Bolivian emigrants in São Paulo celebrated “one year of cultural and democratic revolution” since the election of Morales. In a video recording, Morales noted that while Bolivians abroad had previously “been expelled by the economic model,” the economy is improving with increased taxation of multinational corporations.¹ This event indicates an expanded imaginary of the nation beyond Bolivia’s national borders on both the part of Bolivian emigrants and the Bolivian national government. According to Morales’ speech, emigration is the result of foreign-imposed economic policies that weakened state power. As the Bolivian state reasserts control over the market, it has included Bolivian emigrants abroad in its discourse of a cultural and democratic revolution. Even so, Bolivian emigration has continued unabated and, despite their stated goal to return within a few short years, Bolivian emigrants are staying in Brazil. In the past few years, Bolivians in São Paulo have shifted the blame for their forced emigration from foreign economic policies to the Bolivian state.

In a discussion about the problems faced by the Bolivian community in São Paulo, conselheira participativa Monica Rodriguez noted that, “Bolivian immigrants are orphans, we are orphans. We do not have anyone that will go and speak on our behalf.”

According to Monica, “President Evo Morales forgot about emigrants.” Bolivian emigrants decry the absence of the Bolivian state by framing the state as an absent father who “forgot” or “abandoned” his charges. For many Bolivians, abandonment resonates deeply with the circumstances of their emigration. For Verónica, the money she earns in São Paulo’s garment industry financially supports the mentally handicapped son she left with her aging parents. She painfully recounted that:

At times I believe I should have kept fighting there so I could be with them. Here I am alone. I breathe but there is pain there… The truth is I abandoned [my family]. You do not know what they have, if they eat, if they sleep, and you had to leave because there was no way to make money there… I felt useless and had no idea what to do there… the government does not pay attention to us, we have to leave there so we can make enough to survive.

Without the support of the Bolivian state services, Verónica was forced to abandon her own family. The discourse of “abandonment” morally condemns the state’s absence. In this way, Bolivian emigrants reiterate the government’s dominant discourse of anti-neoliberal policies – rather than the freedom and fatality of markets, Bolivians demand state protections. In this way, Bolivians turn government discourse against those who promote it, suggesting that Bolivia’s political project is far from complete. Bolivian state responsibility for emigrants in São Paulo is thus framed as a moral imperative embedded within the “cultural and democratic revolution” of Morales’ anti-neoliberal project.

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2 Rodriguez, interview with author.
3 Ibid.
4 Verónica (pseudonym), interview with author.
As Bolivians reterritorialize Bolivian nationhood in São Paulo, they also envision a new relationship between Bolivian emigrants and the Bolivian state. Like the nation, the state is a cultural product that is, according to Ferguson and Gupta, “conceptualized and made socially effective through particular imaginative and symbolic devices.” In particular, Ferguson and Gupta argue that mundane rituals and practices naturalize states as “higher than, and encompassing of, society.” In their article on neoliberal governmentality, Ferguson and Gupta argue that since the metaphor of “vertical encompassment” is rooted in the logics of a territorially bounded nation-state, transnational political economies open new spaces for local actors’ claims-making and state contestation. Through iterative interactions with consular representatives at public rituals and in bureaucratic functions, Bolivian emigrants perceive the Bolivian state as somehow above a Bolivian national community in São Paulo. However, given the limited functions of the consulate, Bolivian emigrants contest the ability of the Bolivian state to adequately encompass the performed Bolivian nation in São Paulo.

As part of a new vision for emigrant-state relations, emigrants demand the Bolivian consulate take responsibility for the protection of emigrant livelihoods and security in São Paulo. In news articles and interviews conducted by the author, Bolivians frequently recount the daily violence and insecurity they face in São Paulo. Rather than isolated cases of violence, emigrants perceive this as a pattern of targeted violence often linked to specific Bolivian public spaces, like the informal market of Rua Coimbra. Monica noted that, “it is an ugly thing what is happening on Coimbra” as she enumerated

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6 Ibid., 981.
a series of recent violent episodes including a stabbing, a rape, and a brutal killing that included skinning. Since Bolivians are orphaned by a negligent state, Monica laments that they are being “buried like people of the street, people without documents.” She goes on to note that:

There are [Bolivians] who do not even know how to speak or write and come here, are sexually violated; they work in slave labor for three years and do not even receive a salary, nothing. So where do they go? They return to Bolivia with their life frustrated. It does not have to be like this… You have an obligation as a representative of the government, which is the consulate, to fight, to struggle for this person, to help this person, and not to abandon them.

Importantly, the explicit goal here is not to return to Bolivia where migrants’ success and livelihood is “frustrated.” Bolivian emigrants, therefore, demand state protection and recognition of their citizenship rights primarily to defend the community’s ability to stay in São Paulo, not in Bolivia.

Criticisms of the consulate revolve around their substantive absence from public events and their inability or unwillingness to support Bolivian migrants, either in bureaucratic functions or citizen security. According to Luis, the relationship between the Bolivian consulate and Bolivian migrants is one born of pure necessity in migrants’ pursuit of documents. Verónica notes that interactions between the consulate and Bolivian migrants are limited to “the time of elections or when there is a problem… [or] when you need to regularize your documents in the embassy [sic].” Describing her sense of alienation while at the consulate, Verónica notes, “you wait for hours and hours, no one explains anything to you, they do not treat you like a person, they treat you like

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7 Rodriguez, interview by author.
8 Ibid.
9 Vasquez, interview by author.
10 Verónica, interview by author.
you were a real foreigner even in your own embassy [sic].”¹¹ According to Bolivian protesters, while a Bolivian background check might cost four US dollars in Bolivia or ten US dollars in Argentina, it costs thirty-six US dollars in Brazil.¹² By denouncing their interactions with the consulate as limited, dismissive, and even, exploitative, Bolivian migrants contest the legitimacy of local state representatives and demand greater state protection of citizenship rights.

By focusing on the cultural and class differences between the consul general and other Bolivians in São Paulo, emigrants comparatively frame themselves as legitimate Bolivians. While “95 percent of migrants in São Paulo are very poor and simple,” notes Luis, “the consul general sees himself as an elite.”¹³ According to Luis, “the community no longer accepts the consul’s absence,” and demands that the consul partake in community activities and act as an advocate.¹⁴ At the time of this writing, the Ministry of Foreign Relations of the Plurinational State of Bolivia decided to remove Jaime Pedro Valdivia Almanza from his post as consul general. Although this action addresses emigrants’ specific concerns with the individual representative and their demand for his immediate removal, negative reactions to the government’s new appointment demonstrate that emigrants are demanding a deeper transformation in local state

¹¹ Ibid.
¹³ Vasquez, interview by author.
¹⁴ Ibid.
representation. Bolivian protestors demanded that the consul be elected “from the community and by the community, understanding the problems of Bolivians and working in the community.”\textsuperscript{15} Emigrants’ demands to vote and elect consular representatives from within a Bolivian emigrant “community” radically expands the imagined role of the Bolivian state and calls for the consulate’s authority be based on popular sovereignty.

For Verónica, a new consul general should be, “a capable person… [willing] to come, make nice speeches, dance with us, and say ‘I am truly a Bolivian.’”\textsuperscript{16} Despite this criticism, as an annual sponsor of several Bolivian celebrations, the consulate supports the increased visibility of Bolivian cultural forms in the city. According to Sidney da Silva, the Bolivian consulate celebrated and benefitted from the transformation of religious celebrations, like that celebrating the Virgen de Copacabana, from purely parochial affairs to a “‘folkloric’ spectacle… [and] part of the cultural calendar of the city of São Paulo.”\textsuperscript{17} Even so, Bolivian migrants like Luis and Verónica suggest that sponsorship is not enough. In the context of dance performances, rather than seated apart from and above Bolivian dance fraternities on a stage alongside other dignitaries, the consul general must be corporeally incorporated through participation in cultural

\textsuperscript{15} “Manifiesto de la Marcha,” 3 October, 2014; It is interesting to note, however, that Jaime Pedro Valdivia Almanza was, in fact, a Bolivian migrant to São Paulo. A native of Cochabamba, Valdivia Almanza migrated to Brazil in 1976. He graduated from the Universidade Federal de Paraná-Curitiba, is trained as a medical doctor, and currently owns a hotel business in Bolivia and Brazil. Given his migration history, he claims to have suffered from many of the same obstacles as recent migrants who have migrated illegally to Brazil. He assumed his position as consul general on June 1, 2006 just two months before the inaugural celebration of Bolivian Independence at the Memorial da América Latina.

\textsuperscript{16} Verónica (pseudonym), interview by author.

\textsuperscript{17} Silva, “Bolivianos em São Paulo: Dinâmica cultural,” 24.
performances. However, as noted in the previous chapter, those migrants who dance and may say they are “truly” Bolivian have the financial resources to do so.

In addition to their sponsorship of the 2014 Bolivian Independence Day Festival, the consulate held an intimate gathering at the statue of Simón Bolívar at the Memorial da América Latina on the weekday morning of August 6. While the weekend-long festival showcased performances of thirteen dance fraternities drawing an audience of approximately fifty thousand visitors and the participation of Mayor Haddad, the consulate’s more private commemoration was a solemn affair with approximately thirty individuals. Following the Bolivian national anthem and short speeches by the consul general and the president of the Associação de Residentes Bolivianos (ADRB), an organization founded by Bolivian professionals in 1969, representatives adorned the statue of Simón Bolívar with a floral wreath. Although Monica and Luis, as well as other conselheiros participativos, were in attendance, they both noted the exclusivity and elitism of the affair, as the consulate had not invited the “community.” Yet, the state symbols and speeches of the event attempted to represent the national and cultural origins of Bolivian migrants in Brazil. Standing in front of the Brazilian national flag, the Bolivian tri-color flag, and the wiphala, a multi-colored symbol representing transnational Andean indigenous groups, speakers commemorated Bolivian Independence by highlighting Bolivian cultural diversity and indigenous heritage. The president of ADRB began his speech by mentioning the rebellion of Túpac Amaru against Spanish colonial rule, while the consul general noted that, “we are all

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In his remarks, the consul general noted that, “Bolivia, to this day, bears fruit for us, benefits us,” and figured the presidency of Evo Morales and the adoption of the plurinational constitution as the culmination of 189 years of Bolivian independence, through which “we are all plurales, we are all originarios, in this way, we are all brothers and sisters.” As is the case in Bolivia under Morales, claims of diversity and indigenous cultural heritage have become integral to the language and symbols of state power, most visibly so with the formal recognition of the indigenous wiphala as a symbol of the state and co-equal to the Bolivian tri-color flag. For both Bolivian state representatives and the Bolivian migrant elite in São Paulo, claims to legitimately represent Bolivian migrants are rooted in the discourse and performance of indigenous cultural heritage.

“El Caso del Niño Brayan”: Bolivian Insecurity and Demands for Rights

In June 2013, the murder of Brayan Yanarico Capcha, a five-year-old Bolivian boy, catalyzed a week of Bolivians demanding action from both the Bolivian consul general and the São Paulo municipal government. For Bolivian migrants, “el caso del niño Brayan” exemplified Bolivian insecurity in São Paulo and the unconscionable absence of the Bolivian consulate. For conselheira participativa Monica, the death of Brayan was the turning point for her participation in São Paulo municipal politics. Bolivians’ different protest tactics addressed to both the Bolivian and Brazilian states had

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19 Consul General Jaime Pedro Valdivia Almanza (speech given at the commemoration of Bolivian Independence Day, São Paulo, Brazil, August 6, 2014).
21 Rodriguez, interview by author.
the same message – Bolivians’ integration within São Paulo must be facilitated through the Bolivian state and Bolivian nationality.

During a home invasion and robbery of a Bolivian household in the eastern zone of São Paulo, a Brazilian youth shot and killed Brayan while he was crying in his mother’s arms. With mass media coverage of the tragedy, the news reached a large Brazilian viewership. The media connected the murder to the larger Bolivian community’s insecurity as a result of their undocumented status and informal work in an exploitative garment industry. Unable to open bank accounts, Bolivians often keep large sums of money in their homes and were, therefore, an easy target for home invasions. The municipal government immediately responded with press conferences and public meetings to generate discussions on labor rights and the security of Bolivian migrants.\textsuperscript{22} Monica noted that while “the [Bolivian] community is unnoticed, [Brazilians] only noticed the boy Brayan because everyone is a mother, everyone is a father. They felt pain.”\textsuperscript{23} With the coverage by the media and responses by the government, Bolivian migrants escalated protests directed towards the Bolivian consulate and took advantage of an important public platform.

The trajectory of Bolivian protests following the death of Brayan evolved in relation to the audience. On the night of Brayan’s death, protesters held a peaceful vigil outside of the police station leading the murder investigations. Three days after the murder, protesters congregated in front of the Bolivian consulate and, unlike the vigil, set


\textsuperscript{23} Rodriguez, interview by author.
small fires on the street and vandalized the building. These security risks forced the consulate to shut down for a week until the unrest had settled.24 As Monica noted, “people kept coming, they were angry, they were anxious… until they went there to destroy the Consulate of [Rua] Coimbra… Just imagine, twenty years [the consul general] has not done anything. Rather, he raised [the consulate’s] fees and complicated Bolivians’ situation even more.”25 Monica, like other protesters, complained that the consulate’s prohibitive fees to obtain Bolivian government documentation hindered Bolivians’ ability to legalize their status in Brazil. Another protester said, “we want the consulate to come out. They are not mourning the injustices suffered by our community. This is not just. We work twenty hours a day, we are poorly paid, and now even our children are dead.”26 While the protesters complained that local Bolivian state representatives hindered their integration in São Paulo, they simultaneously demanded state advocacy on their behalf. In this way, Bolivians criticized the Bolivian state for shirking its responsibility to protect the rights of its transnational citizenry and reframed the cause of insecurity as the failure of an apathetic state.

As the protests gained greater visibility, Bolivian protesters began to target a Brazilian audience. Over a week after the murder, one hundred Bolivians attended mass, marched through the central streets of São Paulo with a small white coffin while passing out white flowers to Brazilian bystanders, and reunited with hundreds of other Bolivians in the Praça de Sé, the central plaza of São Paulo where both the Cathedral and São

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25 Rodriguez, interview by author.
Paulo’s courts are located.\textsuperscript{27} Featured prominently at the head of the march were the Bolivian and Brazilian flags, side by side. By promoting interchange between protesters and São Paulo residents and by ending the march at São Paulo’s central square, Bolivians enlarged their audience to encompass the São Paulo municipal government and paulistanos more generally. Additionally, protesters not only backed up their demands solely with the authority of the Bolivian flag, but also as contributing members of a Brazilian polity.\textsuperscript{28} Despite the different tactics used, these protests asserted Bolivians’ desire for integration in São Paulo. Rather than renounce national origins, Bolivian protesters perceive the Bolivian state and Bolivian nationality as necessary to facilitate their active participation in São Paulo.

The murder of Brayan was a turning point for Bolivian migrants’ relationship with both the consulate and the municipal government. For Monica, “when [Brayan] died, it was the straw that broke the camel’s back,” and propelled her political participation.\textsuperscript{29} Both Monica and Verónica claimed that, following the protests, the Bolivian consulate threatened their lives in response to their outspoken criticism.\textsuperscript{30}

Whether or not these claims are founded, it is clear that “el caso del niño Brayan” bred considerable distrust between emigrants and the consulate, as well as migrants’ increased demands for Bolivian state protection. Similarly, in her ethnography on Yemeni nationalism, Wedeen describes the moral panic following a violent episode wherein “claims of moral and material entitlement, the outrage that attended the event, and the

\textsuperscript{27} Praça de Sé has historically served as an important symbolic site of protest.  
\textsuperscript{29} Rodriguez, interview by author.  
\textsuperscript{30} Ibid.; Verónica, interview by author.
expressed hopes that a representative state could be made accountable and ensure safety”
created a public sphere of democratic engagement in which Yemenis appealed as a
people.31 Likewise, “el caso del niño Brayan” activated a communal sense of Bolivian
belonging, bolstered moral claims to material entitlements, and fostered a sense of
outrage against local Bolivian state representatives.

By contrast, the São Paulo municipal government continued to strengthen avenues
of dialogue with immigrant communities following the murder. In October 2013, the
municipal government signed an agreement with a Brazilian state-owned bank, Caixa
Econômica Federal, giving immigrants from countries within Mercosur the right to open
bank accounts and access microcredit loans. According to the municipal government, the
goals of the agreement were to “bring more security, as well as expand citizenship and
incentivize the legalization of the population in the capital.”32 In the same year,
immigrants gained the right to vote for and be elected to the Conselho Participativo
Municipal. “El caso del niño Brayan” significantly expanded Bolivians’ rights in São
Paulo and continued to foster a collaborative relationship with the municipal government
since the election of Mayor Haddad in 2012, even as it aggravated migrant relations with
local Bolivian state representatives and bolstered migrant claims of entitlement.

“Se você não pode votar, você é um cidadão invisível”: Emigrant Citizenship in São
Paulo

Article twenty-seven of the Constitution of the Plurinational State of Bolivia
extended non-obligatory voting for the president and vice-president to all citizens abroad

31 Wedeen, 92.
32 Secretaria Executiva de Comunicação da Prefeitura de São Paulo, “Prefeitura e Caixa
assinam acordo que facilita abertura de contas bancárias para imigrantes do Mercosul,” 4
October, 2013.
over the age of eighteen.\textsuperscript{33} In 2009 and 2014, Morales won 95 percent and 89 percent of the emigrant vote in Brazil.\textsuperscript{34} In 2009, the Bolivian government institutionalized external voting in Argentina, Brazil, Spain, and the United States. Of the 169,096 registered emigrant voters, 125,101 cast ballots with 75 percent supporting Morales.\textsuperscript{35} Expanding institutionalized emigrant voting in the 2014 elections, the Tribunal Supremo Electoral (TSE) estimated that 660,000 Bolivian citizens residing abroad in thirty-three countries, approximately 16 percent of the national population, would be able to vote.\textsuperscript{36} Given these projections, several political parties campaigned in cities with large Bolivian populations, including São Paulo. In 2014, Bolivians in São Paulo cast 21,303 of the 160,040 valid votes cast internationally.\textsuperscript{37} The 18,588 Bolivians in Brazil who voted for Morales aided a resounding electoral victory that captured 61 percent of the vote nationally.\textsuperscript{38}


\textsuperscript{35} Luis Mealla, “Voto en el exterior crea expectativa por su peso en el proceso electoral,” \textit{La Razón}, 10 November, 2013; While in 2009, the emigrant vote was restricted to 6 percent of the national population, by 2014, this restriction was lifted.

\textsuperscript{36} Ibid.


\textsuperscript{38} Tribunal Supremo Electoral, “Elecciones Generales 2014 Brasil,” \textit{Tribunal Supremo Electoral}; Tribunal Supremo Electoral, “Elecciones Generales 2014: Resultados finales del cómputo Nacional,” \textit{Tribunal Supremo Electoral}, 28 October, 2014; Although these voting statistics are similar to results in Argentina, they sharply contrast to results in Spain and the United States where, in 2014, Morales captured 44 percent and 35 percent respectively.
extension of voting rights to citizens abroad is a radical expansion of emigrant citizenship for the growing population of Bolivians residing in other countries.\textsuperscript{39}

In 2006, there were 115 countries worldwide with legal provisions for external voting.\textsuperscript{40} Despite this significant international precedent, the impact of external voting on national politics greatly varies depending on each country and their specific limitations on eligibility.\textsuperscript{41} For Bolivia, given both institutionalized voting mechanisms abroad and the large emigrant population, the extension of external voting rights is a critical reconfiguration of emigrant-state relations. With a national population of ten million, the approximately 1.6 million emigrants represent a huge new voting bloc.\textsuperscript{42} In 2014, in order to adequately engage this population, TSE set up polling locations in thirty-three countries.\textsuperscript{43} However, given limited resources and a large undocumented population unable to register, TSE estimated that of the 660,000 Bolivian emigrants that could participate, only 272,058 would participate.\textsuperscript{44} Despite these limitations, the extension of


\textsuperscript{41} State-specific limitations on eligibility include restrictions based on the length of stay abroad and based on activity abroad. For example, Bangladesh extends external voting rights only to government officers, while Canada extends external voting rights only to those who have resided in Canada within six years; Ibid.


\textsuperscript{43} Mealla, “Voto en el exterior crea expectativa” 10 November, 2013.

external voting offers Bolivian migrants in São Paulo and elsewhere significant new leverage over Bolivian state institutions.

In anticipation of the 2014 elections, Bolivians in São Paulo voiced concerns over the Bolivian state’s manipulation of the emigrant population and organized a series of protests that, according to Brazilian journalist Luz Mendoza, threatened “hunger strikes, voter abstention, or the ‘punishment vote.’” These protests emerged in response to complications with voting procedures. For example, polling places were assigned to voters without taking into consideration voters’ place of residence. The protesters’ manifesto complained of TSE’s incompetence and lack of impartiality. Immediate demands included the removal of the TSE coordinator in São Paulo and the correction to the assigned polling locations. Similar to the protests following “el caso del niño Brayan,” protesters took the opportunity to express concerns over high consular fees and Bolivian insecurity, as well as demand the removal of the consul general and his replacement with someone elected by and from within the Bolivian “community.” Additionally, protesters demanded a series of reforms including “dignified” return migration policies; repatriation of Bolivian citizens who die in São Paulo; support for Bolivian cultural performances; and emigrant representation in Bolivia’s Plurinational Legislative Assembly. By demanding support for cultural performances and repatriation of Bolivian dead, Bolivians publicly express deep attachment to national origins. However, as demonstrated in the last chapter, Bolivian cultural performances are locally effective in São Paulo. The majority of protesters’ concerns focus on securing state support for Bolivian livelihood in Brazil. In particular, emigrants aim to diminish the

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46 “Manifiesto de la Marcha,” 3 October, 2014.
distance between themselves and the Bolivian state by institutionalizing new emigration policies and channels for emigrant political participation.

Luis Vasquez noted that, “our dear Evo Morales does not have a clear policy for emigrants who live out of the country… Evo Morales thinks we are like sheep and that we will vote for him without question. He is mistaken. I believe that this year the vote will be the opposite.” Here, Vasquez highlights emigrants’ continued demands for a more active Bolivian state while indicating potential negative repercussions for President Morales. Through social media, Luis Vasquez noted the significance of nearly thirty thousand registered voters in Brazil and stated:

> We want to remind you that we are also Bolivian citizens and that you need to pay attention to our demands. Over the last nine years we have been forgotten and now, in a time of elections, you remember us. With all the respect you deserve, we do not serve to simply vote but, rather, to demand what we want. We have another vision for our country, we know what we want, we send millions of dollars in remittances that stimulates the Bolivian economy and, therefore, we demand respect for a community that fights so that Bolivia can be well.

Vasquez asserts the economic and political power of Bolivian emigrants. In 2012, over one billion US dollars were sent to Bolivia in the form of remittances. According to the Bolivian Central Bank, 7.6 percent of all remittances to Bolivia in 2014 came from Brazil. Referring to the last nine years, Vasquez links state neglect to the Morales’ presidency. Yet, despite this rhetoric, in both elections, the pro-Morales vote abroad was higher than in Bolivia. Indeed, in Brazil in 2014, Morales captured 89 percent of the emigrant vote in comparison to 61 percent of the national vote. Therefore, despite the

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47 Vasquez, interview by author.
50 Álvaro Fagundes and Ingrid Fagundez, “Remessa de estrangeiros tem maior alta em 7 anos e supera US$ 1 bilhão,” Folha de São Paulo, 17 February, 2015.
contentious relationship between the Bolivian community in São Paulo and the Bolivian consulate, Bolivians resoundingly supported Morales for president.

Advocates of emigrant citizenship frame Bolivians abroad as a fundamental part of Bolivia’s process of democratization and, in particular, the “refounding” of Bolivia as a plurinational state. According to blogger Carlos Alejandro Lara Ugarte, the historical strength of Bolivian emigrant communities, specifically in Argentina, promoted Bolivia’s return to democracy during the 1970s and, consequently, made them an integral part of, “the construction of the new Bolivian state.” In response to political parties opposing the unrestricted extension of emigrant voting, Ugarte discursively frames emigrant voting as a natural progression of democratization:

However, one must note that to restrict citizen voting rights recognized by law is to reproduce the 19th-century neocolonialist practices that lasted until the 1952 Revolution when the majority of nationals (women, indigenous, and illiterate) were excluded from the right to vote with the intention of perpetuating the power of dominant classes and reactionary political parties.

Citizenship, here, expands beyond the territorial limitations of the Bolivian nation-state and emigrant voting is linked with progressive politics.

Scholars debate the role of emigrant voting as either a democratizing mechanism or as a dangerous dissolution of the principles of democratic accountability. Gómez and Zackrison argue that voting rights for Mexican residents in the United States, freed from the control of Mexican clientelism, would simultaneously democratize the Mexican political system while guaranteeing the Mexican juridical and political recognition of

52 Ibid.
migrants.\textsuperscript{53} José Itzigsohn, on the other hand, cautions against such a celebratory analysis by noting that while emigrant voting is a new form of inclusion, it “does not subvert the current socioeconomic order.”\textsuperscript{54} Rather, it is a realignment of power that creates a new elite, in the words of Itzigsohn, “living abroad and acting at home.”\textsuperscript{55} Ruth Rubio-Marín reasserts the need to place limitations on how “economic power or agency translates into political power,” in her critique of the common argument, such as the one expressed by Luis, that emigrants’ economic contributions through remittances should translate into political influence.\textsuperscript{56} However, in São Paulo, the extension of emigrant voting rights opens new avenues of political participation that may be utilized by a wider sector of Bolivian emigrants. Whereas emigrant participation in cultural performances is tightly constrained by their financial resources, institutionalized transnational politics are more universally accessible. Therefore, emigrant voting rights serve as an important step towards the inclusion of a greater diversity of emigrant voices in local politics.

Conclusion

Bolivian emigrant politics in São Paulo are structured and informed by Bolivian national politics that culminated in the election of Evo Morales and the adoption of the 2009 Constitution. According to the Morales’ administration, their mandate was to “refound” and radically alter the country’s political institutions through constitutional

\textsuperscript{53} Arturo Santamaría Gómez and James Zackrison, “Politics without Borders or Postmodern Nationality: Mexican Immigration to the United States,” \textit{Latin American Perspectives} 30, no. 2 (2003).
\textsuperscript{55} Ibid, 1147.
reform.\textsuperscript{57} Included in this new vision for the country was the political inclusion of Bolivian emigrants abroad as a part of Bolivia’s process of democratization. Given the approximately 1.6 million Bolivians abroad, emigrant citizenship radically expands both an imagined nation and institutionalized channels for political participation. As emigrants make demands of Bolivian state institutions, they do so by embedding themselves within the “cultural and democratic revolution” of the Plurinational State of Bolivia. By critiquing the absence of Bolivian state protections in São Paulo, emigrants reassert Morales’ anti-neoliberal political project as a moral imperative that is, as of yet, unrealized. Moreover, the performance of Bolivia’s cultural patrimony, rooted in indigenous forms, further bolsters claims to political rights.

As Bolivians garner greater influence over politics in their home country, they use it to demand rights in São Paulo and facilitate their local integration. Demands, including political representation in Bolivia’s Plurinational Legislative Assembly, assert their desire to stay in São Paulo with Bolivian state protections guaranteed by expanding emigrant political influence. The case of “el niño Brayan” demonstrates how Bolivian migrants deploy divergent tactics when addressing the municipal government as opposed to the Bolivian consulate. Migrants’ use of contentious politics against Bolivian state institutions, as opposed to Brazilian, despite the continued electoral support of Morales, indicates migrants’ ability to leverage emigrant citizenship rights to increase demands. Unlike participation in dance fraternities and cultural performances, emigrant voting is accessible to all Bolivian emigrants. Moreover, emigrant voting rights have significantly expanded emigrants’ capacity to make demands of the Bolivian state. For Bolivian

migrants, citizenship rights and access to democratic spaces is defined by their access to institutionalized channels of political participation and in negotiations with state institutions.
Conclusion

Emergent forms of transnational citizenship among Bolivian migrants in São Paulo draw together regional histories of immigration and economic transformation, while they expand our understandings of social inclusion in post-neoliberal Brazil and Bolivia. Since the 1980s, Bolivian migrant labor in the garment industry has epitomized precarious livelihoods under neoliberal globalization. In Brazil, slave labor eradication campaigns addressed Bolivian garment workers in national dialogues on the limits of Brazilian modernity. These campaigns formed part of federal government attempts to grapple with national legacies of racism and exclusion. In Bolivia, the 2009 Constitution extended emigrants voting rights as part of Morales’ “cultural and democratic revolution” to “refound” the country as a plurinational state. Embedded in the new political and cultural imaginaries of Brazil and Bolivia, Bolivian migrants leverage institutional channels of political participation alongside the performance of Bolivian cultural patrimony to emerge as meritorious citizens and subjects in São Paulo.

While the performance of Bolivian cultural patrimony is both a source of migrant valorization and an avenue for migrant political participation in São Paulo, it also occludes continued forms of intra-community labor exploitation in the garment industry. Whether as vendors in the ethnic market or fraternity organizers in folkloric dance performances, Bolivian migrant elites make visible a unified Bolivian ethnonational “community” disassociated from issues of class and labor. Simultaneously, migrant elites’ display of indigenous cultural forms consolidate their claims to represent Bolivian
migrants despite divergent interests. Ironically, the deployment of Bolivian national identification, rather than “plurinational,” flattens cultural diversity into an essentialized version of the Bolivian nation and is made possible through capital accumulation from the exploitation of poor Bolivian migrants.

This case highlights the continued importance of the nation-state as a principal framework for migrant claims-making. Through the discourse and performance of cultural difference, migrant demands for national voting rights, along with access to state-services, are at the heart of demands for citizenship. Although organizations like CAMI raise the banner of “universal citizenship,” referring to a set of universally-held rights that transcend formal membership in a nation-state, the protection of such rights remains primarily under the purview of individual nation-states. Likewise, while immigrant activists and the municipal government promote culture as the privileged medium for integration and mutual recognition, cultural forms remain rooted in the imagined community of the nation-state. Contesting the assertion of Holston and Appadurai that, “formal membership in the nation-state is increasingly no longer necessary nor a sufficient condition for substantive citizenship,” Bolivian migrants continue to demand greater access to institutional channels of political participation through the performance of an ethnonational identity.¹

While this study highlights how culture is deployed as a political resource for migrants’ social and political inclusion, it also demonstrates how objectified culture may hide class dynamics and perpetuate certain forms of exclusion. Although migrant elites’ strategic deployment of culture is an effective political resource to makes claims of state-

¹ Holston and Appadurai, “Cities and Citizenship,” 190.
protected rights and resources, this study sounds a note of caution against culture’s assumed progressive nature. In studies of nationalism, the importance of state and elite actors in constructing national identities is widely noted. Likewise, as migrants reterritorialize Bolivian nationhood in São Paulo, elite and state actors have a key role, as well as interests, in constructing Bolivian national identification. In this case, a Bolivian migrant elite mobilizes objectified culture while claiming to represent a Bolivian migrant “community” in their negotiations with state institutions. Performances of culture further consolidate migrants’ stratified access to power and resources, as well as mask the continued exploitation of Bolivian garment workers.

My use of class as a dominant unit of analysis is a key contribution to both the Brazilian scholarly and popular discussions on Bolivian migrants. Although several articles expertly illuminate the nuances of migrant labor insertion, they localize issues of class and exploitation in the garment industry. By contrast, articles on cultural performance minimize class dynamics, suggesting that Bolivians are communally transcending the subject position of exploited worker to emerge as a cultural agent. Scholars highlight migrant intentionality in transforming their public image as “slave labor” through culture and positively evaluate it as a sign of community empowerment. Importantly, as scholarly representations uphold elite discourse without analyzing class dynamics, scholarship bolsters elite claims to represent and speak on behalf of the Bolivian migrant population in the city. Additionally, as of yet, little has been written on migrants’ political organizing or their relationship with state institutions. Rather than substantively address migrant-state relations, scholars analyze cultural performance as the medium of communication between an essentialized Bolivian community and Brazilian
civil society. In this study, I assert that cultural performance intersects with migrant political agendas to make significant demands of state institutions. Theorizing the link between culture and politics is critical in recognizing migrants’ agency. Just as some migrants contest the metaphor of “slave labor” for undermining migrant agency, so too should we, as scholars, be wary of reducing migrants to an essentialized folkloric spectacle, even if positively evaluated. Bolivian migrants strategically mobilize cultural performance alongside institutional channels of political participation to negotiate for greater state-protected rights.

Finally, this study makes a small contribution in addressing the gap in literature on south-south migration. Several contemporary studies highlight migration as the human dimension of globalization that, along with the movement of capital, commodities, and information, is significantly reshaping global geographies. According to Appadurai, Holston, and Sassen, cosmopolitan cities are key in analyzing concrete processes of globalization. What Sassen defines as a “new geography of centrality” cuts across the “old North-South divide,” binding international financial centers such as London and New York with São Paulo and Bangkok. However, in the theorization of emergent forms of citizenship in the context of globalization, studies overwhelming depend on evidence from scholarship on immigration to the United States and Western Europe. Yet, since south-south migration is increasingly a dominant human feature of the new geography of globalization, it has just as much to tell us about citizenship today.

Moreover, south-south migration indicates new possibilities and existing barriers for emergent forms of regional alliances. Since the 1980s, Brazil has demonstrated an

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interest in forging relations with Latin American countries as Brazil’s international presence and global aspirations are, in the words of Brazilian scholars Maria Regina Soares de Lima and Mônica Hirst, “increasingly perceived as a process intimately connected to the emergence of ‘South America’ as a particular grouping within the international community.”

In countries like Brazil, contemporary regional migration is part of a process to redefine international relations, as well as address domestic issues of race and social inclusion. At the turn of the twentieth century, state representatives and elites perceived immigration, replacing the local indigenous and black populations, as tied to Brazil’s destiny as the “country of the future.” Today, Bolivian migrants and their claims for citizenship are part of new set of cultural and political imaginaries in Brazil and Latin America.

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Biography

A native of Antrim, New Hampshire, Mira Kohl graduated *magna cum laude* from Macalester College in 2010 with a Bachelor’s of Arts in Latin American Studies and Anthropology and a minor in Hispanic Studies. Following the completion of ethnographic field research in Cochabamba, Bolivia, Mira wrote two undergraduate theses that analyzed negotiations over the implementation of intercultural education regionally and in the everyday politics of the school. Mira has also studied in Argentina, Ecuador, Nicaragua, and Mexico. Upon graduation, she taught English for a year in Andalucía, Spain through the Spanish Ministry of Education. Mira subsequently worked in immigrant advocacy in Boston for two years as the manager of a legal services campaign. In 2013, Mira began the M.A. program at Tulane University’s Stone Center for Latin American Studies. She was awarded the Foreign Language and Area Studies (FLAS) Fellowship, through the U.S. Department of Education, for the study of Portuguese. In the summer of 2014, Mira was awarded a FLAS Grant to attend an intensive Portuguese-language program at the Pontifícia Universidade Católica (PUC) in São Paulo, Brazil. There, she conducted ethnographic field research on Bolivian migrant politics and cultural performances in the city. Mira plans to continue her research through a Ph.D. program.