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**Author**
Escarley Torrico
**Coordination**
Sarah Botton

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# Conflicts and tensions over water ownership in the territory of the Urban-Rural Interface of Hampaturi, municipality of La Paz

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**Conflicts and tensions over water ownership in the territory of the Urban-Rural Interface of Hampaturi, municipality of La Paz**

**Escarley Torrico**
CIDES-UMSA

**Abstract**
Many works focus on water conflicts in urban or rural areas, but very few try to understand what happens in spaces where boundaries are diffuse. In this article, we analyze the tensions and conflicts that arise in the urban-rural interface of Hampaturi, located on the northwest edge of the urban sprawl of the city of La Paz, where we find part of the water dams supplying water for household consumption.

**Keywords**
Hampaturi, Urban-Rural Interface, water system

**Classification JEL**
A13, D62, E01, E22, I30, I31, O11, Q01, Q51

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**Résumé**
De nombreux travaux se concentrent sur les conflits liés à l'eau dans les zones urbaines ou rurales, mais très peu tentent de comprendre ce qui se passe dans les espaces où les frontières sont diffuses. Dans cet article, nous analysons les tensions et les conflits qui surviennent dans l'interface urbain-rural de Hampaturi, situé à la limite nord-ouest de l'étalement urbain de la ville de La Paz, où l'on trouve une partie des barrages qui fournissent de l'eau pour la consommation des ménages.

**Mots-clés**
Hampaturi, Interface urbain-rural, réseaux d'eau

# Introduction

Just by opening the tap, city dwellers seldom wonder where the water they have in their homes comes from. Little is known about the problems and conflicts in water-producing areas because studies of water urbanization focus on the scope of the water network or on the inequality in distribution. Although it is recognized that urban development occurs at the cost of the expansion of water boundaries, intensifying conflicts in extraction territories of the resource (Swyngedouw, 2006), there is little work on what happens in those areas.

With this work we want to fill this gap by concentrating on the study of Hampaturi, a basin at the foot of the snow-capped mountains of the Andes, from where a third of the drinking water consumed by the city of La Paz, in Bolivia, is channeled. For this, the concept of urban-rural interface has been useful to us, which comes from urban planning and tries to render account for those interstitial spaces between the urban and the rural and which should be understood as a specific category due to its particularities.

With the objective of knowing the type of tensions that occur in the territory of water extraction for the city, the field work was carried out mainly during the second half of 2018 with visits to the territory and workshops with the inhabitants of Hampaturi. In addition, the analysis combined geographic information tools and file reviews.

In this article, we seek to show how the inhabitants of the urban-rural interface of Hampaturi intend to use to their advantage the power that gives them the location of water in their territory through the claim of rights over the property of the resource. Likewise, how these efforts are frustrated because the most powerful political and economic actors deploy strategies similar to those used in the exploitation of other resources: co-optation, fragmentation, corruption and patronage to control social demands.

This paper is divided in six parts. The first part describes how Hampaturi, a rural district in the municipality of La Paz, was incorporated into the water system. In the second section, an attempt is made to understand the territory of Hampaturi from the concept of the urban-rural interface. In the third section we refer to what it has meant for Hampaturi to be part of the water system and we analyze the conditions of access to water for its inhabitants. In the final sections we try to show what strategies Hampaturi has deployed to use water as a mechanism to present its demands and what the state response has been.

# 1. The incorporation of Hampaturi in the water system

At the beginning of the 20th century, after the Federal War (1898-1899) and due to an upturn in mining in the northern mountain range, La Paz was consolidated as the most important city in Bolivia. Some thirty mining companies established their offices in that city, at the same time as activity in the construction sector increased due to the remodeling of public buildings. In addition, the city attracted people who were engaged in trade, especially abroad. Peruvian, German, and Austrian merchants swarmed the city. The population quickly overcame the stagnation and decline recorded in past decades. Until 1928 the annual growth rate was 3.2% and reached 5.9% in the 1940s (Schoop, 1981: 61).

Ludovico Ivanissevich (1929), a member of the Water Promotion Board, wrote a report on the situation of the supply of this liquid in the city, in which he outlines the characteristics of the service. Until that moment, this document indicates that the municipality was in charge of supplying water to the city using irrigation channels derived from the Choqueyapu river, then resorted to a water supply from the slopes of Challapampa[1] that fed batteries or public dispensers. In 1904, a distribution network was built that was supplied with water from a spring located in Tembladerani and water service in the homes was started. In the following years, a dam was built in the Achachicala area and a filter to improve the waters of the Choqueyapu river, the distribution network was extended and the Campo de Marte Water Box[2] and a piping between Achachicala and that Box was put into service (*Íd.* 8).

The review of the annual reports of the Municipal Council shows that in 1907 a change in the city's drinking water supply system began to be debated to stop depending on the natural flow of water sources and to store water in a dam to be distributed afterwards to the homes. It was defined that the Milluni basin would be the ideal place for it. The biggest obstacle was the financing of the site since the public administration lacked the resources to pay for the works (Municipality of La Paz, 1907).

At the same time that the municipality was taking various steps to obtain funds that would allow it to undertake the construction of the infrastructure to adequately provide drinking water and sewerage to the city of La Paz, the private initiative participated in undertakings to consolidate an electric energy company that provides the public lighting service. The dammed water in Milluni was also necessary to put into operation the electric power generation turbines and it was there that interests intersected.

The lighting of the city with electric energy had attracted the interest of private entrepreneurs before the beginning of the 20th century. The "Fábrica de Luz" [*Light Factory*] was a local undertaking for which equipment for the generation of electrical energy was imported in order to offer the municipality the public lighting service, replacing the oil candles of the

[1] Currently the Bus Terminal is located there.

[2] Currently it is located in the Miraflores area, near the Villarroel Square.

urban lanterns. For the turbines to work, the city's water captures were used. The company encountered various problems such as financing, fuel[3], and others, which ultimately led to failure.

The local entrepreneurs sold the "Fábrica de Luz" to the French company Bolivian Rubber & General Enterprise Limited. According to Iturri (2007), this company arrived to the country attracted by the rubber business, the investments of which in plantations in the Yungas area did not report profits. But, the presence in Bolivia of one of its engineers would open new options for this transnational company, the parent company of which was responsible for commercializing machinery and electrical supplies. Peruvian Horacio Ferreccio, who arrived with the company to carry out studies on rubber, recommended feasibility studies for the construction of a hydroelectric plant in La Paz, the topography of which was suitable for this purpose.

After purchasing the "Fábrica de Luz", Bolivian Rubber was awarded the public lighting service, at first for 28 months and in 1908 the company signed a contract with the municipality for 25 years. This contract incorporated the construction of the dam in the Milluni area, where the municipality had exclusive rights to exploit the water it supplied to the La Paz households. Bolivian Rubber promised to build the long-awaited dam in exchange for using the water to generate electricity from the turbines. The municipality had obtained a BOB[4] 500,000 loan that it put as a counterpart, making sure that the dam would remain under its ownership when the contract ended. At the same time, the company promised to deliver 500 l/s to the city's drinking water system. Apparently, it was a reasonable agreement, the city won twice because it would have drinking water and electricity.

The Municipal Council reflected the fact as follows:

*Contract is signed with the Bolivian Rubber and General Enterprises Limited, concessionaire of the electricity supply as a subrogation of the Empresa Hidroeléctrica [Hydroelectric Company]. According to the contract, the municipality of La Paz would give The Bolivian Rubber BOB 475,000 as a contribution to the water collection works of Milluni and its conduction to the city, and the company must deliver 500 l/s. The contract indicated that in 1933 the Milluni dam, the Achachicala pipeline and the building would be in the hands of the municipality* (Municipality of La Paz, 1908).

The works lasted two years, until 1910, after which the company was in a position to generate electrical energy that far exceeded the demand at the time. In fact, in the event that all the streets and residences of the city had been lit, there was still a remnant. Iturri (2007) indicates that the company had to carry out campaigns to increase domestic consumption of electrical energy, which at that time was limited to lamps in the rooms. They imported from Europe and the United States "... giant chandeliers, irons, refrigerators and electric cookers, which were offered in their showroom and sales on Sucre street" (*Íd.* 21).

[3] Iturri (2007) indicates that the kettles of the turbines were ignited with "taquia", a usual combustible in the city of La Paz that came from the excrement of the llama. The company bought large quantities of "taquia", which caused the shortage of combustible for cooking with the consequent complaint from the families.

[4] Boliviano, name of the currency since 1864. In 1908, 1 pound sterling was equivalent to 12½ bolivianos.

In a few years, the electricity company established itself as one of the most important in the city, venturing into other areas such as passenger transport by tram and telephony. Over time it changed owners and name and in the 1950s it took the name of Bolivian Power Co., always in the process of expanding its operations. In 1930, it obtained the concession to produce and distribute more electrical energy by building a new plant in Zongo, which allowed it to cover the industrial demand of the mines, which became its main client, and even managed to have a presence in other cities such as Oruro[5].

But what happened to drinking water? The dark side of this story is that the promises of modernity contained in the flashes of electric lamps dazzled the city council authorities. These promises were not kept regarding the drinking water, as the company simply did not honor the commitment to deliver 500 l/s to the city. The memories of the Municipal Council of those years are full of complaints on this matter, also of excuses and explanations to delay the fulfillment of the commitment. In 1916, Arturo Posnansky, an engineer from the municipality, drafted a document to propose solutions to the city's water problem, stating:

The water of Milluni will always serve for domestic use and when it comes in greater abundance, it will provide excellent hygiene services, *especially if Bolivian General Enterprises were to comply with the first clause of its contract and flow 500 l/s into the Achachicala reservoirs* (Posnansky, 1916: 6).

In 1929, the engineer Ivanissevich (1929: 8) pointed out that the Milluni system only provided 74 l/s to the city:

> The current supply is made up of the three sources expressed, from Tembladerani, Milluni and Panteón, in the following proportion:
>
> Tembladerani, approximately 17 l/s
>
> Milluni 74 l/s
>
> Del Panteón 8 l/s
>
> Total 100 l/s
>
> The approximate flow of 100 l/s represents 8,640 $m^3$ per day, which, taking into account the higher output of the slopes in summer, can be raised to round up to 9,000 $m^3$ or 9,000,000 liters per day.

Even Iturri (2007: 37) records the subject in the memories of the light company:

> According to the files of the company, in July 1928 Bolivian Power had 5,035 subscribers for the electricity service, about two thousand more than in 1920. (...) Likewise, complaints abounded about the company's failure to comply with the water supply to the city, as Bolivian Power "launched" the water from the Milluni dam from 6 pm to 10 pm when the population's greatest requirement for water was before noon. To remedy that, it was suggested to the municipality to place a graphic meter that permanently indicated the volume that moved through the drainage channel, fining the company if it did not comply with that clause.

[5] "La Fábrica de Luz" (Iturri, 2007) is a detailed account of the history of the Electric Company.

The contract with the electricity company not only deprived the municipality of using the potential of the city's main water source at that time, but it also sucked up the municipality's resources and put it in serious economic problems. The company's main customer was the municipality, since the latter paid for the public lighting service. It was increasingly difficult to bear the cost of this service, which grew as more streetlights were installed. At that time, the neighbors did not pay a fee for the service and the income of the municipal treasury disappeared with each expansion. At some point, the municipality had to transfer the property tax payment (one of its main income) directly to the company to fulfill the obligations that street lighting generated. These obligations increased with the subsidy granted to the company for the operation of the trams and, finally, for the telephone lines installed in the public divisions. The municipality ended up indebted to the electricity company and negotiated extensions of the contract in poor conditions[6].

But that was not all. The electricity company was in charge of the location of the dam without the supervision of the municipality and chose a more convenient place for its interests, but not for the consumption of water by the inhabitants of the city. Obviously, the dam was located in the Ovejipiña sector where the water was contaminated by residues of the mining activity[7] that had been developing in the area. Over the years it was found that the waters were unsanitary.

In 1917, the Municipal Council entrusted a medical commission to study the waters that came from Milluni, as it was suspected that they were the source of an epidemic of typhoid fever that affected the city. The results confirmed the fears:

*We would not fulfill our duty without indicating to the Honorable Council the terrible conditions of the capture of the waters that we call drinking waters and that are far from it, a fact verified by repeated bacteriological examinations, which according to Miquel's table would be classified in the table of very impure. This fact is understood taking into account the defects of the capture, since the Milluni water, before entering the intake, meets the river, and also the canal that carries the water to the population is mostly exposed and, as there are inhabitants in that region, their excrements continuously infect the water consumed by the city* (Municipality of La Paz, 1907).

Emilio Villanueva, who was already a prominent municipal official, said in a public conference when he was asked about the situation of drinking water in the city of La Paz:

*Ovejipiña is the place where the Milluni river receives as a contribution the infiltrations of an unhealthy area, the soil of which is covered with* ***sulfurous outcrops*** *and* ***excrement materials****, the hills in which there is more than one indigenous cemetery. At the time when I visited it for the first time, all of this was aggravated by the entry of the artificial lagoon of acidic waters from the Huayna Potosí mine mill, today The Fabulosa Mines Company. Not even looking for a bad place on purpose for a capture one would have had a worse one. And this is how I expressed my opinion to the engineer Emilio Basadre Forero (...) I said, how is it possible that you and the engineers who intervened in this work projected it in such poor conditions?* (Villanueva, 1936: 184, our bold).

[6] In fact, the Milluni dam passed into the hands of the municipality in 2003.

[7] In the Milluni area there were mining operations that even dated from the Colony and which were maintained despite the fact that the waters were collected in the lower part for urban domestic consumption.

The annual reports of the municipality reflect that the situation of water supply in the city became critical in the following years. Apart from the issue of mining contamination, shortages ensued. A growing urban population could not be provided with the service since the water sources were not sufficient. In 1928, the municipal report stated that:

*The provision of drinking water is one of the most delicate and urgent problems, because with the existing services, water is becoming scarcer and less pure every day. Remember that lake Milluni receives inconvenient tailing disposal and that all reports agree on the need to purify those waters or look for a new source of provision* (Municipality of La Paz, 1928).

It even points out that in 1929 the operations of the Fabulosa Mines Company in the Milluni region not only contaminated the water consumed by the inhabitants of the city with acidic water, but began to divert it for its operations and the functioning of motors. Milluni's flow dropped so low that it put the electricity generation at the Achachicala plant at risk. The electric company approached the Municipal Council to request vigorous actions against the mining company, indicating that this was the reason why it could not comply with the delivery of 500 l/s stipulated in the contract. The impasse ended when the Fabulosa Mines became a user of the Bolivian Power services and continued to operate (Iturri, 2007: 36).

Apparently, the conviction of contamination of Milluni's waters discouraged claims for compliance with the delivery of the 500 l/s by the electric company. Solutions to purify the water were explored, but none were feasible, were too expensive, or did not fully satisfy. It was then that the search for new water sources began.

Various proposals were considered, the search and exploitation of springs, the digging of wells to exploit groundwater, and finally the construction of a new dam. Arturo Posnansky, inspector of Public Works of the Municipal Council, proposed a project in 1916 in which he elaborated the initiative to "propose a new capture of drinking water at the foot of the Hampaturi glaciers" (Posnansky, 1916). He suggested constructing a new dam to collect the waters of the snow-covered mountain of Chicani in the southern part of the city and at that time an extensive agricultural area dotted with haciendas. In 1918, the city's Water Promoter Board was organized with the mission of analyzing and studying all the proposals and projects that sought to solve the problem. By then, the formulation of the Hampaturi project had advanced, in 1936 work began and in 1945 the Hampaturi water conveyance was inaugurated, delivering the city with 500 l/s of pure water.

The competition of water uses between electricity generation and mining activity in the Milluni dam sealed the fate of Hampaturi as the city's water supply zone. In the following decades (1979, 1993, 2016), work was carried out to expand the storage capacity of various dams. Currently, Hampaturi supplies a third of the city's water demand with a population of almost one million inhabitants, mainly covering the southern area and part of the Miraflores district.

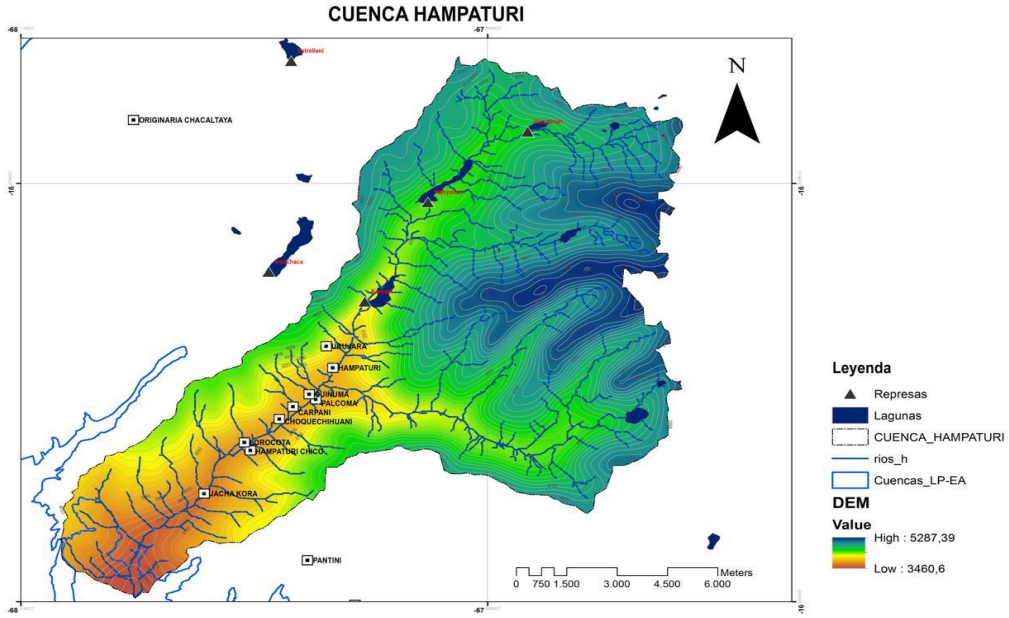
# 2. Understanding the territory of Hampaturi: an approach from the concept of urban-rural interface

The Hampaturi area is part of one of the several basins that are formed at the foot of the snow-capped mountains of the Andes and that end in the valley where the city of La Paz was located. From north to south there are four basins, transversely they present towards the north a strip of strong mountain range relief of hard soils, which reach 4,000 to 6,088 meters above sea level. Towards the south it presents an inter-Andean valley with medium and soft relief near the mountains and with moderate soils for agricultural cultivation, which are between 3,600 to 4,000 meters above sea level.

The main four basins are[8]: Huayna Potosí (also called Choqueyapu), Orkojahuira, Hampaturi (also called Irpavi), and Achumani. Due to the location and proximity to snow-capped mountains, there are several lagoons (Hurmutani, Pampalarama and Patalarama, Inka-chaka, Challapata, Ajuan Khota, Kunka Huikara, and others) and also rivers (Orkojawira, Achumani, Irpavi) in that area. The difference between the basins is the height at which they are located; Huayna Potosí and Orkojahuira are high and therefore they are colder, while Hampaturi and Achumani, which are to the south, are lower in altitude and their climate is more favorable for agriculture.

As the following map shows, water defines the territory in the Hampaturi area.

**Map 1. Municipality of La Paz. Hampaturi basin**
Source: prepared by R. Mamani for Torrico, 2019, based on data provided by the Autonomous Municipal Government of La Paz (GAMLP for its acronym in Spanish)



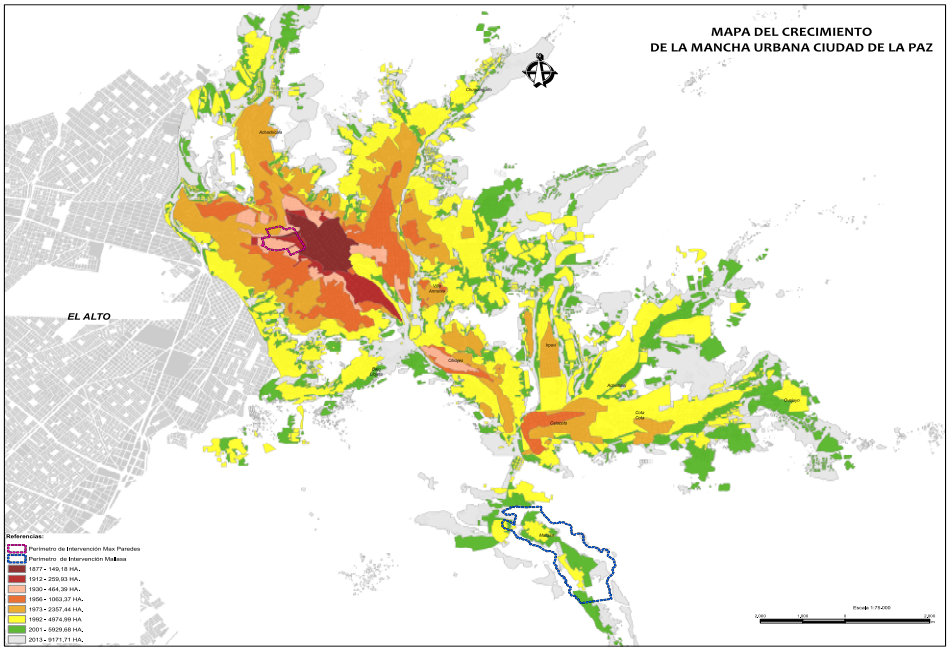

[8] The municipality of La Paz has a total of eight basins in its territory: Choqueyapu, Orkhojahuira, Llojeta, Irpavi, Achumani (Jillusaya), Huarajahuira, Huacallani and Mallasa, but the largest and most important are the four mentioned.

The basin is furrowed by numerous streams and slopes that, together with its altitude and temperature, make it suitable for agricultural activity. Until the Agrarian Reform (1953), when the land was distributed among the peasants, there were three haciendas: Lorocota, Chicani and Chinchaya, which must have been very prosperous judging by the size of one of the houses that survives to this day in the Chicani area.

It is possible that the flow of water from the main river has decreased due to the construction of the dams, affecting agricultural production in the area. On the contrary, the slopes of the basin always had a string as a source of water, located on the west side of the Kasiri lagoon and the irrigation system is powered by this source.

In the first decades of the 20th century, when the proposal arose to build a water dam in this area to supply the city of La Paz, the advance of the urban area had barely managed to pass through the Obrajes area, but since the 1980s urbanization advanced by leaps and bounds so that it is no longer possible to argue that Hampaturi, rural district of the municipality of La Paz, continues to be only rural, as reflected in the following map

**Map 2. La Paz (municipality). Advance of the urban area of the city, 1877–2013**
Source: Autonomous Municipal Government of La Paz. Strategic Planning Directorate[9]




For the municipality of La Paz, Hampaturi is administratively part of the Rural District 22. The different Municipal Development Plans refer to it as a "rural" area although certain sectors are considered "urban" and others "suburban". The lack of precise definition of this territory, common in this type of areas where the traditional borders between urban and rural are blurred (GAMLP, 2016), plays a role as we will see later.

[9] I wish to thank the Strategic Planning Directorate of the Autonomous Municipal Government of La Paz (GAMLP) for providing this map and also map 3, which are not published in any other medium.

Several works have highlighted the need to analyze these areas in light of tools that allow to escape from the limits of the urban / rural dichotomy. Hence it is useful to appeal to these readings for a characterization of the Hampaturi area. One of the reference works in Latin America on the subject is that of the Colombians López, Delgado and Vinasco (2005: 35) who understand that the spatial portion where the encounter between urban and rural occurs has usually been designated as "...suburban area, of urban-rural transition, of rural urban continuum, of edge of city, among others". The problem is that these categories correspond to a static vision of the territory, which establishes hierarchies between the urban and the rural, and which is therefore not useful for understanding them.

The quoted authors raise the need to overcome binary visions that consider the urban and the rural as "pairs in opposition (...) that are conditioning each other over time, either from inclusion, exclusion or juxtaposition" (*Íd.*: 35). In this sense, they appeal to a new category of analysis: the *urban-rural interface*, which they define as "...another category of territorial analysis necessarily complementary to that of the rural, urban, the city and the countryside" (*Íd.*: 31). What is new about this notion is that it emphasizes transition and articulation. Hence the importance of the term *interface*, a IT loan that attempts to account for the link between two realities. It reflects the idea of "connection, of articulation and in turn of transition between one territorial reality and another, producing a new one that is equally molded in time and space" (*Íd.*: 35).

The immediate origin of this notion is the work of Allen, Da Silva and Corubolo (1999) who, from urban planning, proposed to overcome the traditional analysis of the urbanization process in developing countries, structured around the dichotomies urban-rural, traditional-modern, formal-informal, developing the concept of *suburban interface*. The conventional variables to distinguish the urban from the rural were traditionally the notion of population, density, characteristics of the infrastructure, administrative boundaries, and predominant economic activities. However, all of these were insufficient to characterize the communities and the dynamics that arise in suburban areas, rather understood as "edge" territories.

In addition, these authors point out that although there is no consensus on the concept of the suburban interface, professionals and institutions increasingly recognize that urban and rural characteristics tend to coexist in cities and beyond their limits. Therefore, they proposed to define the *suburban interface* delimiting its unique characteristics in biophysical and socio-economic terms, and taking into account the dynamics of rural-urban flows in and across the system.

> *The definition of work adopted is not based on prescriptive conditions (distance from urban areas, density or infrastructure) but on the specific characteristics of the Suburban Interface as a different ecological and socioeconomic system under uncertain institutional arrangements. This definition provides a basis for understanding not only the emergence of the problem, but also the opportunities for development and sustainability of the rural and urban continuous systems and the communities that live and work within the interface* (*Íd.*: 5).

As said, the team of López, Delgado and Vinasco collected in essence the contributions of Allen, Da Silva and Corubolo (1999), but considered that the term urban-rural interface was better suited to the idea of transition of two realities, and that the use of the term "suburban" should be abandoned due to its negative charge. On the other hand, they recognized that one of the greatest difficulties in the study of these spaces was the physical delimitation

"given the difficulty of establishing exactly the point where the exclusively urban or the exclusively rural is presented in a particular way. This implies that a strict analysis can extend the physical environment of the interface to extremely wide portions of the space" (2005: 36). This difficulty would be solved from notions such as territoriality, references of identity and strategic ecosystems.

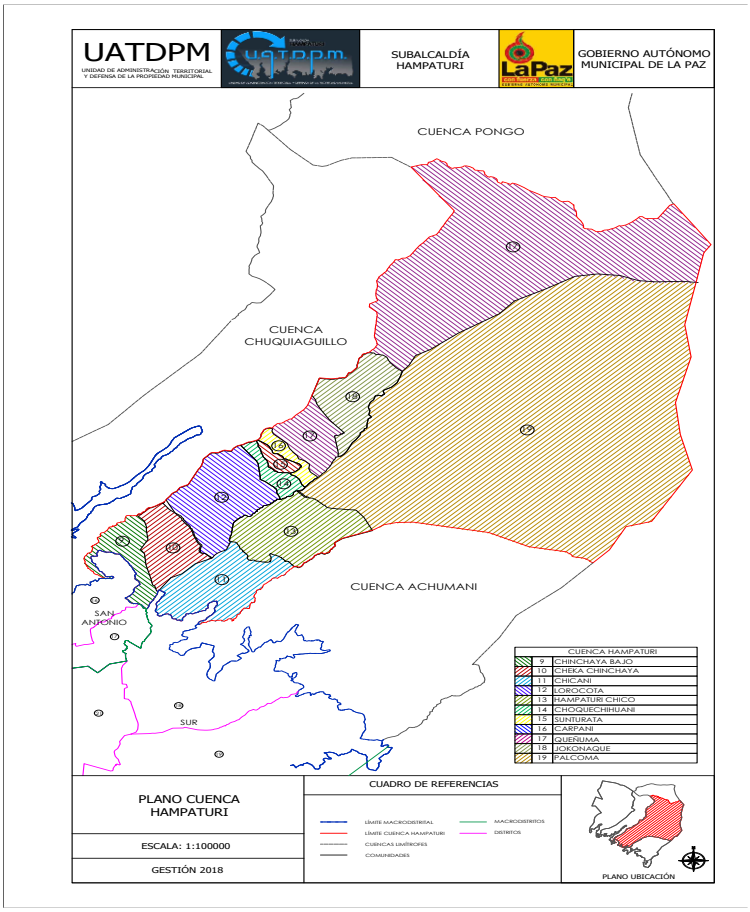
Understanding the Hampaturi territory in light of the urban-rural interface concept offers a new perspective. In this territory, at least the following three aspects can be analyzed:

> *i) The ecological interface*, where urban characteristics defined by equipment and infrastructure coexist as well as inadequate services; and a natural and rural system that seems to be being reduced or modified by urban expansion;
>
> *ii) The socioeconomic particularities*, the continuous but not finished urbanization process generally accompanied (and in many cases produced) by land speculation; the change of high productivity economic activities; and the emergence of often illegal informal activities (i.e. clandestine slaughterhouses); intensive use of agro-chemicals and fertilizers for the production of vegetables and mining activities to supply construction materials, etc. As a result, the social composition of the suburban system is highly heterogeneous and subject to change over time. Small farmers, informal settlers, industrial undertakings, and urban middle class buyers coexist in the territory with different and often contradictory interests, practices, and perceptions (Allen, Da Silva and Corubolo, 1999: 5);
>
> *iii) The institutional arrangements*, usually uncertain, due to their location on the edge; the lack of institutions capable of guiding the links between urban and rural activities, reinforced by the overlapping sectoral convergence of institutions with different agendas: local government institutions tend to focus on the urban or the rural; metropolitan governments rarely include rural jurisdiction; there are no special authorities to manage urban-rural areas; and district and regional governments do not adequately connect urban and rural issues. Poor management of suburban areas obstructs both rural and urban development (*íd.*).

# 3. Hampaturi's complex and asymmetric relationship with the state

The dams of Hampaturi are located fifty minutes from the city center. First, one reaches the Pampahasi area[10] where the drinking water treatment plant known as SAMAPA (Servicio Autónomo Municipal de Agua Potable y Alcantarillado) [Autonomous Municipal Service of Drinking Water and Sewerage] is located. A route of minibuses carries passengers to the dams, others only cover the route of the most populated sectors: Chinchaya and Chicani, following the border of the Irpavi river and passing through several communities: Lorocota, Choquechihuani, Carpani, Queñuma, Jokonaque and Palcoma, until reaching the dams, first "the small one", as the oldest one is called in the lower area of Hampaturi, and then "the large one" in the upper area, delivered in July 2017 by Evo Morales.

**Map 3. La Paz (municipality). Hampaturi basin communities**
Source: Sub-municipality of Hampaturi, Unit for Territorial Administration and Defense of Municipal Property




[10] Pampahasi, an old grazing area, is a district located on the eastern hillside of the city. There, one of the water purification plants that comes from the Hampaturi dams was built. The neighbors of the area assure that at the end of the 1960s several entrepreneurs and the state bought land in the area that was part of a hacienda to build homes for laborers. Laborers from the SAID and SAMAPA factory and others began the urbanization (see Historia de 100 barrios paceños [*History of 100 La Paz districts*], Autonomous Municipal Government of La Paz (GAMLP), 2009: 452-458).

On the way from Pampahasi, an urban centrality with a lot of commercial movement and densely populated, passing through the district of Villa Salomé to where the municipal transport arrives, one must then "go down" towards Hampaturi, which is more rural and as one moves on, the urban trace diffuses. Homes are becoming scarce and vacant lots appear with brick fences and signs that announce the sale or with the indication that they are the property of some family. Clearly the land business is very dynamic and property conflicts are also known. The landscape changes arriving Chinchaya where solar tents dominate, with yellow plastic roofs, destined to the cultivation of vegetables, an activity to which many inhabitants of the area dedicate themselves as it is compatible with small plots of 500 square meters. Passing Chinchaya there are extensive cultivated lands and the yellow tents decrease. This is the route to reach the increasingly appreciated water sources that supply almost 250 thousand people out of the 758 thousand that inhabit the city of La Paz.

Historically, it is known and observed that the area received very little attention from national and local authorities, a common characteristic of non-central territories, not like department capitals and a few other cities in the country, until the administrative decentralization. Although the Popular Participation Act (1994) assigned competences to the municipalities over their rural areas, the municipality of La Paz only began to establish an institutional presence, recognizing and incorporating the rural part of the municipality in the governance as of the 2000s.

The review of the different development plans prepared by the municipality of La Paz[11] shows that the incorporation of rural districts was gradual, but that there are still differences in the treatment they receive. The budget they obtain is still limited compared to the urban area[12] and despite the fact that rural districts represent 95% of its territorial area.

One of the interviews carried out with an official from the Municipal Planning Directorate summarizes very well the place that the rural has occupied throughout these years: "*The Autonomous Municipal Government of La Paz is learning to work with the rural. Until recently, when referring to the institution, it was said: "City of La Paz" and not "Municipality of La Paz*" (Villegas, 2018). The same official points out that in the Jayma Plan (2007-2011), progress was made in the understanding of the rural territory of the municipality, which until then was not part of the planning. Even a Rural Development Plan was prepared, although it was not published or executed because to be official this document had to be previously approved by the Municipal Council, which did not happen due to lack of consensus. Despite these advances, the municipality is still in a learning process: "*We work in the rural area, but there is no "rural vision" (...) we work in the rural area but under criteria of urban work in which the municipality has much more experience (...) we are working to learn to work in the rural area*" (*íd.*).

[11] Since the enactment of the Popular Participation Act in 1994, all municipalities must plan the development of their territories in the medium term (Municipal Development Plans (PDM) - 5 years) and in the short term (Annual Operational Plans (POA)). In 2018, the national government introduced a modification in the planning of local governments and requested the elaboration of Territorial Plans for Integral Development (PTDI).

[12] To carry out this work, the following were reviewed: PDM La Paz 2005-2009; Jayma Plan (2007-2011), La Paz Plan 2040 and PTDI La Paz 2017 and 2018.

This situation is also reflected in the poverty indicators. In 2012, the municipality of La Paz measured poverty in its territory using different methods: *i)* poverty level (income, expenditure and consumption), *ii)* Unmet Basic Needs Index, and *iii)* quality of life of the population. It is notable that in all the methodologies applied, rural districts 22 of Hampaturi and 23 of Zongo are those with the highest poverty rates in the municipality (GAMLP, 2013).

These facts seem to be in line with the idea that rurality in Bolivia is linked to poverty, with the addition that these are also the territories of the municipality with the largest number of self-identified indigenous populations. In the Hampaturi district, 82.6% ascribe as Aymara and almost half of its population (42.6%) learned to speak that language (*Íd.*: 33). Being indigenous and living in a rural area seems to be synonymous with being poor, even living in one of the most important metropolitan areas of the country.

The situation of access to water is one of the most delicate issues. Paradoxically, Hampaturi (District 22) has a water coverage below the municipal average, although the captures to supply La Paz and El Alto are located there. While in the municipality of La Paz the average coverage of water by pipe network is 97.5%, in the district of Hampaturi this coverage only reaches 57.6% and only 24.7% have pipes inside the house. Furthermore, the liquid they receive is not always drinkable, about 70% of the district's population receives water from springs and wells (*Íd.*: 37). A few minutes from any dam, no house has water from the network and the community members cover this need with water from springs, through water committees or cooperatives, administered by themselves[13].

[13] Although the quality of the water of these springs can be questioned, the service is continuous and without interruptions, unless there are landslides.

**Picture 1. La Paz (municipality). Water pipe channeled from the Hampaturi dam (taken from Chinchaya)**
Photo: E. Torrico, 2018

Some authors like Poupeau *et al.* (2019) consider Hampaturi to be "a case of environmental injustice" since its inhabitants do not have access to drinkable water from the network, despite the fact that the infrastructure of the water company passes through that territory. In their work, the authors have pointed out that to cover domestic needs, each community had to organize alternative systems for collecting water from springs and wells. Some experiences work better than others, not all water committees can adequately manage all the aspects related to the administration of the community service that involves collection, distribution, service charge, and maintenance of water networks and channels. But the common denominator seems to be the doubtful quality of the water, as well as the discontinuity of the service.

# 4. The new post-nationalization context of the service: fears related to climate change, and institutional weakness

The Water War in Cochabamba (2000) and the conflicts over the termination of the contract with Aguas del Illimani in La Paz (2005) already showed the growing importance of the issue of water on the national political agenda. Both conflicts expressed the rejection of the Bolivian families to the process of privatization of the water service because, in fact, it meant raising the costs of access to the liquid, either by way of increasing connection costs or consumption rates. These mobilizations not only achieved the termination of the concession contracts with the transnational water companies, Suez and Bechtel, in addition to the return of the state to the administration of the service, but also the declaration of access to water as a human right in the Political Constitution of the State (2009) of Bolivia and also at the United Nations.[14]

The new institutional context of water in Bolivia shows that the conflict has not gone into the background. New problems, both internal and external, have arisen along the way and the way they are faced feed fears and discourses about the future of water for Bolivian families. In the case of the city of La Paz, two issues increase fears: *i)* the effects of climate change on glaciers and rain patterns, and *ii)* water crises due to management problems after the nationalization of the service. In this section we intend to show how these two elements rearticulate the discourse of scarcity that is put at the service of the commodification of water with consequences on the demands of the Hampaturi territory regarding the ownership of the sources.

## 4.1. Institutional post-nationalization weaknesses of the water service in La Paz

In the framework of the privatization of drinking water services in cities in Bolivia, in 1997 the Aguas del Illimani consortium was awarded the concession to manage the drinking water[15] and sewerage services of the cities of La Paz and El Alto for a period of 30 years. The international tender, as well as the start of operations, did not cause any problems and there were no major social conflicts in the process. In fact, the company operated without major observations for almost ten years, very different from what happened in Cochabamba[16].

Complaints and comments regarding the performance of Aguas del Illimani occurred as of 2005 and came mainly from residents of the city of El Alto who reported that the company had consistently breached the obligation to expand water coverage in the city. The company argued that it was not profitable to provide the service to poor and low consumption sectors. In 2006, as a result of social mobilizations, the contract with Aguas del Illimani was

[14] On July 28, 2010, the United Nations adopted resolution A/64/L.63/Rev.1, the article 1 of which reads: "Declares the right to drinking water and sanitation as an essential human right for the full enjoyment of life and all human rights".

[15] Until then, the service was in charge of a municipal entity created in the 1970s, called the Servicio Municipal de Agua Potable y Alcantarillado [*Municipal Service of Drinkable Water and Sewerage*], SAMAPA.

[16] The privatization of water in Cochabamba caused a large social mobilization in 2000, known as the *Water War*. The concession had to be terminated, which inspired other urban social movements in the world that were also opposed to the privatization of the drinking water service.

terminated. The state administered it again although the situation of the company was not clear. Would it be converted in a public company? Would it be in charge of the municipality or the central state? How would the institution be structured?

Once the contract with Aguas del Illimani, AISA, was terminated, the Empresa Pública Social de Agua y Saneamiento [*Public Social Water and Sanitation Company*], EPSAS, was created, but without clarity on its institutional structure[17]. In 2007, a commission was formed to settle the issue, but there were disagreements with the representatives of the Neighborhood Councils of El Alto that asked for more members in the directory board. In 2013, EPSAS was intervened by the central government due to accusations of mismanagement and has remained so to date, despite the fact that the municipalities of La Paz and El Alto have requested to take over the responsibility of the drinkable water service which corresponds to the municipalities.

In that time, the company had to face three serious crises that have limited its ability to supply water to the city (see table 1). Although these crises are said to have originated from technical failures and natural events, the institutional capacities of EPSAS have also been questioned.

**Table 1. Municipality of La Paz. Water crisis, 2008-2016**
Source: own elaboration based on hemerographic review

| Date | Event | Affected districts |
|---|---|---|
| 01/26//2008 | Pipeline rupture | 33 affected districts |
| 03/06/2011 | Mega-landslide | 41 affected districts |
| 11/02/2016 | Major crisis | 94 affected districts |

All these events occurred in the Hampaturi area where currently three important dams are located that capture the resource. The first crisis occurred in 2008[18] with the rupture of a pipe that transported water to the purification plant; the second in 2011 due to the *mega-landslide* that occurred in Callapa, which also damaged a pipeline; and in 2016 when the Hampaturi dam ran out of water. The solving of each event lasted several months and caused great damage to companies and families. To face them, the participation of both the national government and the municipality was necessary, as well as the deployment of emergency and logistics plans to provide water by means of tanks.

In each of these crises, the confidence of the population was compromised in the capacity of the nationalized company to face the challenges that were posed and, ultimately, to ensure the continuity of water service in the city.

[17] The Empresa Pública Social de Agua y Saneamiento [*Public Social Water and Sanitation Company*], EPSAS, arose in compliance with Decree No. 28985 of December 2006, by which the Bolivian government determined the procedures for the transfer of the AISA shares in favor of the National Fund for Regional Development (FNDR), a procedure that was executed to make the contents of the Dispute Termination Framework Agreement viable. At the beginning of 2007, the creation of the Inter-institutional Commission responsible for the design of the new model of the Public Water and Sanitation Company was stipulated. Initially, a term of no more than six months was granted, a term that was extended several times in more than twelve years, which means that the definition of an institutional structure was never finished due to the intervention of the central state.

[18] On the 2008 crisis, see the detailed work by Sébastien Hardy (2010).

### 4.2. Fear related to the effects of climate change on glaciers and water availability

The effects of climate change in La Paz also leave their mark in this context. Two decades ago extreme events were experienced with drought cycles and floods that have put the city on edge. The hemerographic review on the water problem in the last fifteen years shows the persistent concern of the citizens, especially at the end of the year, due to the water level in the dams, due to the start of the rainy season and the volume of the rainfall. Rumors of rationing in the districts are not always confirmed by the authorities, who rather organize campaigns for the good use of water and against the waste of it. This situation that is experienced in the daily life of families is reinforced by the dissemination of data from the academic sphere, the presentation of studies and the holding of seminars that warn about the effects of global warming on glaciers, on which depends a part of the water of the dams of the city of La Paz.

Between November and December 2008, the authorities expressed their concern about the lack of rain: "La Paz will have a water shortage until the first fortnight of February 2009, if there are no heavy rains during this month. The prefect of the department, Pablo Ramos Sánchez, announced a rationing due to the snowmelt of the snow-covered mountains and the limited receptive capacity of the liquid in the dams" (*La Prensa*, December 12, 2008).

In January 2009, it was still not raining, while campaigns to reduce consumption were announced and explanations were given about the low capacity of the dams due to thick sediment layers. The EPSAS manager stated that the Incachaca dam had only 30% of its flow and the Hampaturi dam only 50% of its capacity (*La Razón*, January 13, 2009). In February, the news was even more alarming as the dams had dropped to their most critical level. Journalists from various media went to the site to check out a scene that had rarely been seen:

> *The Hampaturi dam is in a similar situation, located behind the Pampahasi area. About 25 minutes before reaching the site, a large area of land is observed through which small flows of water run. Only when the expert says it, one can guess that there was a river over there* (*La Razón*, February 1, 2009).

During the following days the debate and the bad news intensified, newspaper headlines showed concern: "Imminent risk" (*El Diario*, February 5, 2009), "Little water" (*La Prensa*, February 28, 2009), and communiqués on the importance of water care abounded. National, departmental and local authorities issued a communiqué prohibiting the use of water to play with during carnivals (*El Diario*, February 10, 2009). Prefect José Luis Paredes called for actions to permanently solve the problem and pointed out that the bans and rationing of water were only temporary. For his part, the Minister of Water, René Orellana, asked for calm and communicated that the forecasts of the Meteorological Service indicated that the rains would soon arrive. In the month of March, the rains began and were so intense that the dams were filled and overflowed causing other problems (*La Razón*, March 4, 2009).

This context evidenced the fragility of the city of La Paz to face the management of the water service in the context of the impact of climate change, not only due to changes in climate behavior but also due to signs of institutional weakness in facing the challenges of the present and the future.

### 4.3. The discourse of scarcity and the commodification of water

Castro, Kaïka and Swyngedouw (2002) consider it useful to distinguish between commodification and privatization of water since these terms are often used interchangeably. Commodification refers to the process by which water becomes a market good, while privatization refers to the change of ownership of infrastructure and the management of the service from a public actor to a national or transnational private company.

Although in the first moments the commodification was coupled with *privatization* processes, the tensions and conflicts that arose in the world drove the reversal in the intervention of private agents in the management of the service or the administration of infrastructure. For example, in Bolivia, social mobilizations in the cities of Cochabamba and La Paz managed to cancel concessions to transnational companies.

The central point of the argument is that reversing privatization processes does not necessarily imply commodification. In both public and private companies, "profit" continues to be the parameter by which the performance of service providers is measured, and the price continues to be a key instrument for regulating demand. Competitiveness and productivity are the discursive elements under which the performance of water service providers is judged, even when they are administered by a public entity. Hence, we can point out that the global trend of commodification of water for domestic consumption, which started in the 1980s, is already hegemonic despite the conflicts and resistance.

The hegemony of commodification, understood in the ideological sense of the term, has to do with the construction of a vision and wide acceptance in all sectors of society that water is not a good but a commodity and, therefore, its access is subject to the laws of the market sphere. In this context, Castro, Kaïka and Swyngedouw (2002) identify that one of the mechanisms that serves to build the hegemony of the commodification of water has been the discourse of scarcity.

Economic and political actors are interested in emphasizing the idea that water is running out, whether due to misuse, mismanagement, or other issues such as climate change. Although these elements are verifiable, they are also part of a discourse that aims to shape common sense that becomes the new axis on which public debate revolves. This discourse does not question how, who and in what way they access water; it does not question the inequalities of class and ethnicity involved in consumption, but it rather justifies the commodification as a mechanism to regulate the demand for water.

If water is a scarce good and therefore valuable in commercial terms, it should not surprise us that questions arise such as: To whom does this good belong? Consequently, if water must be paid for, who should collect? In this sense, in the studied case, we propose that part of the conflicts over water in Hampaturi are centered on property disputes, reflected in demands for payment of royalties for the use of territory. Instead, another part focuses on compensation, translated into infrastructure construction and other projects. In both cases, an attempt is made to equalize the conditions. In the words of Le Gouill (2017), the water crisis in 2016 determined a balance of power between EPSAS and the *ayllu* of Hampaturi.

# 5. Using the "power" of water to obtain rights in Hampaturi

In a context in which fears in the face of water scarcity increase, the territory of Hampaturi takes on a new relevance; the power of water matches the conditions. In this section, we will analyze how the water crisis becomes a favorable scenario for the inhabitants of Hampaturi to raise their demands and social claims, not only regarding their right to access drinking water, but also – among the most radical voices – regarding the ownership of water sources and the autonomy of the territory, demanding royalties from the city for the passage of water.

In the 2008 event, pointed out above, the cause of which was the rupture of the pipeline in Hampaturi, the residents blocked the road and prevented the entry of machinery for several days until EPSAS authorities, the mayor, and the country's own president were present to negotiate an agreement that included payment for damages caused in the crops. When the EPSAS technicians proposed using the old aqueduct to transport the water while the damaged pipe was being repaired, the residents asked for the payment of royalties for the passage of the water. For their part, the inhabitants of the peasant communities demanded the payment of rights for the passage of the EPSAS channeling through their lands. The absence of a legal status of EPSAS prevented it from negotiating quickly and this is why the municipal and national political authorities intervened more visibly in managing the crisis (Hardy, 2010).

In July of the same year, when the new pipe installed in Hampaturi was inaugurated, the community members complained to President Evo Morales for the lack of access to drinking water in their homes. The president expressed his surprise: "It is not possible that where the water comes from, the community members do not have it" and the Minister of Water assured that there were projects underway to provide drinking water to the area (*La Razón*, July 18, 2008).

In 2009, the issue of water ownership came up again, within the framework of the debate on the proposal for the Organic Statute of the Municipality of La Paz. The representatives of Hampaturi stated their intention to seek recognition of indigenous autonomy[19] in their territory. Adolfo Choque, delegate for the rural areas expressed: "*It is not in the interest of the municipality of La Paz that we have autonomy. On that side there will be a certain hindrance, but it must occur*". He also said that the indigenous autonomy would allow them "*to manage natural resources in coordination with social actors; elect the appropriate authorities through their uses and customs and the planning of the rural area*" (*La Razón*, September 25, 2009). The reaction of the municipality of La Paz to this request was not positive: "*The executive secretary of the Municipality of La Paz, Javier Zárate, assured that if the community members opted for indigenous autonomy "they would be left without [economic] resources. We are talking about very few people and there is no point in entering [the discussion] for* ***their benefit***" (*La Razón*, September 25, 2009, our bold). Finally, the Organic Statute of La Paz was approved without considering this request, but Hampaturi mobilized in marches and organized a council against the mayor before resigning.

[19] This figure is incorporated into the Political Constitution of the State (2009), which allows indigenous peoples to autonomously manage their territories and the resources that exist there.

But the relationship with EPSAS and the central government has also been tense and has required a lot of negotiation, especially regarding infrastructure works and jobs that the community members demand in exchange for letting the works in the area advance. Since 2007, EPSAS recognized the need for the construction of a new dam in Hampaturi, but the financing problems and those that came from its weak institutionalism did not allow the project to start. In 2014, shortly before the project was finalized, EPSAS signed an agreement with the Hampaturi communities that consisted of securing sources of work, not only in the construction of the dam, but also in the water company, and in addition, EPSAS promised that it would hire exclusively the trucks of the inhabitants of the area to transfer materials during the construction of the dam (*El Diario*, March 16, 2016), but a fatal accident prevented this agreement from being fulfilled.

On January 18, 2016, a crew of workers who worked at the Cotahuma area hospital[20] reported that one of their workers descended to check a water connection chamber. The land gave way and collapsed, burying Tito Choque, a community member from the Hampaturi area. EPSAS refused to pay compensation to the family, arguing that he was a temporary worker (*La Razón*, March 2, 2016). The *Mallkus* mobilized and asked to speak to the manager, who ignored the requests and threatened to request their arrest if they continued with the claims (*El Diario*, March 2, 2016). The communities responded by blocking the entrance road to the dams and claiming the breach of the agreement signed with EPSAS. The death of Tito Choque and the company's refusal to pay compensation to his family showed that they only offered temporary jobs and without social benefits. Finally, they reached a new agreement which was not made public (*El Diario*, March 16, 2016).

The moments of crisis of EPSAS are the propitious scenario for negotiations and agreements. One of the most important agreements that the residents of Hampaturi achieved from the government and the fulfillment of which is still being demanded was signed during the last and most serious water crisis in La Paz. In November 2016, in the midst of the water crisis, it was evident that the government was in serious trouble, because the residents of the affected areas carried out mass marches demanding water and they held the government responsible for the mismanagement of EPSAS. Desperate, the government asked the Hampaturi community members to use the water from the Kasiri lagoon[21], which was only used for irrigation in the area. After an agreement, the leaders of Palcoma, who control the entrance to the lagoon, accepted the transfer of water to the Incachaca dam to alleviate the shortage in the city. In compensation, the government committed the construction of multifunctional courts, a technical college, social housing, drinking water, sewerage, and an irrigation project. After a year, Hampaturi mobilized for the breach of the agreement and this time demanded to be part of the EPSAS directory board (*El Diario*, February 1, 2017). Until the time of this research work, drinking water has not yet been installed in Hampaturi and the work for the irrigation project continued.

The central government is not the only one interested in having a presence in Hampaturi. This territory is also important for the Autonomous Municipal Government of La Paz (GAMLP), not only because it must foresee the fulfillment of its obligation to provide the city with water, "...at some point, the people of La Paz lost their relationship with the rural areas, but... there

[20] Cotahuma is a district located on the eastern slope, where the municipality built a hospital.

[21] As mentioned before, when the water from the Irpavi river was dammed, the communities of the basin channeled a branch of the Kasiri lagoon for irrigation, their own source of water independent of the dams.

was a reason for the municipality to cover these areas, Zongo generates water and electricity for the city, Hampaturi is the receiver, and La Paz is the consumer" (Villegas, 2018), but also because it is the expansion area of the urbanization and, in addition, because its good relationship with the area is important for the management of the old conflict of limits that it maintains with the neighboring municipality of Palca.

The way to strengthen the link between the GAMLP and Hampaturi has been to invest in road, social, educational, and sports infrastructure and provide social services, as well as emergency care in case of landslides and collapses; and at institutional level, the operation of the sub-municipality under the command of a person from the area. On the other hand, the GAMLP supports agricultural production projects such as solar tents[22] and provides spaces for the sale of products in the city.

[22] In the mapping of the area, only between Chicani and Chinchaya there are up to 500 solar tents.

# 6. State strategies to undermine the power of water in Hampaturi

Although apparently the water has served to give back the voice to the inhabitants in Hampaturi and improve their situation, both the central state[23] and the municipality deploy strategies to control social demand. If water is a commercial good, a resource that is exploited like any other, it should not surprise us that the same tactics are used as they are used in other sectors such as mining and oil operations, in which strategies for controlling the populations where these resources are exploited are optimized for many years.

Although the central state needs to have "good" relations with Hampaturi, this does not imply that it meets all its demands. In fact, they are more interested in controlling the population than in meeting their needs. In the exchange of goods, some communities receive more than others and hence, the possibility of unified representation is broken, a necessary cohesion to demand their rights. The infrastructure works that has cost so much to achieve with the agreements are also a source of disputes between sectors or communities, each community negotiates separately with EPSAS, with the government, or the municipality, which agree to their requests according to the importance they have regarding water or based on their political loyalty. The current deputy mayor expresses the situation like this:

*Let's see, I am from Lorocota, my community is Lorocota, so they know me as deputy mayor that I am from Lorocota, my people who think he is from SOL.BO[24] and does not give, does not want to give … What is its people, Palcoma, who have synthetic courts (we have been there for a walk, right?), it is its people, he gives water, he gives everything, he has installed its pipes, its irrigation, he is doing everything to collect that water from Cairuni to replace, let's say … The dam, sometimes it dries out, right? He already raises that view, (…) but the company doesn't have to do that, it's not fair, the company should work with people benefiting, let's say giving benefits for all the communities*" (Siñani, 2018).

The response to the demands and its administration does not proceed in terms of rights but favors, which is the establishing of a client relationship in exchange for political loyalty.

In December 2018, in an assembly of the Chicani community, the representative explained to the neighbors the situation of the drinking water project. She informed the neighbors that she had a meeting with Evo Morales and that she told him that the drinking water and sewerage project was not advancing. "*…then I took him by the hand and I told him: look, brother Evo Morales, I have this problem, I have this project that has been sleeping since that date*". The president would have ordered the EPSAS manager to execute the project and would have told the leader: "*Don't worry anymore, don't cry anymore, you will have water*". She said that days later she approached EPSAS to comply with the direct order of the president, but there they observed: "*…you have already handed in your militancy booklet?*"[25].

[23] The central state acts through the ministries or other departments such as the Instituto de Reforma Agraria [*Institute of Agrarian Reform*], INRA, and also through the Empresa Pública Social del Agua [*Public Social Water Company*], EPSAS.

[24] Soberanía y Libertad [*Sovereignty and Freedom*], SOL.BO, is the political party formed by Luis Revilla, current mayor of La Paz, to participate in the municipal elections in 2015, after the Electoral Court withdrew the membership of the political party Movimiento Sin Miedo [*Movement Without Fear*], which was the party he participated with until then.

[25] For the national elections of October 2019, one of the requirements established by the Supreme Electoral Tribunal was the holding of primary elections in political parties. For this, each party had to present books of its registered militants so that they can be enabled for the day of the vote.

They did not have such a booklet, because in the assembly they had decided that they would not do so, but the leader insisted on the importance of doing this task to make the water project viable.

*We don't have it, brothers, because we had decided not to do it, right? But they keep pressing us with that to open the doors well for us because the doors are half-open, so that element is what we have to analyze now or we can simply do it as I do, right? I dress like a chameleon and I transform myself for this project. If I'm going like this, they won't listen to me, I put on what clothes are, sometimes I carry my MAS flag[26], the question is that they pay attention to me, right? Whether we want to or not, they are in the lead, so we have no other choice, what can we do? So, in that aspect I would like you to analyze, they have given us until this Friday to have a directory of eight persons, so, brothers, you will have to see who has that willingness to support us. On my part, I am going all the way so that this issue of drinking water is carried out* (Chicani Community Assembly, December 4, 2018, phonographic record of field work).

All these actions produce division and weakness in the organizations. Accusations that one or the other leaders are "sold" to the company, the government, or the municipality are common.

*From the leaders, the company buys, I belong to the company, you are leaders, the people attack you, right? So, what can we do? Cover him up, don't give him that, don't give them anything, by now, the leaders have [to see] what he's going to do, right? So that's how they run this company* (Siñani, 2018).

This has an impact on the organizational structure, until recently a single *marka*[27] represented all the communities of Hampaturi, but now there are two. One, from the upper part (more rural) and the other from the lower part, in the process of urbanization. Even within communities there is division. Chinchaya has been divided into four sectors and something similar happens in Chicani.

[26] Movimiento al Socialismo [*Movement to Socialism*], MAS, is the acronym used by Evo Morales, current President of Bolivia, to participate in the national elections in 1997 and with which he has appeared since then.

[27] *Marka* in Aymara and Quechua means town or, in a broader sense, territory. Marka Hampaturi was the only organization until recently. Now the most urban part has organized another *marka*, called La Cumbre.

# Conclusions

For a long time, those who inhabit the territory of Hampaturi had to settle for being the area from which they took the water to “the city”, which on the scale of territorial hierarchies had priority over the “rural” work carried out there. It is possible that this water has given rise to the urbanization of the southern area of La Paz, generating greater wealth for the owners of agricultural estates who saw their income increase with the change in land use. It has also allowed citizens to have access to water permanently and at affordable prices. But for Hampaturi, its role as a water supplier territory has only meant poverty. They even had to organize the families' irrigation and access to water by their own economic and organizational means.

However, times have changed and water is the resource that people from La Paz still have to worry about. In the context of climate change and the institutional insecurity brought about by the nationalization of the water company, the city has been increasingly exposed to a supply crisis. Hampaturi has become increasingly important for being the place where the water is.

As we show in this document, the Hampaturi inhabitants try to use the power of water to overcome social inequality. They have questioned the ownership of the territory that the water sources have and have seen the possibility that this element allows them to think about their development on their own terms through indigenous autonomy and the payment of royalties for the passage of the aqueducts. This path has not been smooth, for the moment they had to settle with compensations that translate into road and social infrastructure, but they have not yet achieved access to drinking water and irrigation. In addition, there are actors with more power interested in controlling the water. The central state and the municipality dispute the control of the EPSAS water company and in this way they use the Hampaturi's internal weaknesses and breaches. In the end, water has provided them with opportunities as well as threats. The deficiencies are exploited to put one community against another, sowing mistrust and then taking advantage of the fragmentation.

Swyngedouw (2006) points out that in recent times there has been a profuse production of documents on water, but that most evade the most trivial of the truths: “*Waterflows to power*”, which means that for groups with economic, political, and social power, running out of water will never be a concern, they will not die of thirst, nor will they suffer the anguish of seeing their fields dry. They control the distribution and allocation of water, and this fact allows them to further increase their power.

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Agence française
de développement
5, rue Roland Barthes
75012 Paris I France
www.afd.fr

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