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PhD Thesis

Governing extraction

**Regulation, the state and social struggles
over minerals and hydrocarbons in Bolivia**

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Abstract

The resource-based accumulation strategy traditionally adopted by Latin American countries is associated with problematic political economic and socio-environmental outcomes. In Bolivia, since 2006, the government of Evo Morales adopted important plans—informed by popular-indigenous mobilisations—for restructuring the governance of, and ultimately overcoming, resource ‘extractivism’. A decade on, however, Bolivia has deepened its reliance on resource exports rather than reducing it, while the impacts of extraction at local scales have, in most cases, not improved. Researchers have extensively documented these contradictory outcomes. Yet, the question remains open as to *why* political change in Bolivia has not resulted in more profound socio-environmental transformation *vis-à-vis* natural resource extraction. In this thesis, in order to address this question—through drawing on a ‘regulationist’ approach to resource governance and expanding it to include concepts from neo-Gramscian state theory—I carry out a conceptually-informed exploration of social struggles over minerals and hydrocarbons in Bolivia during under Morales.

I argue that the consolidation of resource-based accumulation was contradictory the result of overall progressive changes in the governance of extraction, including a greater ability of the state to accrue resource rents as well as an improvement of the legal and institutional framework for managing the socio-environmental impacts of extraction. Such a result was associated with important shifts in power relations among social forces, mediated by the state, whereby ‘extractivist’ and related interests were initially challenged, but managed, over time, to regain political power. I show that the dialectics of progress and restoration that characterised the cycle of the left in Bolivia corresponded to a trajectory of ‘passive revolution’. As social change stopped short of profoundly challenging dominant political economic relations, it resulted in the restoration or even consolidation of previously existing arrangements. This resulted in a gradual marginalisation, and later repression, of movements struggling for socio-environmental transformation, most notably indigenous-*campesino* organisations.

This provides an entry point to address the broader issue of the ‘structural’ limitations and strategic challenges faced by movements struggling for emancipatory socio-environmental transformation. While explanations offered by scholars have emphasised either ‘structural’ limitations to change or political ‘agency’ (particularly the inability of the MAS government to confront capitalist political power), I show that structure and agency are dialectically interrelated. Social struggles challenge, reproduce or reinforce obstacles to transformative action ingrained in the form and operations of the state. Greater consideration to the way the state power reflects and modifies power relations among social forces can inform political ecological analyses aimed at unpacking opportunities and challenges for emancipatory socio-environmental transformation in changing conjunctures.

Resumen

La estrategia de acumulación ‘primario-exportadora’ tradicionalmente adoptada en América Latina tiene consecuencias político-económicas y socio-ambientales problemáticas. En Bolivia, desde 2006, el gobierno de Evo Morales adoptó importantes planes—influenciados por movilizaciones populares e indígenas—para reestructurar la gobernanza de los recursos naturales y, en última instancia, superar el ‘extractivismo’. Una década más tarde, sin embargo, Bolivia ha profundizado su dependencia de las exportaciones primarias en lugar de reducirla, mientras que los impactos de la extracción a escala local, en la mayoría de los casos, no han mejorado. Los investigadores han documentado ampliamente estos resultados contradictorios. Aún así, queda abierta la cuestión de *por qué* el cambio político en Bolivia no ha dado lugar a una transformación socio-ambiental más profunda en relación con la extracción de recursos naturales. En esta tesis, con el fin de abordar esta cuestión, adopto una aproximación crítica al tema de la gobernanza de recursos naturales que integra un enfoque regulacionista con la teoría neo-gramsciana del estado. Y aplico este marco teórico para llevar a cabo un análisis de las luchas sociales sobre los minerales e hidrocarburos en la Bolivia de Morales.

Argumento que la consolidación del patrón de acumulación primario-exportador es el resultado contradictorio de avances en la gobernanza de la extracción, que incluyen una mayor capacidad del estado para apropiarse de rentas procedentes de recursos naturales, así como una mejora del marco legal e institucional para la gestión de los impactos socio-ambientales de la extracción. Este resultado se asocia con importantes cambios en las relaciones de poder entre las fuerzas sociales, mediados por el estado, a través de los cuales los intereses extractivistas y conservadores inicialmente desafiados lograron, con el tiempo, recuperar su poder político. Propongo además que la dialéctica de progreso y restauración que ha caracterizado el ciclo de la izquierda en Bolivia corresponde con una trayectoria de ‘revolución pasiva’. A medida que el cambio social no llegó a alterar de forma suficientemente profunda las relaciones económicas y políticas dominantes, se produjo una restauración o incluso consolidación de correlaciones de fuerzas previamente existentes. Esto dio lugar a una progresiva marginalización, y más tarde represión, de los movimientos que luchan por la transformación socio-ambiental, sobre todo las organizaciones indígena-campesinas.

Los resultados de la investigación permiten abordar la cuestión más amplia de cuáles son los obstáculos y desafíos estratégicos que enfrentan los movimientos que luchan por la transformación socio-ambiental. Mientras que las explicaciones ofrecidas por los estudiosos enfatizan o bien las limitaciones ‘estructurales’ para el cambio o la incapacidad del gobierno del MAS para enfrentar el poder político capitalista, en esta tesis, argumento que la estructura y la agencia política están dialécticamente interrelacionadas. Las luchas sociales desafían, reproducen o refuerzan los obstáculos para la acción transformadora que derivan de la forma y el funcionamiento del estado. Los análisis político-ecológicos destinados a evaluar las oportunidades y desafíos para movimientos socio-ambientales en diferentes coyunturas deberían prestar mayor atención a la manera en que el poder del estado refleja las relaciones de poder entre las fuerzas sociales.

Preface

This thesis collects three manuscripts prepared for publication, reworked into chapters. The first, co-authored with Isabella Radhuber, was published in *Geoforum* in 2015 and won the ‘Best Student Paper Award’ from the journal. The other two are currently at different stages of the peer-review process, respectively in *Political Geography* and *Antipode*.

For reasons of coherence, I have not included in this thesis two more papers which came out of the PhD process. One, submitted for review to *Ecological Economics*, is co-authored with Giorgos Kallis and seeks to foster the integration of environmental conflict research with governmentality studies. The other is a collaborative paper, co-authored with Melissa García Lamarca, Jonah Wedekind and Erik Swyngedouw. It explores the relevance of Marxian theory of rent for political ecology, and should see the light of day soon in *Capitalism Nature Socialism*.

But there’s more to the PhD than the thesis (and indeed more than journal articles). I carried out my doctoral research as part of the European Network of Political Ecology (ENTITLE) project (www.political ecology.eu). In its EU-inspired penchant for obligations and ‘deliverables’, the project required engaging with a diverse range of writing projects, addressing not just academics but also ‘policy makers’ and ‘civil society’ (whatever that means). These included, among other things, the book *Political Ecology for Civil Society*—a collectively-edited collection of multi-authored chapters introducing and developing key political ecology concepts and debates—where I contributed to a chapter on ‘Struggles over the Commons’.

With ENTITLE colleagues, I engaged in collective projects above and beyond obligations. Some of us are in the process of publishing a Special Issue, which I am co-editing with Chus Beltrán, Irina Velicu and Christos Zografos, on contemporary *Political ecologies of capital and struggles*. In 2014, moreover, as a result of an ongoing self-organisation process among the project’s students and post-docs, we launched ENTITLE Blog (www.entitleblog.org), which has emerged since as one of the central spaces for public debate around political ecology.

A secondary, but also important, collaborative engagement has been with the ‘Research & Degrowth’ collective in Barcelona (www.degrowth.org). I was invited to contribute an entry on ‘Capitalism’, which I co-authored with Terry McDonough, in the extremely successful book *Degrowth: A Vocabulary for a New Era* (Routledge, 2014), edited by Giacomo D’Alisa, Giorgos Kallis and Federico Demaria. I am also currently organising a symposium, forthcoming (again) in *Capitalism Nature Socialism*, on *Capitalism, Socialism and the Challenge of (De)growth*, with the help of Salvatore Engel de Mauro.

Finally, as part of collaborations established during the year I spent preparing and doing fieldwork Bolivia, I contributed to two long reports in Spanish, aimed to share research results with those who participated in the investigation as well as to intervene in the public debate in the country. The first, led by colleagues of CEADESC (Centre for Applied Studies on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights) in Cochabamba, documents the impacts of gas extraction on indigenous territories. The second, which I prepared with the help of Helga

Gruberg, aims to evaluate the management of socio-environmental impacts of mining in the Bolivian *altiplano*. These reports contain much of the empirical data of my research, which only made it into the thesis in very condensed form, due to the constraints of the journal article format.

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Most of the data I used my PhD is knowledge I 'extracted' from Bolivian people and organisations. Although I did my best to give some of it back, I remain hugely indebted to them. I wish to thank all those who participated in and supported me in my research—in communities, social organisations, NGOs, universities and public institutions—for kindly offering their time and for sharing their opinions, contacts, knowledge and experiences. Special thanks to the CEADESC team, especially Gustavo and Adriana Soto, for welcoming me there and helping me with the logistics of research; and to Helga Gruberg, who provided valuable assistance for my fieldwork.

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Several other people provided useful comments on earlier drafts of the material included here, or helped me in other ways with the research and related tasks. Among them, I wish to thank Ulrich Brand, Eduardo Gudynas, Lorenzo Pellegrini, Begüm Özkaynak, Beatriz Rodríguez Labajos and the members of the 'Post-extractivismo' discussion group who provided feedback on my writing.

The ENTITLE network provided an invaluable support group—personally, intellectually and politically. Many of the arguments I make in the thesis emerged from or benefited from conversations and discussions with ENTITLE colleagues, particularly fellow students and researchers. The 'Political Ecology' reading group in Barcelona—a *de facto* ENTITLE detachment—has offered great support and ideas. I thank Irmak Ertör, Lucía Gallardo, Marien González, Panagiota Kotsila, Melissa García Lamarca, Rita Calvario and Santiago Gorostiza for providing constructive criticism on a significant chunk of the material included here.

They, together with other people from and around ICTA, have been an amazing source of friendship, conversations, emotional support—and the occasional beer or three. A thought of solidarity goes to Ethem who, as I write, is busy putting up with the insanity of authoritarian neoliberalism.

Finally, very special thanks to my family, for their unconditional faith in my ability to do whatever it is I'm doing (they're not too sure). And to Marta, who made it all easier.

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Introduction.

Political ecology, resource governance and post-neoliberalism

1. Introduction

Since the late 1990s, resource-rich countries in Latin America experienced a strong growth in the export of natural resources (Bebbington, 2009, p. 8). The expansion of resource exports was incentivised by a cycle of high commodity prices, particularly between 2003 and 2013, driven by growing global demand for materials and energy (Muradian et al., 2012) as well as by technological change and political economic restructuring in the extractive industries (e.g., Bridge and Le Billon, 2013). Such an expansion was also enabled by policies promoting economic liberalisation and foreign direct investment, through improving ‘risk/reward ratios’ for transnational capital (Bridge, 2004; Emel and Huber, 2008). The deepening and extended geographical reach of intensive natural resource extraction for export—what some commentators, following Eduardo Gudynas (2013), have called ‘*extractivism*’—has had deeply problematic implications for affected territories and populations. For this reason, it has resulted in an increase in socio-environmental conflicts, whereby *campesino* and indigenous groups and environmental organisations have mobilised against the injustice and dispossession generated by enclosures and contamination (Bebbington and Bury, 2013; Martinez-Alier and Walter, 2015)

This cycle of extractivist expansion coincided with a widespread crisis of neoliberal hegemony in the region (Robinson, 2009, p. 233). This crisis resulted in a change of political regimes throughout Latin America, with a range of leftist and centre-left parties elected to government throughout the region. Commentators distinguished between the ‘radical’ leftist projects which took power in Venezuela, Bolivia and Ecuador and the more moderate reformist governments of Argentina, Brazil, Chile and Uruguay, sometimes referring to the conjunct of these newly elected left-of-

centre administrations as the ‘pink tide’ (Robinson, 2009, p. 288). Most clearly in Bolivia, where the leftist ‘Movement Towards Socialism’ (MAS) led by Evo Morales Ayma came to power in 2006 with strong indigenous-*campesino* support, there was a strong consensus that promoting greater equality, social welfare and environmental integrity entailed overcoming extractivism (what Bolivians call the *patrón primario exportador*, the ‘primary export [development] pattern’). This goal, included in the first ‘National Development Plan’ of the Morales government (Gobierno de Bolivia, 2007a, pp. 29–36), was to be achieved in two main ways. First, through a process of natural resource industrialisation, implying a greater involvement of the state in production. Second, through promoting community-based agricultural, extractive and manufacturing activities oriented towards self-sufficiency and the internal market (Wanderley, 2013, pp. 110–111). This economic diversification project was seen as a step towards the pursuit of an alternative development paradigm of ‘*vivir bien*’ (‘living well’) (Cunha Filho and Gonçalves, 2010).

Despite these plans, natural resource extraction in Bolivia continued to expand (Molero-Simarro and Paz-Antolín, 2012), resulting in growing socio-environmental impacts. This is in line with the experience of other countries in the region. At the same time, ambitious plans for improving the implications of extractions for affected populations, strongly demanded by indigenous-*campesino* mobilisations, were partly abandoned or poorly implemented (Hindery, 2013; Perreault, 2013). Affected groups, increasingly discontented with extractivist policies, mobilised in defence of territories and livelihoods. Important tensions between governments and indigenous-*campesino* movements emerged in leftist countries, including Bolivia (Bebbington and Humphreys Bebbington, 2011). Mobilisations attracted repressive responses on the part of states and, in some cases, a foreclosure of democratic spaces (Svampa, 2015a). This, as I will show throughout the thesis, was both caused by, and contributed to, the reduction of transformative ambitions of progressive governments. While implementing a political economic restructuring of the type outlined above is objectively a daunting task, especially for relatively small and peripheral countries with no major geopolitical leverage, the data points to an actual deepening of resource dependency, a process of ‘reprimarisation’ (Gudynas, 2009; Svampa, 2013). This apparently paradoxical outcome has led some critics to argue that the difference between left and right may have been overestimated on important

counts (Bebbington and Humphreys Bebbington, 2011; Gudynas, 2009). While there are good reasons to be disappointed with political projects of the like of Bolivia, it is important to resist the temptation to jump to simplistic conclusions. At the same time, the present conjuncture of left crisis and the threat (and in some case reality) of a conservative comeback should not be a good reason to gloss over the contradictions of ‘twenty-first century socialism’. A careful and balanced assessment is both necessary and urgent (Modonesi, 2015).

2. Research question and summary of the main argument

In this thesis, I contribute to this task through addressing the following research question: Why has political change in Bolivia not resulted in emancipatory socio-environmental transformation *vis-à-vis* natural resource extraction, as demanded by the popular-indigenous mobilisations that brought Evo Morales and the MAS to power? I will argue that the consolidation and expansion of resource-based accumulation during the Morales years was the contradictory outcome of overall progressive changes in the governance of extraction. These included a refashioning of political economic arrangements around resource exploitation, allowing for a greater ability of the state to accrue resource rents, as well as an improvement of the legal and institutional framework for managing the socio-environmental impacts of extraction, demanded by indigenous-*campesino* organisations. Such contradictory outcomes related to important shifts (and counter-shifts) in power relations among social forces. In this process, extractivist interests as well as the national conservative bloc were initially challenged, but managed, over time, to consolidate or regain political power, at the expense of movements struggling for more radical socio-environmental transformation.

The concrete exploration of the Bolivian case will serve as an entry point for contributing to broader debates regarding the politics of ‘post-neoliberalism’ and why they resulted in the consolidation of extractivism rather than its overcoming. Notions such as ‘neo-extractivism’ or ‘reconstituted neoliberalism’, adopted by critical scholars, capture important aspects of contemporary Latin American processes. I shall argue, however, that they are too crude in considering the restructurings associated with the

left-turn as a set of intentional interventions, explicitly aimed at legitimising extractivism and resource-based accumulation. Rather, I suggest, the contradictory outcomes of ‘actually existing’ post-neoliberalism—and of post-neoliberal resource governance—were co-produced through social and political struggle that mediated, shaped or challenged political agendas and policy prescriptions.

This relates to the overarching issue that motivates my research: that of structural limitations and strategic challenges encountered by movements seeking to transform socio-environmental relations in emancipatory ways. In the Bolivian case, explanations offered by critical scholars have emphasised, to a different degree, either ‘structural’ limitations to change, or political ‘agency’, particularly the unwillingness or inability of the MAS government to more directly confront capitalist political power. Through combining a regulationist approach with insights from neo-Gramscian state theory, I will contribute to this debate by showing that structure and agency are dialectically interrelated: social struggles challenge, reproduce or reinforce the ‘selectivities’ ingrained in the form and *modus operandi* of the state which limit possibilities for transformative action. I will argue, furthermore, that the dialectics of progress and restoration that characterised the cycle of the left in Latin America corresponds to a trajectory of ‘passive revolution’, whereby social change which stops short of challenging dominant political economic relations results in the partial restoration or even consolidation of previously existing arrangements.

I shall further engage with these debates and spell out my contributions in greater detail in Section 5. First, however, I will set the background for my empirical arguments, through providing contextual information regarding the politics of natural resource extraction in contemporary Bolivia.

3. Background: The politics of resource extraction in Bolivia

Resource struggles

Since the discovery of the silver of Potosí’s *Cerro Rico*—the ‘rich mountain’—in the sixteenth century, Bolivia has been inserted in the world economy as an exporter of primary commodities (Galeano, 1997, chap. 1). Immense natural wealth has been

transferred abroad while the country has been left largely poor. Eduardo Galeano's (1997, chap. 1) chilling description of the rise and fall of Potosí in *The Open Veins of Latin America* gives a sense of the boom-and-bust tendencies of extractivist world-integration of countries like Bolivia (cf., Bunker, 1984). This uneven and cyclical dynamic continued to the present day, though under changing arrangements and with different commodities gaining centrality at different times.

In the twentieth century, natural resource contentions shaped Bolivian politics. Hydrocarbon resources were the main focus of imperialist interests in the country, which also caused a war with Paraguay over the gas-rich Chaco region (1932-1935). Twice the Bolivian government reacted by nationalising the sector, in 1937 and in 1969, though in both cases resources were successively partly returned to private interests (Gandarillas et al., 2008; Wanderley, 2012). Concerning national capital, the main centre of power were Bolivian mining entrepreneurs (known as the 'tin barons'), whose domination was interrupted by the 1952 revolution, in which a politically radical miners' union played a central part (Dunkerley, 1984).

The last fifteen years of the twentieth century were characterised by a period of crisis and profound restructuring of Bolivia's extractive sectors (Kaup, 2013). The dismantling of state mining was the centrepiece of neoliberalisation applied in Bolivia since 1985. Ostensibly as a response to a hyperinflation crisis, Bolivia was one of the first countries where 'shock-therapy' neoliberal reform was experimented, designed by Jeffrey Sachs and implemented with the decisive support of then senator Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada (known as Goni), the most important mining entrepreneur in the country (Klein, 2009, chap. 7). The privatisation of the state-owned COMIBOL—Bolivian Mining Corporation—was central to this process, partly due to the need to break down the power of the miners' unions. Mining privatisation consolidated the position of national capitalists such as Sánchez de Lozada and prepared the entry of transnational firms and large-scale operations (Kaup, 2013, chap. 3). In the process, over 20,000 miners were expelled from the state sector, in time replaced by a growing number of self-employed mineworkers, with no class consciousness, organised in so-called 'cooperatives'.

The bulk of neoliberal restructuring of the hydrocarbon sector was carried out throughout the 1990s. It entailed the dismantling of the national company YPFB

(Yacimientos Petroleros Fiscales Bolivianos), the signing of favourable gas export contracts (primarily with Brazil) and control by foreign firms of production and distribution (Hindery, 2013; Kaup, 2013, chap. 4; Wanderley, 2012). The main effect was an empowered transnational extractive capital, together with a much decreased ability of the state to collect revenues and a corresponding erosion of political stability and legitimacy.

The ‘popular-indigenous’ mobilisations that, more visibly since 2000, precipitated a crisis of neoliberal hegemony (Kohl, 2006) and prepared the ground for the election of Evo Morales, were centred on issues of resource sovereignty (Perreault, 2006; Spronk and Webber, 2007). Mobilised popular sectors put forward two main demands in relation to resource governance. The first (and most widely shared) demand was resource nationalisation, and particularly of the gas sector, whose transnationally-controlled economy was seen as a symbol of Bolivia’s exploitation on the part of foreign interests (Perreault, 2006, p. 162). Second, indigenous-*campesino* organisations focused their demands on territorial sovereignty and co-government of natural resources, including full implementation of rights to ‘free prior and informed consent’ and increase in material benefits, including direct access to a portion of resource rents (Radhuber, 2012; Schilling-Vacaflor, 2014a). Plans for change in the governance of extraction partly reflected the demands emerging from popular-indigenous mobilisations. Nevertheless, implementation was limited and fraught with contradictions.

Towards pluri-nationality?

The plans and measures briefly described above were the result of intense popular-indigenous mobilisations, in a favourable political conjuncture. Particularly, the 2000–2005 cycle of struggle was a period of unprecedented empowerment for the indigenous movement, the culmination of a process of political articulation among diverse indigenous organisations as well as with other popular sectors, primarily *campesino* unions (Gutiérrez-Aguilar, 2008; Tapia, 2008). From the alliance of these two social blocs—the historic ‘Unity Pact’ formed in 2004—the ‘pluri-national state’ proposal was formulated, imagining the coexistence, within the institutional architecture of the state, of a plurality of socio-cultural, political and productive

forms—including important spaces of indigenous territorial sovereignty and co-government over natural resources (Garcés, 2010).

The paradigm of pluri-nationality shaped the agenda of the Morales government as regards indigenous-*campesino* rights. In the first term of Evo Morales's presidency (2006-2009), the measures included in the Hydrocarbon Law of 2005—focusing on indigenous territorial co-government and direct participation in extraction and its benefits (Radhuber, 2012)—were extended to the national legal framework, through the inclusion of principles of pluri-nationality in the 2009 Constitution (Schavelzon, 2012). Indigenous provisions in the Hydrocarbon Law were already partially limited when rendered operative through three supreme decrees, between 2007 and 2009 (Radhuber, 2012, p. 175). A further reduction happened in the process that led to the approval of the new constitution, whereby proposals for land reform, indigenous political representation and territorial autonomy included in the final text of the Constitutional Assembly were later substantially limited in parliamentary negotiations (Garcés, 2011). Other mechanisms, such as national laws of indigenous consultation as well as a new 'Mother Earth law' generated disputes and were postponed in their definition and implementation. This produced tensions among the indigenous-*campesino* bloc and between indigenous organisations and the state.

In the second term of Morales (2010-2014), these tensions exploded. The conflict in 2011-'12 over a highway cutting through the Isiboro-Sécure Indigenous Territory and Natural Park (TIPNIS) inaugurated a conjuncture of open hostility between the government and the Bolivian indigenous movement (Laing, 2014). The conflict resulted in a crisis of the popular-indigenous articulation on which the MAS based its hegemonic strategy. Most notably, it led to the break-up of the indigenous-*campesino* Unity Pact and its reconstitution as a government-controlled umbrella organisation. A phase of indigenous repression began, during which the two main indigenous organisations—the Confederation of Indigenous Peoples of Bolivia (CIDOB) and the National Council of *Allyus* and *Markas* of the *Qullasuyu* (CONAMAQ)—were divided: the government co-opted members and cadres aligned with the party, or willing to do so, and isolated and marginalised the remaining, legitimately elected leaderships.

The trajectory of the MAS and the 'Process of Change'

This movement from the initial empowerment to successive marginalisation of the indigenous bloc mirrors the overall trajectory of the MAS's project. Coming out of coca-grower and *campesino* unions, in the conjuncture of crisis of neoliberalism the MAS quickly grew to become the main opposition party. It catalysed the multiple popular-indigenous forces into a common electoral project (Postero, 2010), turning into the main opposition party in the 2002 elections before eventually entering the presidency in 2006. As it expanded beyond its local bases in the Cochabamba region, the MAS included elements from other popular sectors as well as progressive intellectuals and middle classes. Once in power, the Morales government found itself with increased room for manoeuvre for putting its ambitious political project—which Bolivians call the 'Process of Change'—into practice. It gained 'relative autonomy' from transnational capital's interests through reducing dependency from World Bank and IMF conditionality and thanks to a period of relatively low US interventionism in the region (Webber, 2011a). Moreover, it benefited from widespread popular support, a favourable economic conjuncture (most notably, high commodity prices) and a rising leftist geopolitical bloc in Latin America.

Initially, the Morales government gave signs that a truly radical reform of the state and the economy was to come. On May 1st 2006, for instance, it declared the nationalisation of Bolivia's hydrocarbon resources in a public ceremony charged with historical, anti-colonial symbolism. In the first years in office, it put into place other nationalisations as well as measures for wealth redistribution (coming from natural resource rents), particularly through issuing aid packages (or '*bonos*') to schoolchildren, pregnant women and the elderly. A strong international presence, moreover, such as radical environmentalist and 'decolonial' discourse at international climate and UN gatherings, gained Morales the favourable opinion of progressive commentators worldwide. Domestically, however, the consolidation of the MAS's political power was difficult and conflictive. The institutionalisation of the Process of Change was fraught with challenges (Kohl and Bresnahan, 2010).

While counting on strong popular support, and having secured the control of key state apparatuses, such as the army, the MAS faced aggressive opposition from the national conservative bloc. Opposition was spearheaded by the *mestizo* land-holding

elites based in the region (*departamento*) of Santa Cruz, in the eastern lowlands—the country’s main agribusiness and cattle-ranching region. They opposed plans for land redistribution (Valdivia, 2010), but also feared that the hydrocarbon sector reform would limit the flow of oil and gas revenues to *departamentos*—rents that local elites had secured during neoliberal times thanks to close ties with central power (Kaup, 2013). The right combined reactionary politics with imaginaries of racial and class superiority (Peña-Claros, 2010; Perreault and Green, 2013). This resulted in a tense political conflict—a ‘catastrophic deadlock’ (García-Linera, 2010a) which reached its most intense point in 2008.

The conflict with the conservative bloc was recomposed in 2008-’09. In August 2008, the MAS won a referendum demanded by the neoliberal right to revoke Morales’s presidency. The conservatives in the east shifted then to a more violent approach, staging a failed ‘civic coup’ attempt and mobilising paramilitary violence, which caused strong popular reaction and widespread international condemnation (the conjuncture of left hegemony in the region was key in this moment). The end of the antagonism of the conservative bloc consolidated the political position of the Morales government, sanctioned by a landslide victory in the 2009 elections. After the conflict with the right was solved, many expected that barriers had been removed for a deepening and radicalisation of the Process of Change. Yet, quite the opposite actually happened.

The politics of discourse

A final point to note regarding the trajectory of the Process of Change concerns its political discourse. This is considered one of the most innovative aspects of the MAS’s project. Ideologically, the MAS drew on Marxist, structuralist and left-nationalist intellectual lineages, emphasising themes of resource nationalisation and industrialisation as part of a process of national liberation from imperialist domination and the construction of an anti-capitalist alternative. At the same time, however, this project was also informed by indigenous-*campesino* traditions. The ideas of pluri-nationality, living well (*vivir bien* or *Suma Qamaña*), Mother Earth (*pachamama*) and ‘territorial integrity’, coming from Aymara Indianism and lowland indigenous struggles (Anthias, 2012; García-Linera et al., 2010; Zimmerer, 2015), were central to

the critique of developmental and extractivist society–nature articulations which inspired the MAS’s plans for change. These elements informed Morales’s red-green political discourse and its self-positioning as an indigenous president (Morales-Ayma, 2010).

Since its first years in power, however, critics have noted a gap between the MAS’s radical and innovative discourse and its policies. This regards both its pretensions to be constructing a new form of socialism (Orellana-Aillón, 2006) and its self-declared environmentalist character (Zimmerer, 2015). Perhaps the first moment of open tension between the Morales government and the indigenous and environmentalist movement was the Cochabamba ‘Peoples’ Summit’ on climate change in 2010, organised in response to the disappointing outcomes of the COP-15 meeting in Copenhagen. There, a parallel working group was formed (named Mesa 18) by discontented activists, who denounced the distance between the bold proclaims of Morales abroad and its extractivist policies within the country (Aguirre and Cooper, 2010). These tensions intensified over the years, with an increasing number of commentators expressing perplexity over the use of indigenous-informed signifiers such as ‘living well’ and Mother Earth to promote development plans resting on the expansion of capitalist appropriation of nature.

In this case too, the tension became more explicit in the second term of government. During increasing conflicts with the indigenous movement, the MAS government began to take distance from indigenous groups and targeting them as ‘enemies of the Process of Change’ (Laing, 2012; Pellegrini and Ribera-Arismendi, 2012). While generally continuing to mobilise the same red-green and indigenous-inspired ideological referents, Bolivian officials framed indigenous *opposition* as a minority, manipulated by NGOs allied to imperialism as well as by right-wing parties (Beaulieu and Postero, 2013). This is a similar discourse mobilised by other governments in the region (Bebbington and Humphreys Bebbington, 2011), used to ‘other’ those who oppose extractivism in order to repress them. But it is all the more unsettling because it came from an ostensibly progressive president of indigenous origin.

4. Research objectives

In this thesis, I explore the tensions and contradictions outlined above through carrying out a conceptually-informed, in-depth empirical analysis of the politics of natural resource extraction in Evo Morales's Bolivia, with four objectives. Specifically, I will seek to understand and explain:

1. How changes in the governance of extraction related to broader shifts in the balance of power among competing social forces.
2. How and why social sectors demanding progressive socio-environmental transformation *vis-à-vis* the governance of extraction were marginalised.
3. Why the initial phase of openness to progressive transformation of the state was followed by a partial restoration of previously existing political economic relations.
4. How the MAS's mobilisation of radical and indigenous-informed discourse contributed to securing consent for its political project in changing conjunctures.

In the next section, I present the main debates in political ecology that underpin my research question and objectives and lay out the theoretical framework that guides my analysis.

5. Literatures and contribution: Regulation, hegemony and the state

The notion of environmental (or resource) 'governance' has become increasingly widespread since the 1990s to capture the emergence of institutional arrangements around society–nature interactions that transcend the reach of the nation-state (Bridge and Perreault, 2009). This is seen as part of an underlying shift away from the centrality of the state for environmental regulation and towards the increased importance of private sector and 'civil society' actors—referred to by some as a shift 'from government to governance'. Mainstream approaches adopt a 'managerial' or 'functional' view: they treat 'governance' as a collective effort for solving practical problems related to resource management or 'sustainability' issues (Young, 2009).

While some of these approaches are progressive and well-intentioned—most notably, perhaps, Ostrom’s (1990) work on the governance of the commons—these mainstream accounts of governance largely leave out consideration of political economic arrangements and power relations, with the effect of depoliticising highly contentious issues of resource management and access (Bridge and Perreault, 2009). For this reason, much like ‘sustainability’, governance is often associated with a depoliticising neoliberal discourse around the environment. Against this trend, political ecologists have mobilised the term in a critical way, focusing on the ‘political work’ that governance discourses and interventions do (Bridge and Perreault, 2009, p. 476). Rather than asking ‘how should nature be governed?’, they have focused on how society–nature interactions are managed through defining and intervening in environmental problems. Political ecologists have drawn insights primarily from ‘governmentality’ studies (Valdivia, 2015) and from the ‘regulation school’ (Boyer, 1990). The latter is closest to the analytical framing I adopt in this thesis.

Regulation and governance beyond neoliberalism

Developed in France in the early 1970s, the regulation approach is a broad and diverse research programme cutting across political economy and critical social sciences. Inspired by Marxism, this approach challenges the universalistic and ahistorical accounts of neoclassical economics as well as its assumptions about the harmonic and self-equilibrating dynamic of the market. Instead, it stresses the historically- and geographically-specific nature of capitalism, and emphasises its contradictions and crisis-tendencies (Boyer, 1990; Jessop and Sum, 2006, pp. 3–5). The main research focus of regulationists is on how economic and extra-economic mechanisms combine to secure a relative degree of stability in capital accumulation. It integrates the analysis of economic and ‘extra-economic’ processes, in order to understand how capitalist relations are regulated—or, more correctly, *regularised* (Himley, 2013; Jessop and Sum, 2006, p. 4). The semantic distinction is important: while ‘regulation’ in English refers primarily to intentional politico-judicial interventions (*réglementation* in French), the term ‘regularisation’ (*régulation*) refers to the broader and partly unintentional social processes through which accumulation is stabilised and normalised in the face of contradictions and conflicts (Boyer, 1990, p.

20; Jessop and Sum, 2006, p. 15). This is associated with the notion of the ‘*mode of regulation*’, defined as “an ensemble of organizational forms, networks, and institutions, rules, norms and patterns of conduct” through which a ‘regime of accumulation’ is reproduced (Boyer, 1990, p. 35; Jessop and Sum, 2006, pp. 41–42; Peck, Jamie, 2009, p. 640).

Since the late 1990s, political ecologists have reformulated the methodological and conceptual apparatus of regulation theory in order to render it compatible with the critical analysis of environmental governance (Bridge and Jonas, 2002). The goal of this research agenda is to understand how the accumulation crises emerging from capital’s use of nature are contained through institutional refashioning (Bridge, 2000, pp. 240–242). Shifting away from the macro-economic concerns and broad abstractions of regulation theory—focused on long-term accumulation cycles, crisis tendencies and historical periodization of institutional forms (Boyer, 1990)—political ecologists have tailored the regulation approach for empirically analysing the institutions that regularise the contradictions between accumulation and nature in specific contexts (Bridge and McManus, 2000). A regulationist approach understands environmental or resource governance as the reconfiguring of institutions which mediate nature-society relations in ways that stave off accumulation crises (Bridge and Perreault, 2009). Such an approach to governance has been applied extensively to the study of natural resource extraction. In this context, political ecologists have explored how corporate-led initiatives have emerged in the extractive industries with the goal of containing crises related to socio-environmental impacts and conflicts. They analysed, for instance, how mining firms mobilise narratives of environmental sustainability as well as ‘corporate social responsibility’ initiatives in ways that reduce conflicts with local communities and environmentalist groups (Bridge and McManus, 2000; Himley, 2013, 2010; Horowitz, 2015).

Such a focus on corporate-led governance converged in important ways with a broader research agenda in political ecology around ‘nature’s neoliberalisation’ (McCarthy and Prudham, 2004), aiming to uncover how changing arrangements for governing environments and resources shifted power away from state and popular control towards market-based mechanisms. The association of governance with neoliberalism and the corresponding ‘hollowing out’ of the state, however, makes it

difficult to analyse instances of institutional restructuring that, at least in part, challenge or counter such a trajectory. As scholars of Latin American ‘post-neoliberalism’ have remarked, as a result of a cycle of social mobilisation centrally focused on resource governance, state authority and regulatory functions were partly reinstated rather than ‘hollowed out’ (Perreault, 2008, p. 848). This process, as I will argue throughout the thesis, has been fraught with ambiguities and contradictions, and there is no evidence of a diminished role of non-state actors and scales of governance other than the national (de Freitas et al., 2015). Nevertheless, this is a reminder that governance restructuring is an open-ended process, and while it may imply a greater role of corporate actors at the expense of the state and progressive social movements, it may also do just the opposite. In order to capture these contradictory processes, changes in governance need to be analysed against the background of broader shifts in social and power relations—playing out through and mediated by the state.

The state is seen by regulationists both as a component of the institutional ensemble of mode of regulation and the broader terrain of struggle which determines its form and functioning (Boyer, 1990, p. 41; Jessop, 1990, p. 317; Jessop and Sum, 2006, p. 90). For Lipietz (discussed in Jessop, 1990, p. 309), the mode of regulation functions, like the state, through institutionalising and confining social (including class) struggles so as to guarantee continued accumulation¹. Bob Jessop’s work has been central to integrating the regulation approach with state theory. For Jessop, the regulationist view of the economy as embedded in broader social relations is akin to Gramsci’s idea of the ‘integral state’, whereby ‘political society’ is interpenetrated by hegemonic relationships formed in the terrain of civil society (Jessop and Sum, 2006). In its crudest form this means to think of the state as an ‘institutionalisation of class compromises’ (Boyer, 1990). Put differently, the mode of regulation—and hence governance—reflects the social power balance in the same way as the state, as Poulantzas (2000) famously put it, represents the crystallisation or ‘condensation’ of relationships of power among social forces (Jessop, 2008). This relational approach allows us to analyse changes in governance as the product of a shifting correlation of

¹ This outcome—a guarantee of continued accumulation—cannot, of course, be taken for granted: the form the mode of regulation takes, and its successful ‘coupling’ with an accumulation regime, is itself the contingent product of political and social struggles.

forces, crystallised in the institutional ensemble of the mode of regulation and of the state itself.

Counter-hegemony and 'strategic selectivities'

Environmental conflicts and movements are a central concern of political ecology (Le Billon, 2015; Martínez Alier, 2002; Robbins, 2012). In the context of the expansion of natural resource extraction in the last two decades, much attention has been directed towards social struggles around extractive and other nature-facing industries (e.g., Bebbington and Bury, 2013). 'Commodity frontier' expansion has been associated with an 'eco-territorial turn' in social struggle (Svampa, 2010), an instance of the increased global visibility of 'struggles against accumulation by dispossession' (Harvey, 2003). Research on environmental conflicts has focused primarily on processes of resistance to natural resource extraction as well as on forms of local organisation and creation of alternative spaces (e.g., Martinez-Alier et al., 2016, 2010). Some of this research, for diverse and often implicit ideological reasons, suffers from a methodological anti-statism which leads many to emphasise local resistance—and 'glocal' networks—while bypassing the political economy of capital and the role of the state in its reproduction (Parenti, 2015).

The conjuncture of popular struggles and political change in Latin America provided the opportunity for exploring the ways in which 'eco-territorial' and local struggles were articulated with other rural and urban movements in order to produce shifts in national and regional politics which, despite the contradictions outlined above (and explored throughout this thesis), are of unquestionable political significance. Gramscian (political ecology) approaches are especially well-suited for the analysis of these processes. Karriem's (2009) work on the Brazilian Landless Movement (MST), for instance, has illustrated how movements can scale-up from localised struggles over land access to becoming a central, 'counter-hegemonic' actor in national politics, through extending its organisational ties and broadening its ideological and political horizons. This type of analysis allows us to shift from describing and documenting social movement practices, to understanding the appropriateness and effectiveness of their strategies in given conjunctures (Jessop, 2012).

One point that this line of research misses, however, regards the issue of why these counter-hegemonic movements fail. Karriem's (2009) account, for instance, stops at about the time that Lula's Worker Party was elected to power in 2002, with decisive support from the MST. The effects of institutionalisation on the movement are not analysed. Yet, this is key to understanding why, despite its impressive trajectory of counter-hegemony building, a movement such as the MST was unable to fundamentally influence the policies of Brazil's leftist government. In the Bolivian case, for instance, early research on the MAS points to the role of the party in co-opting movements, thereby reducing their mobilising abilities (Regalsky, 2010). In this thesis, I seek to contribute to understanding why counter-hegemonic movements often fail to produce a genuinely transformative impact on policies, through shifting attention to the 'selectivities' ingrained in the apparatus and *modus operandi* of the capitalist state (Jessop, 2008). This will also allow me to add to recent debates regarding the conceptualisation of the state in political ecology (Robbins, 2007; Robertson, 2015).

While state power is a 'social relation', or a condensation of social relations, it does not passively reflect the social power balance and changes therein, but also shapes and modifies this balance. This is partly related to the ambiguous relationship between state and capital. The state is caught between the twin and contradictory goals of maintaining social cohesion and guaranteeing capital accumulation in the long run (Boyer, 1990). In relation to this problem, Poulantzas introduced the notion of the 'relative autonomy' of the state (Jessop, 1982). Building on Gramsci's critique of 'economism', the idea of relative autonomy tries to make sense of the paradox whereby the state is independent from capital while serving its long-term interests. For Poulantzas (Jessop, 1982, p. 68), the fact that the state does not have an explicit class bias allows it to present itself as defending the general interest of society, and can thereby more easily secure social consent around dominant class projects. Moreover, the autonomy of the state means that it can 'overrule' the particular interests of specific classes or factions and impose short-term sacrifices or compromises on capitalist fractions for the sake of the overall stability of the power bloc. In other words, for Poulantzas, it is precisely through acting independently from capital that the state can secure the latter's long-term interests.

The idea of relative autonomy partly contradicts the understanding of the state as a social relation, introduced above. Poulantzas explains this by arguing that the state apparatus contains an ingrained, '*structural selectivity*', which modifies the balance of class forces in ways that stops subaltern groups from threatening the interests of capital (Jessop, 1982, p. 140). As Jessop (1982, pp. 351–352) is right to point out, however, thus formulated, the idea of structural selectivity ends up reproducing the very economic reductionism that Poulantzas tried to overcome: no matter how complex and incoherent state power may become as a result of shifts in social correlation of forces, it ultimately ends up reproducing the interests of capital. Consequently, Jessop proposes an important corrective, which characterises what he calls a 'strategic-relational approach' (SRA) to the state. The SRA, for Jessop (1990, p. 149), "endorses the notion of 'structural selectivity' but does not suggest that its effects always favour one class or set of interests". This means that the ultimate reconstitution of the hegemony of capitalist classes cannot be taken for granted: it does not automatically emerge from the form of the state, but depends on contingent conditions open to being changed (Jessop, 1990, p. 256).

Selectivities exist that make the pursuit of certain class projects more difficult than others, but these are open to being modified—they are *strategic* rather than structural. Thus, Jessop (1990, p. 260) adds,

a given type of state, a given state form, a given form of regime, will be more accessible to some forces than others according to the strategies they adopt to gain state power; and it will be more suited to the pursuit of some types of economic or political strategy than others because of the modes of intervention and resources which characterize that system.

Selectivities can be interpreted not as something given and immutable, but as the contestable product of past strategies, condensed in the state apparatus and *modus operandi* (Jessop, 1990, p. 261). Consequently, a central feature of the SRA "is its concern with the strategic possibilities that a specific period gives for different actors, different identities, different interests, different coalition possibilities, different horizons of action, different strategies, and different tactics" (Jessop, 2012). All this is meant to ally an analysis of the workings of state power with the understanding of concrete possibilities for change in specific conjunctures.

Post-neoliberalism as passive revolution

The issue of limits to radical change, and the trajectory of progress and restoration which characterised the cycle of the Latin American left, relates to broader debates on the political economy and ecology of ‘post-neoliberalism’. The term ‘post-neoliberalism’ was introduced by commentators to refer to the political and ideological shifts associated with the Latin American left turn (Grugel and Riggirozzi, 2012; Yates and Bakker, 2014), and then extended to other contexts and places. While recognising the possibility of conservative ‘ways out’ of neoliberalism (Brenner et al., 2010), post-neoliberalism has been regarded primarily as a progressive project, stemming out of the desire to overcome market orthodoxy and enhance popular participation (Sandbrook, 2011; Yates and Bakker, 2014). In this sense, post-neoliberalism indicates a project for redirecting politics and the economy towards social concerns, as a reaction to the regressive economic and political effects of neoliberalism. This is how the term has also occasionally been mobilised by state-managers. For Bolivian vice president and renowned theorist Álvaro García Linera (2006a, p. 30), for instance, through combining

Indianismo, the national-popular, unionism and Marxism, Evo Morales was able to convert the MAS into a machinery of power that [...] came to control the State and, from there, dared to undertake the construction of a post-neoliberal model, perhaps the only serious one in Latin America.

A more sceptical approach considers ‘post-neoliberalism’ as either a rhetorical change from neoliberalism or a way of saving the latter from its own excesses. Critics adopting this position have questioned its characterisation as a progressive project, claiming that it stops short of producing any significant break with the neoliberal order (Bebbington and Humphreys Bebbington, 2011). In these sense, ‘post-neoliberalism’ has been associated with other characterisations, such as ‘neo-extractivism’ or ‘neo-structuralism’. The former, neo-extractivism, has become popular in academic and activist circles to describe a form of redistributive or ‘compensatory’ extractivism, intentionally aimed at obtaining popular support for this development model (Gudynas, 2009; Svampa, 2013). The latter, ‘neo-structuralism’, refers to a set of policy prescriptions devised by the UN think-tank CEPAL (Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean), which envisions a

number of correctives to Washington Consensus-type free market orthodoxy, without altering its central tenets (such as trade liberalisation, export-led growth and labour flexibility; Leiva, 2008). In this sense, Webber (2011) has polemically labelled what he sees as neo-structuralist informed policy reforms in Bolivia as an instance of ‘reconstituted neoliberalism’ (cf. Veltmeyer, 2013).

While such ‘sceptical’ positions point to important aspects of the trajectory of the Latin American left, they are perhaps too crude in considering the restructuring associated with post-neoliberalism as a set of *intentional* interventions, explicitly aimed at legitimising accumulation and extractivism. Rather, the form that ‘post-neoliberalism’ takes in each country and conjuncture depends on context-specific conditions, external influences, and changing correlations of forces (Brenner et al., 2010). I argue that the strategic-relational approach adopted here allows us to account for how policy changes and their ambiguous outcomes are co-produced through social and political struggle that mediate, shape or challenge political agendas and policy prescriptions. It contributes to unpacking how neoliberal and ‘post-neoliberal’ tendencies are co-produced, through attention to the way that competing policy prescriptions, interests and political ambitions are negotiated and struggled over in specific contexts (Yates and Bakker, 2014, p. 83). This, however, still stops short of understanding why the trajectory of most post-neoliberal experiments has been characterised by an initial radical break with neoliberal rule, followed by a partial restoration of pre-existing conditions.

In this thesis, I adopt the Gramscian notion of ‘passive revolution’ in order to capture this dialectics of transformation and restoration. The notion of passive revolution was first introduced by Gramsci in the context of his discussion of the Italian unification process (known as *Risorgimento*). As he noted, however (2000, pp. 263–264), this thesis has broader scope for the “interpretation of ... every epoch characterised by complex historical upheavals”. Passive revolution describes historico-political processes in which social relations are profoundly reorganised, yet this is done in ways that reproduce existing political domination while containing popular initiatives from below (Hesketh, 2010, p. 384; Jessop, 1990, p. 213). This is why Gramsci also referred to this process as a ‘progressive restoration’ (Voza, 2004,

p. 190). Therefore, as Modonesi (2013) notes, a passive revolution need not be politically conservative, even if it results in the consolidation of capitalist relations.

Passive revolution is associated with what Gramsci dubs ‘transformism’ (*trasformismo*) (Hesketh and Morton, 2014), defined as the “gradual but continuous absorption [into the ruling class] of the active elements produced by allied groups—and even those who came from antagonistic groups and seemed irreconcilably hostile” (Gramsci, 2000, p. 250). Through transformism, in other words, the ruling class or fraction aims at “weakening or paralysing one’s opponent or opponents by taking over their leaders” (Gramsci, 2000, p. 261), overtly or covertly. This is related to the problem of incomplete or ‘limited’ hegemony (Jessop, 1990, pp. 211–213). While complete, ‘expansive’ hegemony mobilises the active consent of all social forces under the moral and intellectual ‘leadership’ (*direzione*) of a particular dominant class or fraction, limited hegemony can only advance the interests of particular popular forces (via *ad hoc* compromises and concessions) and needs to co-opt, marginalise or repress others (Gramsci, 2000, p. 261). Particularly targeted are those subaltern forces which may threaten the accumulation process—the economic base of hegemony—as well as popular-democratic movements which undermine the ideological bases of the dominant project (Jessop, 1990, p. 213).

The notions of passive revolution and transformism, in sum, help us to better account for the seemingly paradoxical process whereby an ostensibly progressive project may end up turning against emancipatory socio-environmental movements. It complements the notion of ‘selectivity’ through explaining how and why counter-hegemonic projects are demobilised through the strategic inclusion of limited popular demands in a ‘progressive restoration’ project, which redefines social relations and institutional configurations without ultimately attacking existing relations of class and political domination. A key point to note here is that, as Jessop (1990, p. 213, original emphasis) points out, “for Gramsci the crucial element in ‘passive revolutions’ is the *statization* of reorganization or restructuring”. In the process of institutionalisation of demands for social change, therefore, a passive revolution ends up absorbing, diffusing or destroying popular discontent (Hesketh and Morton, 2014, p. 150). This point has relevance for the politics of post-

neoliberalism and helps us to shed light on the ambivalence of its ideological underpinnings.

Discourse, hegemony and populism

The last body of literature I contribute to regards the complexity of the politics of discourse. Discourse is a central and underemphasised aspect of how natural resource extraction is governed (Bridge and McManus, 2000). Critical scholars have denounced that the radical and indigenous-informed ideology of the MAS and other governments does not correspond to the realities of its political orientation (e.g., Tockman and Cameron, 2014). Seldom, however, the ‘political work’ of discourse has been analysed or related to the stabilisation of extractivism in the present moment. In relation to Bolivia, insights from Gramsci and Laclau have been mobilised in the analysis of the MAS’s ideological strategy in its early years, and how it enabled it to construct a popular–indigenous, counter-hegemonic articulation (Errejón, 2014). García Linera (2010a) has drawn on Gramsci to characterise the Morales government’s ability to obtain consent from conservative forces in the country, praising its mobilisation of material and ideological strategies for the construction of expansive hegemony. Errejón and Guijarro (2016) echoed this position by arguing that the ability to impose a discursive framework of reference, including the appropriation of ideological elements of the conservative opposition, was central to the consolidation of hegemony in the second term of the Morales government.

These positions clearly gloss over the contradictions of the Process of Change and the exclusion of popular sectors from the MAS’s project. Critics, of course, reject this; interestingly, many mobilise the work of Gramsci to argue the exact opposite. The Bolivian theorist Luis Tapia (2014), for instance, claimed that the MAS no longer functions as an hegemonic articulator of transformative popular forces, but rather seeks to contain them through their disarticulation and substitution. Similar arguments have been made by others, who suggest that rather than ‘expansive’ hegemony, the Bolivian Process of Change resembles the reduced hegemony of a revolution ‘from above’ (Modonesi, 2013; Webber, 2015a). What is missing, here, however, is an understanding of how ideology is still mobilised in order to maintain

political stability around the extractivist project, not as part of a genuine hegemonic leadership, but precisely to make up for its absence. This might offer an insight into the contradictory intensification of radical discourse in the context of an increasingly less radical political trajectory (Svampa, 2015b).

In this thesis, to make sense of this paradox, I adopt Ernesto Laclau's theory of populism. Many, including critics on the left (Swyngedouw, 2010a; Žižek, 2006), consider 'populism' as a reactionary political strategy, inevitably entailing a degree of ideological mystification. For Laclau (1977), however, populism is not associated with a specific political programme. Rather, it is a strategy that is equally available to social forces of all political colours, a 'logic of articulation' of political contents (Laclau, 2005a). The starting point of populism, in this sense, is the presence of social demands that an existing institutional system is unable to meet. When demands of multiple social groups go unmet, solidarity can arise among them. The common source of frustration is the basis for the formation of an ideological 'chain of equivalence' among diverse demands. Through these equivalential chains, a collective identity is formed—'the people'—defined in opposition to a common source of 'negativity', the 'enemy' (typically, the establishment or 'power'). In the Laclauian framework, which elaborates on Gramsci, this is the necessary step that every social group needs to take in order to move from particularistic demands to hegemonic struggles (Laclau, 1977). In other words, this is the only way that subaltern classes can overcome the moment of 'economic-corporate' struggles and become (counter-)hegemonic, through building alliances with other subaltern and popular-democratic forces (cf. Karriem, 2009).

It follows that there is nothing inherently reactionary about populism. It can be mobilised to subvert the existing institutional order as much as to reinforce it, depending on the articulation of social demands on which it is based and consequently on the source of common frustration it identifies. This is why, for Laclau, populist strategy can be equally mobilised by reactionary projects like fascism or enable 'the highest form of socialism'. In order to understand the politics of populism, however, the class relations that underpin populist strategy need to be brought to the fore (Hart, 2013). Populism is neither above class, nor stems directly from it; it consists of popular-democratic interpellations (and antagonism towards

dominant ideology), articulated with specific class projects (Laclau, 1977, p. 175). Similarly, ideological mystification is not a necessary feature of populism. It is the result of the relative distance between the shared signifiers which emerge from equivalential chains, and the contents of the demands themselves. The more these signifiers become ‘empty’—that is, the more they lose their grounding in the social demands from which they emerged—the higher the risk that the populist discourse may turn into manipulative rhetoric (Laclau, 2005a, pp. 46–47).

Significantly, for Laclau (2005a), the moment in which this happens is typically the process of institutionalisation of a populist rupture. This is when social demands are most likely to be repressed and the equivalential discourse can be imposed more or less violently. Note the parallels here with the idea of ‘passive revolution’, discussed above. At the same time as a counter-hegemonic project may turn into a form of ‘restoration’ (however progressive), its transformative discursive element, articulated as a populist language and collective identity, is likely to degenerate into a form of ideological mystification. This insight, underdeveloped in Laclau and related debates, is important to make sense of the contradictory nature of populism emerging from literatures on the ideological strategies of the Latin American left. More broadly, this understanding of populism, closely allied with attention to the materiality of social struggle that underpins it, provides a conceptual lens through which to analyse the politics of discourse in Bolivia and its relationship with resource regulation.

6. Political ecology and the ‘extended case method’

In this section, I explain how I operationalise the theoretical framework described above into a method for data collection, analysis and interpretation.

Methodological challenges

The analytical framework laid out in the previous section can be subsumed to the broader intellectual project of political ecology. The latter is summarised by Perreault et al. (2015, pp. 7–8) as entailing three commitments. First, *theoretically*, political ecologists are committed to a critical understanding of society–nature interactions

and knowledges about the environment, as imbued with and inseparable from power relations. Second, this also demands a *political* commitment. Political ecology seeks to understand socio-environmental relations ‘in order to change them’: to open-up space for emancipatory transformation, through both unpacking and denouncing the structural causes of inequality and visibilising alternative and emancipatory practices (cf. Robbins, 2012). A necessary corollary of this is being explicit about one’s normative stance and ‘positionality’. Lastly, *methodologically*, political ecology research favours in-depth, qualitative and ethnographic methods. It considers it crucial to explore place-based environmental practices against the backdrop of relations of production and exchange, and therefore rejects the ‘view from nowhere’ of positivist science (cf. Haraway, 1988).

As a research approach, however, political ecology is related to important epistemological and methodological challenges. First, political ecology explanations seek to render explicit the linkages and interrelations between local processes and the broader political economic dynamics in which they are embedded. In order to make sense of local socio-environmental relations, and avoid ‘apolitical’ and naturalising explanations, these relations must be understood in their interrelationships with broader social processes and political economic structures (Robbins, 2012, chap. 1). Second, there is an implicit tension in political ecology research, as in social science more generally, regarding the mutual determination and analytical separation between ‘agency’ and ‘structure’². Third, there is the problem of representativeness of empirical, single-case research of the type carried out by political ecologists. Doubts have been raised concerning the usefulness of proliferating empirical explorations that are not comparable or commensurable and do not make an explicit effort to

² This is a broad debate with which I will not fully engage here. I want to note, however, that students of the theoretical approaches outlined above have reflected upon similar challenges, perhaps in more explicit terms. For instance, regulationists have insisted on the importance to avoid thinking capitalism as automatically self-regulating, while simultaneously rejecting the voluntarism of unconstrained agency. Instead, they have emphasised “the historically contingent ... mechanisms that lead specific economic agents to act in specific circumstances in accordance with the unevenly changing, objective requirements of capitalist reproduction” (Jessop and Sum, 2006, p. 6). Similarly, as I mentioned in the previous section, state ‘structures’ that constrain social change can be conceived of the crystallisation of past strategies in their interaction with present struggles, thereby avoiding an exaggerated dichotomy between structure and agency (Jessop, 1990). The challenge remains of how to turn these principles into research practice.

speak to a common theoretical concern (Castree, 2010). This leaves open the issue of how the findings of these studies can be generalised.

I argue that a case study approach—specifically, the ‘extended case’ method, as defined Michael Burawoy (1998)—offers a productive way of working through these issues.

The ‘extended case’ method

The extended case method explicitly works through moving from the micro to the macro and from the particular to the general. For Burawoy (1998, p. 5), as a form of ‘reflexive’ (as opposed to positivist) science, the extended case method “starts out from dialogue, virtual or real, between observer and participants, embeds such dialogue within a second dialogue between local processes and extralocal forces that in turn can only be comprehended through a third, expanding dialogue of theory with itself”.

It does so in three main ways. First, the extended case method scales-up from the local through linking the situation studies with its context. This is a feature of case study methodology more generally, which makes it particularly adapt to studying situations whereby the phenomenon cannot be separated from its context (as one would do in a scientific experiment; see Yin, 2013, pp. 13–14). Second, in linking social action to broader social forces and processes, the extended case method seeks to uncover and reconstruct the linkages between actions to structures (Burawoy, 1998, pp. 14–15). Social action, for Burawoy, both presupposes and reproduces a regime of power, in turn invoking or shaping broader structures (Burawoy, 1998, p. 18). Through abstracting from social situations and processes to the broader context, researchers place the site of research in a relation of mutual determination with an external field of forces. In this way, agency and structure are seen as dialectically related (Burawoy, 1998, pp. 15, 20). Third, extended case method is based on a form of theoretical rather than statistical representativeness. Findings are generalised through *perfecting existing theory*, through partial refutations and adjustments³ (Burawoy,

³ Positive science, such as statistics, presupposes the separation of the researcher from the object of study, the controllability of external conditions, and the generalizability of a given sample to the whole

1998, p. 16). This, incidentally, makes the extended case method also different from ‘grounded theory’ (Charmaz, 2014), in that it does not try to generate theoretical propositions out of nothing, but elaborates on existing frameworks (Burawoy, 1998, p. 25).

These principles informed my data collection strategy to an important extent. First, I connected local processes to broader geographical scales: I started from local cases of conflicts around mining and hydrocarbon extraction, dialoguing primarily with affected indigenous-*campesino* populations as well as relevant local authorities and firm representatives, and then scaled-up the analysis to regional (*departamento*) and national level actors, in order to uncover the interaction between situation and context. Second, moving up scales, the distance from the specificities of local situations was also higher, and I moved closer to understanding the functioning of broader political and economic ‘structures’. Third, I generalised my findings through theoretical refining. I have adopted the regulation approach and applied it to the partially exceptional case of environmental governance under ‘post-neoliberalism’. In this way, I have not simply re-tailored an existing analytical approach to a specific instance, but rather the opposite: I have extended and refined this theoretical framework to accommodate previously neglected situations and processes.

At the same time, however, I diverged from the principles of the extended case in a number of ways. First and foremost, my reliance on participant observation was very limited. This is for Burawoy (1998, p. 6) a central aspect of the method. While committing to inter-subjective engagement and intervention in the research site and social field of study, as the extended case method suggests, I have relied primarily on *interviewing* as a research technique—including in-depth face-to-face interviews as well as focus groups. Though I have attended organisation meetings and political gatherings, I acted primarily as an observer rather than as an active participant. Second, in terms of data analysis, I have relied primarily on coding techniques of

population (Burawoy, 1998, p. 32; Yin, 2013, p. 12). In case study research these conditions are not given. The researcher actively participates in the situation of study and has no control over the broader processes which influence it. While positive science relies on ‘procedural objectivity’—whereby applying a correct, standardised data gathering procedure guarantees the validity of the result—the case study method seeks instead to achieve ‘embedded objectivity’, or objectivity ‘dwelling’ in theory (Burawoy, 1998, p. 28).

interview transcripts (and, to a less extent, of primary documents) drawn from ‘grounded theory’. I agree with Burawoy (1998) that case study research does not discover theory out of raw data, but rather expands on existing theoretical frameworks. However, I found it useful to adopt coding techniques as developed by grounded theorists for making sense of my data (Charmaz, 2014, chap. 3). Moreover, I have partly relied on Foucauldian-informed discourse analysis principles (Carabine, 2001) for uncovering the workings of power/knowledge in interviewee narratives⁴.

Fieldwork activities

The empirical core of the thesis was based on a total of 12 months of fieldwork and related activities, carried out in Bolivia between 2013 and 2014. During this time, I have realised a total of 81 semi-structured interviews and six focus groups. Participants included: members and leaders of rural communities affected by oil, gas and mineral extraction activities (20 interviews and six focus groups); national and local leaders of indigenous-*campesino* and environmental organisations (13 interviews); personnel of state agencies at national, regional and municipal level dealing with resource extraction sectors and related socio-environmental issues (19 interviews); representatives of state and private hydrocarbon and mining firms operating in the case study areas, including personnel responsible for environmental management and ‘community relations’ (nine interviews); ‘organic intellectuals’ of the MAS’s Process of Change or of political movements opposing it, including academics, activists, NGO representatives and former state functionaries (20 interviews).

Background and complementary data were gathered through the review and analysis of secondary sources, including: Bolivian legislation, with particular attention to environmental and indigenous rights; national development plans and strategies for

⁴ In practical terms, this means that I have analysed the same material at two levels. First, I looked for common themes emerging from the texts, which helped me to identify and systematise the main objects and categories, in order to understand processes and practices. Second, drawing on Foucauldian principles, I have looked at specific perceptions, representations and discursive strategies adopted, more or less consciously, by actors. In this way, for instance, while I interviewed company and state personnel to find out about their environmental management practices and relationships with local communities, I realised that they shared certain tropes about indigenous peoples—as being manipulated by environmental NGOs and explicitly seeking conflict in order to blackmail extractive firms—which ‘othered’ indigenous people and influenced the way their claims were perceived.

the mining and hydrocarbon sectors; position statements of indigenous-*campesino* and environmental organisations; NGO publications and media reports on conflicts surrounding resource extraction and state-social movement relations nationally and in the study areas. I detail the main activities below, roughly grouped into three ‘phases’

GAS AND INDIGENOUS RIGHTS (SEPTEMBER–DECEMBER 2013)

As part of a ‘secondment’ with the Centre for Applied Studies on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CEADESC), a small indigenous rights NGO based in Cochabamba, in this period I carried out investigation on the implications of gas extraction in lowland⁵ indigenous territories. The study, which I conducted as part of a research team⁶, resulted in the publication of a long report (Soto et al., 2013). It aimed primarily at assessing how the newly reformed legal and institutional framework for managing the socio-environmental impacts of the hydrocarbon sector was implemented in practice, and how the main actors involved—representatives of the state, firms and affected groups—perceived its outcomes.

Data gathering focused primarily on the traditional gas extraction region of the Chaco, in south-eastern Bolivia, where the Assembly of the Guaraní People (APG), the main indigenous group in the area, has long fought for territorial rights and against the negative impacts of hydrocarbon activities (Anthias, 2012). The CEADESC team and I took two research trips to the Chaco in order to conduct interviews and focus groups in the Aguarague National Park and in the province of Yacuiba, in coordination with the APG. In a third research trip, we organised a meeting in Rurrenabaque, in the Northern La Paz region, with representatives of local indigenous organisations. Here, we carried out further interviews and focus

⁵ The Andean highlands or high plateau (*‘tierras altas’* or *‘altiplano’*) regions, stretching north to south along the western side of the country, are historically inhabited by Quechua- and Aymara-speaking indigenous populations. These, since the 1950s, have come to identify as *campesinos* (peasants), while at different times reasserting their ‘indian’ (*indio*) or ‘originary’ (*originario*) character. The lowlands (*tierras bajas*) comprise both the Amazon regions to the north-east and east of the Andes, and the drier plains of the Chaco in the south-east. Altogether, these are known as the eastern ‘crescent’ (*media luna*). As many as 34 ethnic and linguistic groups exist throughout the Amazon and Chaco. All lowland groups self-identify primarily as ‘indigenous peoples’ (*pueblos indígenas*) (García-Linera et al., 2010). It is only with the 2009 Constitution that an official attempt is made to bring these diverse groups under a common category: that of ‘indigenous originary peasant’ people (*pueblo indígena originario campesino*) or nation (Gobierno de Bolivia, 2009a).

⁶ Some of the data in this phase was collected by other members of the research team, or in collaboration with them. I am solely responsible for its analysis and interpretation for this thesis.

groups with members and leaders of the Regional Tsimane Mosetén Council (CRTM), the Indigenous Women's Central of Northern La Paz (CMILAP) and the Indigenous Council of the Tacana People (CRTM). The objective of this meeting was to find out how indigenous rights were implemented in the area of the Pilon Lajas Biosphere Reserve and Community Territory, in the western Bolivian Amazon. This area is set to become the next frontier of hydrocarbon (and hydroelectric) production in the country and has already been at the centre of disputes between indigenous organisations and the MAS government. Finally, during this first phase, I also took two trips to Santa Cruz and one to La Paz to interview hydrocarbon firms' representatives as well as personnel of the Ministry of Hydrocarbons and of the Environment.

MINING AND THE ENVIRONMENT IN THE LAKE POOPÓ BASIN (MAY- AUGUST 2014)

The Poopó Lake basin, in the highland region of Oruro, is a traditional mineral extraction region and one of the country's most affected by mining contamination (see Perreault 2013). Intense water usage for mineral extraction and processing and discharge of heavy metals and other pollutants in rivers have exacerbated water scarcity and land salinization issues which are heavily impacting local indigenous-*campesino* and fishing communities. This area has also been the centre of mobilisation against the negative environmental impacts of mining. Since 2007, a local organisation, the *Coordinadora* for the Defence of the Desaguadero River and the Lakes Uru-Uru and Poopó (CORIDUP)—with the support of local and national NGOs and of indigenous authorities pertaining to the National Council of *Allyus* and *Markas* of the *Qullasuyu* (CONAMAQ), the most important indigenous organisation in the Bolivian highlands—has organised to demand action from the state to compel mining companies and 'cooperatives' to reduce contamination. In 2009, a national march organised by CORIDUP was successful in pressuring the government to pass a supreme decree (SD 0335), declaring the Poopó basin in a state of 'environmental emergency' due to mining activities, and devising a plan for the 'integral remediation' of the area.

Having learned about issues of socio-environmental management and related conflicts in the hydrocarbon sector, I travelled to Oruro in May 2014 to conduct a similar investigation regarding mining. After preliminary interviews with members of

supporting NGOs, I conducted three research trips to the municipalities of Rancho Grande, Pazña and Poopó, where I carried out interviews with members of affected communities as well as with representatives of CORIDUP and CONAMAQ and personnel responsible for environmental and mining issues at municipal level⁷. In Oruro and La Paz, I conducted further interviews with representatives of the regional government and of the Ministries of Mining and of the Environment, as well as with technicians of the state-owned Bolivian Mining Corporation (COMIBOL) and the Regional Federation of Mining Cooperatives (FEDECOMIN). I also contacted personnel of the main private mining company operating in the region, Sinchi Wayra (owned by the Swiss group GlencoreXstrata), and made repeated attempts to arrange an interview, but was ultimately denied permission, due to the company's fear of public exposure. The empirical results of this investigation were also published in a long report (Andreucci and Gruberg, 2016).

STATE–SOCIAL MOVEMENTS RELATIONS (FEBRUARY–MARCH AND SEPTEMBER–OCTOBER 2014)

A third set of data collection activities, consisting of semistructured interviews with a number of 'expert' actors, focused on the relationships and tensions between the state and social movements *vis-à-vis* resource governance. I conducted these interviews in between the previous two phases described above, while based in Cochabamba, and in the last two months of my stay in Bolivia, during which I moved to La Paz—the seat of government and the city where most state agencies and social organisations have their national headquarters. It is important to stress that these were not simply experts, but 'organic intellectuals' (organisers of hegemony), either of the MAS project or, primarily, of the indigenous movement and other leftist organisations now targeted for critiquing the government.

A key issue I explored in this phase is that of the tension between the *campesino* and indigenous bloc, resulting from the fact that the former remained allied with the MAS party while the latter was being strongly targeted by the government. I used as entry points two main disputes between the two blocs: the TIPNIS (Isiboro-Sécure

⁷ In the first trip, I benefited from the logistical support of colleagues from CEADDESC. Throughout this phase, moreover, I was assisted in the field by a Bolivian agrarian development researcher, Helga Gruberg Cazón.

Indigenous Territory and Natural Park) conflict, and tensions over the management of the Indigenous Fund, a mechanism demanded by the APG for accessing hydrocarbon rents for development projects and later used by the MAS in order to coopt indigenous and *campesino* leaderships.

I interviewed former members of the ‘Comuna Group’, an intellectual collective whose theoretical production informed and reflected upon the MAS’s project (Baker, 2015); former members of the government who left due to tensions over the perceived conservative turn of the Morales administration on indigenous, land and environmental issues; leaders of indigenous organisations and NGOs; activists and researchers of the TIPNIS conflict; signatories of the ‘June Manifesto’ (leftist activists and academics pushing for a more radical direction in the Process of Change; see Almaraz, 2012); and personnel of the agency responsible for managing the Indigenous Fund.

7. Structure of the thesis

The rest of the thesis is structured as follows. In Chapter 1, I deal with the expansion of mining activities in Bolivia under Evo Morales and how it related to the process of ‘counter-neoliberal’ reform. Drawing on the regulation approach and strategic-relational state theory (see Section 5), this chapter analyses recent changes in the governance of Bolivian mining, in order to understand why plans to initiate a transition towards a more plural and diversified economy have not been put into place. I make three interrelated claims. First, the expansion of mining has been enabled by maintaining institutional arrangements for mineral exploitation established during neoliberalism, favouring transnational firms and self-employed (‘cooperative’) miners over state-owned and community-managed mining. Second, despite the new government’s improved legal framework for the promotion of environmental and indigenous rights, the mining sector has continued to benefit from *de facto* lax environmental regulation, which constitutes an indirect incentive to mining expansion at the expense of ecologies and indigenous-*campesino* livelihoods. Third, the state has played a central role in weakening social resistance to mining expansion, by demobilising those social forces—particularly indigenous-*campesino*

organisations—whose proposals and demands conflicted most clearly with extractivist development.

In Chapter 2, I carry out a conceptually-grounded analysis of struggles over hydrocarbon governance, in order to shed light on the reasons why indigenous-informed policies for improving the socio-environmental implication of oil and gas extraction have been implemented only in limited ways (and later partly rolled back). Expanding on the regulationist conceptual framework through including further insights from neo-Gramscian theory, I make two interrelated arguments. First, initial, important advances in the governance of resources in Bolivia were later partially reversed, due to shifting power relations between social movements, the hydrocarbon industry, and the state. Second, the coming to power of Evo Morales resulted in a ‘passive-revolutionary’ process whereby an initial radical break with the neoliberal order was followed by a gradual adaptation of radical political objectives to the existing political economic relations. Most notably, plans to reduce the country’s dependency on gas exports as well as to challenge the transnational domination of the hydrocarbon sector were abandoned, generating an increasingly explicit incompatibility with indigenous demands.

Chapter 3 takes on the problem of ‘populism’. In this chapter, through an engagement of the politics of discourse *vis-à-vis* natural resource extraction in Evo Morales’s Bolivia, I explore the contradictions of populist strategy in relation to changing political economic conditions and correlations of forces. I show that, in the years leading to the election of Morales, populism—as a way of constructing a popular identity, through articulating social demands in opposition to a common ‘enemy’—was effective in challenging the hegemony of neoliberal forces and favouring their replacement with a new, ‘popular-indigenous’ power bloc. Once the hegemony of the new power bloc was stabilised, however, indigenous demands for improving the socio-environmental outcomes of resource extraction began to be perceived as a threat to resource-based accumulation. In this new conjuncture, the signifiers originated in popular-indigenous struggles were used by the Morales government to legitimise its control over and repression of the indigenous movement. I argue that, as the Bolivian case shows, the ideological degeneration observed in Latin American left governments signals a problem not with populism

per se, but rather with the political and class projects that these governments put forward.

In the Discussion, I provide an overview of my main empirical arguments and discuss their implications for current debates in political ecology around resource governance, post-neoliberalism and socio-environmental transformation. I suggest that combining a regulationist approach to governance with a neo-Gramscian understanding of the state, politics and ideology is of much relevance for political ecology. First, it enables us to see that the state not only contributes to ‘making’ nature for the reproduction of capital, but it is itself fully intermeshed with, and mutually co-constituted by, socio-environmental relations and struggles. Second, the state, in its ‘integral’ sense, is therefore a key terrain for socio-environmental struggle, open to being changed in profound and potentially transformative ways. Greater consideration to the way the state crystallises power relations among social forces, and to how this relates to the existence of (always mobile) ‘selectivities’, can inform analyses aimed at unpacking opportunities and challenges for emancipatory socio-environmental transformation in specific conjunctures.

Chapter 1.

Mining expansion and the selectivities of the state

1. Introduction

The extractive boom of the last decade has had mixed consequences for Latin America, fuelling economic growth, political change and redistribution, but also increasing socio-environmental conflicts and primary-export dependency (Bebbington, 2009). The term *extractivism* has been adopted in the Latin American debate to capture the renewed emphasis on extraction as a growth strategy in the region. Drawing on Gudynas (2013, p. 3), I define extractivism as a type of natural resource extraction which *a)* is large scale and/or very intensive; *b)* is oriented primarily towards export; and *c)* entails little or no industrial processing. While extraction of natural resources is not *per se* a negative thing, in ‘peripheral’, resource-rich countries *extractivism* is typically associated with negative socio-environmental implications as well as relations of unequal exchange at the global scale (Gudynas, 2013). From a political economic perspective, extractivism can thus be understood as a regime of accumulation which is primarily *extensive* and *extraverted*; that is, based mainly on nature’s appropriation and oriented towards primary commodity export.

To the extent that ‘post-neoliberal’ Latin American governments set for themselves the goal of overcoming primary export-based development, the expansion of resource extractivism in these countries is considered paradoxical (Gudynas, 2009; Svampa, 2013). Bolivia is a good case in point. Since 2006, the government of Evo Morales and his MAS (Movement Towards Socialism) party have implemented a political project which has been presented as radically alternative to neoliberalism. An important aim of this project has been to diversify the economy and strengthen communitarian productive forms, as part of a perceived need to shift away from primary export-based development (Gobierno de Bolivia, 2007a). Ten years on,

however, Bolivia's economy is more dependent on primary exports than before⁸. This is in line with a general trend in the region, incentivised by high commodity prices; it does, however, point to the challenges involved in using resource rents to fund economic diversification.

Research in political ecology has extensively documented the impacts of growing extraction (e.g., Bebbington and Bury, 2013); the debate around the *drivers* of the extractive boom, however, remains less developed. Extractive activity expansion has been related primarily to high international commodity prices, but other political economic drivers have also been discussed. Specifically, there is a broad consensus among critical scholars that neoliberalisation has played a central role in facilitating private investment in extractives. In Latin America, the main effect of neoliberal globalisation has been the restoration of the primacy of 'export-led development' (Robinson, 2009). The implementation of neoliberal mining codes in the 1980s-'90s has shifted investment patterns towards countries in the global South by improving 'risk/reward ratios' for transnational extractive capital (Bridge, 2004). As part of global neoliberal reform, investment in 'southern' countries has been encouraged by multi-lateral institutions, by reducing the ability of states to extract rent and impose regulations (Emel and Huber, 2008). How much do these neoliberal conditions matter, however, to countries which have undertaken a process of ostensibly 'post-neoliberal' counter-reform?

This chapter sets out to analyse the complex reconfiguration of mineral governance which followed the crisis of neoliberalism in Bolivia, and how this reconfiguration has related to the continued expansion of resource extractivism. Particularly, expanding a regulationist approach to governance by combining it with strategic-relational state theory (Jessop, 2008, 1990), I analyse the role of changing state-society relations in influencing this process. My argument is based on an empirical exploration of the case of mining in Bolivia. Primary data for my investigation has been accessed in two ways. First, I have analysed relevant statistical data as well as legal and policy documents produced by national and international institutions.

⁸ From 2005 to 2012, the contribution of primary goods to the total value of exports rose from 89% to 95% (CEPAL, 2013, p. 111). In the same period, the primary sector's contribution to the Bolivian GDP grew from 21,6% to 24,5%, while that of industrial manufacturing declined slightly, from 11,6% to 10.2% (own elaboration based on data from CEPALSTAT, 2015).

Second, I have drawn on data produced via extensive fieldwork conducted in Bolivia between 2013 and 2014, focused primarily on conflicts around mining in the Oruro region in the Bolivian highlands. Field research included participation in community meetings and social mobilisations, as well as 63 semi-structured interviews with state authorities, experts and members of social organizations, NGOs and affected communities⁹.

My findings show that, in the Bolivian mining sector, the expansion of extractivism has been related to the reproduction of political economic conditions established under neoliberalism. Despite the government's declared commitment to re-establishing state control over the exploitation of mineral resources, promote economic diversification and support communitarian productive forms, reform has been limited. While the reactivation of the Bolivian Mining Corporation (COMIBOL) resulted in greater state participation in the production and processing of minerals, the unprecedented increase in extraction and exports experienced during the Morales years was primarily driven by booming transnational investments and a burgeoning self-employed ('cooperative') miners' sector. This, I will argue, has implications for the way we conceptualise post-neoliberal resource governance. First, institutional reconfigurations aimed to stabilise accumulation in response to the crisis of neoliberalism are shaped by changing power relations among social forces. Second, these changing relations played out through and were influenced by the state. The state should then be understood as a specific reflection (or 'condensation') of social relations, which also actively intervenes in these relations by enabling certain political projects and hindering others.

The rest of the chapter is structured as follows: In the next section, drawing on regulation theory, I lay the conceptual bases for my analysis. I do so by discussing the relationships between resource governance and state–society relations and by unpacking the notion of 'post-neoliberalism'. I also position my contribution in relation to debates in geography and other social sciences around heightened dependency on primary exports in post-neoliberal Bolivia, by suggesting that the marginalisation of social forces opposing extractivism is an important and under-

⁹ Further data used for this chapter was collected and made available by Isabella Radhuber.

researched issue. In Sections 3 and 4, I engage with the empirical case of Bolivian mining, with two objectives. First, I identify the main changes and continuities in the post-neoliberal reconfiguration of mineral governance, and relate them to the issue of expanding extractivism. Second, I discuss some important ambiguities and contradictions which have accompanied ‘counter-neoliberal’ reform. Section 5 identifies important shifts in the overall balance of power among social forces in Bolivia and discusses the role of the state in reinforcing these shifts. It also briefly discusses the new Mining Law as a condensation of power relations in the second term of the Morales government. My main conclusions are summarised in Section 6.

2. Regulation, governance, and strategic-relational state theory

The regulation approach is concerned with the social embeddedness of the capitalist economy and the forms of social regulation which seek to solve its tensions and contradictions (Jessop and Sum, 2006). It places emphasis on institutions and relations that sustain accumulation regimes in historic cycles of capitalist development. Regulationist accounts distinguish between the ‘accumulation regime’ and the ‘mode of (social) regulation’. The accumulation regime is understood as the social organization of production, circulation, consumption and distribution, including relations with non-capitalist forms. The mode of regulation refers to the ways in which the accumulation regime is reproduced “despite and through its conflictual and contradictory character”¹⁰ (Lipietz, 1988, p. 11). It comprises the social institutions, rules and norms which stabilise (or ‘regularise’) accumulation in the face of contradictions and crises (Himley, 2008, p. 437; Jessop and Sum, 2006). A regulationist approach, therefore, is particularly well-suited to capture the ways that institutional configurations are restructured in response to socio-ecological challenges to accumulation—and how such a restructuring affects the governance of natural resources.

¹⁰ Among these, here I focus primarily on intentional processes of de-regulation and re-regulation undertaken by the state in relation to a range of competing social forces.

Since the early 2000s, geographers have drawn on the regulation approach in order to capture the changes in resource governance and environmental policy brought about by neoliberalisation and related scalar restructuring (Bridge and Jonas, 2002). Moving from a critique of the nation state-centred focus of early regulation theory (Bridge and McManus, 2000), these scholars have shifted analytical emphasis towards other institutional arrangements, particularly at the sub-national scale. Consistent with an understanding of neoliberalism as implying a shift from *government* to *governance* (Bridge and Perreault, 2009; Himley, 2008), they have given greater importance to non-state actors such as private firms and social movements. Contradictions and conflicts related to extractive sectors or projects, it is argued, are temporarily avoided through regulatory changes which result from negotiations and struggles among competing (local) actors (Bridge, 2000; Bridge and McManus, 2000; Himley, 2013; Horowitz, 2015).

This analytical focus is useful for understanding the ways that accumulation is stabilised in the face of socio-ecological contradictions and conflicts. To the extent that post-neoliberalism is associated with a ‘return of the state’ (Grugel and Riggirozzi, 2012), however, I argue that understanding institutional restructuring associated with the post-neoliberal shift requires an engagement with state–society relations at multiple scales. Following Jessop (2008), I thus complement a regulationist approach with insights from ‘strategic-relational’ state theory (see Brand et al., 2011). This allows to better integrate “analysis of political economy with analysis of civil society and/or state” (Jessop and Sum, 2006, p. 4). Informed by Marxist approaches to the state—particularly the work of Gramsci and Poulantzas (Jessop, 2008)—strategic-relational theory proposes an understanding of the state as a ‘social relation’, whereby the state reflects the changing balance of power among social forces. The state, at the same time, is not a neutral actor: it actively constitutes this balance of power rather than simply reflecting it. This is well captured by the notion of the state’s ‘strategic selectivities’ (Jessop, 2008), which refers to the ways that the state can be more accessible for some social forces than for others, or can advance or obstruct competing interests. Strategic-relational theory, therefore, helps to explain the ways that resource governance is remade as the outcome of changing power relations among social forces, played out through the state.

Post-neoliberal governance

Combining the regulationist approach with strategic-relational state theory provides a useful framework for the analysis of ‘post-neoliberalism’. The latter is understood as a set of social, political and economic transformations which emerge out of the crisis of neoliberalism (Brand and Sekler, 2009). As a political project, post-neoliberalism entails a range of strategies for overcoming free-market orthodoxy—including re-socialising the economy and deepening democracy (Yates and Bakker, 2014). The outcome of these strategies, however, is not necessarily a complete replacement of neoliberalism (Brenner et al., 2010). While in some cases—such as in Bolivia, Ecuador and Venezuela—the extent of transformation was seen as potentially radical, in actuality these countries have experienced rather limited structural change¹¹.

This is consistent with a regulationist reading. According to regulation theory, the capitalist state is caught between the twin imperatives of *a*) fostering accumulation and *b*) guaranteeing a degree of social cohesion, stability and legitimacy (Boyer, 1990). Post-neoliberal restructuring has sought to partly re-embed the economy in order to reactivate and stabilise accumulation. The ways that (and the extent to which) institutions have been reconfigured in specific contexts has not, however, been predetermined by agreement to an overarching plan. It has not, for instance, resulted from the application of ‘neo-structuralist’ policy prescriptions¹² (Leiva, 2008)—although these might have had a degree of influence. Rather it has depended on a dialectical tension and shifting relations between, on the one hand, demands for more or less radical change coming from different movements and social sectors; and, on the other, political and economic incentives and pressures for maintaining, restoring or expanding neoliberal conditions—all this mediated by the state.

¹¹ Particularly, they have not altered (and have in fact deepened) the primary export orientation of their economy. While post-neoliberalism cannot, of course, be reduced to shifting away from primary export-led development, in resource-rich countries in Latin America this element has been central to ‘post-neoliberal’ governments’ plans (Gobierno de Bolivia, 2007a).

¹² ‘Neo-structuralism’ is a set of policy principles devised by the UN Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (CEPAL) in the mid-1990s. It advocates a greater role of the state and civil society as a way of improving Latin America’s terms of insertion in the global market; unlike the post-war structuralism of Prebisch and others, however, it does not question the primary export orientation of the region’s economy (Leiva, 2008).

This conceptual framework thus enables us see how current uses of the word ‘post-neoliberalism’ conflate three aspects of the concept¹³. First, the diverse politico-ideological projects which have emerged in opposition to neoliberalism—*post-neoliberalism* proper, with emphasis on the final ‘ism’. In Bolivia these would include, for instance, mineworker unions’ proposals for state re-appropriation of the mineral production chain, or indigenous-*campesino* visions of ‘pluri-nationality’ and ‘*vivir bien*’. Second, the concrete policies and practices through which post-neoliberal principles are actualised in specific contexts—referred to as ‘*counter-neoliberalisation*’ processes (Brenner et al., 2010). Examples include nationalisation of strategic companies or land redistribution. Third, the hybrid outcome of uneven, partial actualisations of post-neoliberal principles in pre-existing (neoliberal) contexts—sometimes called ‘*actually existing post-neoliberalism(s)*’ (Yates and Bakker, 2014). This refers to the actual situation of left-leaning countries whose governing political parties have defined themselves explicitly in opposition to neoliberalism.

It is important to treat these three aspects separately, in order to understand their causal relations: some post-neoliberal projects result in counter-neoliberal reforms, but not others; counter-neoliberal reforms, in turn, interplay in various ways with neoliberal continuities and resurgences to produce hybrid institutional configurations. How resource governance is remade, therefore, depends to an important extent on how post-neoliberal projects—and the social forces which sustain them—are differentially institutionalised, disciplined or marginalised.

Limits to counter-neoliberal reform in Bolivia

The counter-neoliberalisation of Bolivia’s resource governance has not resulted in reduced dependency on extraction; extractivism has in fact expanded. This has been related to the Morales government’s inability to undertake structural, macroeconomic reform (Bebbington and Humphreys Bebbington, 2011). Existing research identifies at least three reasons for this. First, the presence of ‘structural’ constraints to the possibility of steering the trajectory of development away from extractivism—including the ‘path-dependent effects’ of neoliberal gas governance (Kaup, 2010) as

¹³ See Peck and Tickell, (2002, p. 383) for a similar discussion on the notion of neoliberalism.

well as weak institutional capacity, which resulted in the inability to re-invest revenues in long-term diversification plans (Kohl and Farthing, 2012; Wanderley, 2013). Second, reluctance on the part of Evo Morales's MAS party to embrace some of the more radical demands arising from popular struggles (Webber, 2011a, 2010)—and the related need to use extraction rents to maintain political legitimacy in the short term (Kohl and Farthing, 2012). Third, the presence of conservative social and political forces within the country, which forced the government to seek compromises and thus limited the extent of reform in key areas (Kaup, 2013). This is the case, for instance, of the aggressive opposition of landholding elites in areas such as land reform (Valdivia, 2010).

As regards the mining sector, the opposition of social forces which benefited from neoliberal political economic arrangements is considered a primary limiting factor for counter-neoliberal reform. First, unsurprisingly, transnational firms expressed concerns over plans to increase state presence in mineral production chain and increase levels of taxes and royalties (Kaup, 2014, p. 1845). Second, self-employed ('cooperative') miners' federations—representing the largest portion of workforce in the Bolivian mining sector after the dismantling of the public sector begun in the 1980s—also resisted paying higher taxes and royalties and actively opposed nationalisations (Kaup, 2014; Webber, 2011a, chap. 4). Cooperatives, for Kaup (Kaup, 2014, p. 1846) successfully struggled to maintain the favourable conditions granted to them under neoliberalism—such as fiscal incentives and the possibility of signing joint-venture contracts with transnationals—thus limiting the reach of counter-neoliberal reform. Third, the political power of the mining sector as a whole functioned as an obstacle to reform in areas such as environmental protection and indigenous rights (Perreault, 2013). The predominance of social forces interested in maintaining the neoliberal institutional configuration was therefore central to limiting counter-neoliberalisation.

I share with these accounts an analytical focus on the role of competing social and political forces in challenging or reproducing neoliberal continuities. In this chapter, however, I seek to add to them in two ways. First, I further emphasise the importance of those post-neoliberal social forces whose projects, visions and demands opposed—directly or indirectly—extractivism. The role of these 'post-

extractivist' forces—such as, most notably, the indigenous-*campesino* movement in specific conjunctures—is not sufficiently explored in relation to Bolivia's macroeconomic restructuring. Yet, they have arguably played a central role in shaping the discourses and plans of the MAS government—even though their projects have not resulted in structural changes of the extent demanded. Second, I place greater attention on the state, as the arena in which these processes were played out and fought over. It is through the state that the demands of post-extractivist forces were institutionalised, disciplined or marginalised, and their organisations co-opted or de-mobilised. Therefore, I suggest, analysing the role of these social forces in their relationship with the state is central to understanding the contradictions and shortcomings of Bolivia's counter-neoliberalisation process.

3. Neoliberal continuities and counter-neoliberal reform

In keeping with a broader trend in the region, Bolivia's development trajectory has been characterised by a history of resource-based, outward-oriented and dependent capitalist integration (Kaup, 2013; Klein, 2009). In the central decades of the twentieth century, several Latin American countries attempted to redirect development towards a more inward-oriented pattern, through the promotion of domestic market expansion and so-called 'import-substitution industrialisation' (ISI)—an accumulation model usually referred to as 'developmentalism'. Neoliberal restructuring started in Latin America with authoritarian governments in the 1970s, followed by a formally 'democratic' wave of 'structural adjustments' from the mid-1980s. After the 1952 Revolution, Bolivia also undertook a developmentalist experiment, based on mining nationalisation and agrarian reform. This, however, did not last long, as liberalisation measures started again in 1955. After a further re-regulatory wave in the late sixties, Bolivia underwent a profound neoliberal adjustment in the 1980s¹⁴ (Kaup, 2013; Klein, 2009).

¹⁴ In the midst of a hyperinflation crisis, Bolivian president Victor Paz implemented a 'shock therapy' reform designed by Jeffrey Sachs and the IMF in agreement with former dictator Hugo Banzer (Klein, 2009, p. 151). A profound neoliberal restructuring was the object of a comprehensive legislative

The restructuring of the economy which ensued hit the mining sector profoundly. Neoliberalization of the mining sector, orchestrated by the national mining elite led by Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada (Kaup, 2013), had three main effects. First, it deepened the process of privatisation, with the partial shutdown of the state-owned COMIBOL in 1985-‘86. Second, it demobilised the country’s historically powerful—and politically radical—miners’ unions. Restructuring of COMIBOL was followed by the ‘re-localisation’ (a euphemism for dismissal) of over 20,000 mining workers, which also increased informality in the sector and prepared the ground for the expansion of self-employed (‘cooperative’) mining (see below). Third, it opened up the sector to transnational investment, particularly in the 1990s, when Sánchez de Lozada was elected to the country’s presidency for the first time (1993-1997).

Neoliberalisation reached its peak in this period. As part of the restructuring, a new Mining Code was adopted in 1997 (Gobierno de Bolivia, 1997), aiming to further liberalise the sector and foster foreign direct investment. The Code explicitly favoured private and transnational mining firms by, *inter alia*: granting concession-holders indefinite and exclusive rights for all mining activities; giving firms unlimited rights over the use of land and water found on the concession; limiting the role of COMIBOL to administering the sector; and implementing a fiscal regime favourable to private and transnational investors (including low royalties and taxes and the possibility to repatriate profits). This reform was part of a World Bank-led strategy for remaking the region’s mining sector along neoliberal principles (World Bank, 1996), implemented in Bolivia as part of a loan agreement (World Bank, 1989). As an overall result of the reform—according to a World Bank (1997, p. xx) report—“Bolivia, a country known for its traditional underground tin mining, is now considered to have significant potential for the exploration, and subsequent production, of diverse minerals by a high technology, large-scale mining industry”. Conditions were thus created for the transnationalisation of the sector.

package including the infamous Supreme Decree 21060, passed in 1985, which was later defined as a form of ‘economic Pinochetism’.

Post-neoliberal plans

The political shift begun in 2006 reversed to an extent the structural imbalance between transnational capital and the state. This is reflected in new policies and principles for the extractive sector. The 2007 National Development Plan (NDP) recognised popular demands for increased state control of natural resources and economic diversification, as well as for greater democracy and community participation (Gobierno de Bolivia, 2007a, p. 22). For mining, the NDP proposes increased state participation in production and industrialisation, to be achieved through a reconstituted COMIBOL (Gobierno de Bolivia, 2007a, p. 123). The 2009 Constitution further emphasises the importance of national resource sovereignty, the socio-economic function of mining and protection of indigenous rights (Gobierno de Bolivia, 2009a). The displacement of the national mining elite from the centre of national power and the correspondent increase in the influence of workers' unions and indigenous-*campesino* sectors thus informed plans for partial counter-neoliberalisation (Kaup, 2013).

Counter-neoliberal reform resulted in greater state presence in the mining sector and the reactivation of COMIBOL. This is shown by the increase in public funds directed to state-owned enterprises, including in the mining sector (Radhuber, 2014). While public companies received 4% of total state expenditure in 2005, in 2011 their share reached 35%. Public investment targeted primarily the hydrocarbon sector; starting in 2007, however, mining emerged as a second important target. Funds destined to public mining companies, which had dropped to 2.5% of the public budget in 2006, averaged 6.2% from 2007 to 2011. State-led industrialisation projects and nationalisations have also taken place, including the full nationalisation of the Huanuni and Colquiri tin mines and the Vinto foundry, as well as the signing of several joint venture (now called 'association') contracts with COMIBOL majority. These measures mark a clear reversal with respect to the previous two decades of neoliberalisation. The counter-neoliberal process, however, has been partial and fraught with ambiguities and contradictions.

The post-neoliberal principles identified in the NDP and the Constitution have been implemented in very partial ways. First, despite the changes highlighted, no overarching reform of the mining sector has taken place in the period considered

(2006–2014). (While a new Mining Law was passed in May 2014, the possibility that it may deepen counter-neoliberal reform is strongly contested by most commentators; see Section 5). Second, progressive principles coexist in the same documents with neoliberal continuities, reflecting an effort to maintain favourable conditions for mining operators in general and transnational investors in particular (Gobierno de Bolivia, 2009a, p. 311, 2007a, p. 158). Furthermore, mining is still explicitly favoured over communities' activities such as agriculture. The Constitution does recognise, for instance, that communities have a right to autonomous indigenous territorial administration, to a healthy environment and to practice their traditional political, legal and economic forms; mining activities, however, are considered of higher value than agriculture when both compete on territories (Gobierno de Bolivia, 2009a, pp. 107–112). These shortcomings and ambiguities have contributed to a limited counter-neoliberal reconfiguration of mining governance.

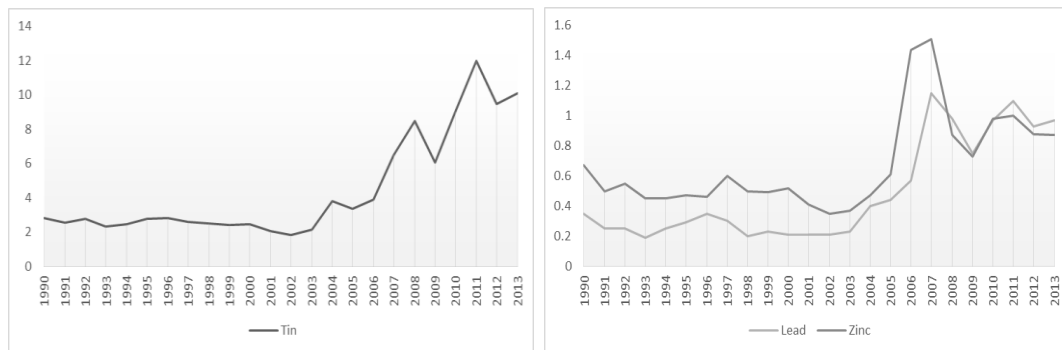
Changes in the structure of mining

The expansion of mining extractivism under the government of Evo Morales has related primarily to the persistence of political economic conditions established under neoliberalism. First, the efforts made since the 1990s to encourage foreign investment, coupled with an upswing cycle in mineral prices starting from 2003 (Figure 1.1), have led to a marked increase in transnational mining operations. Private investment, booming around the same time (Figure 1.2), has been concentrated in a few transnational-led projects producing primarily zinc, lead and silver—the most important being the San Cristóbal open-pit mine in Potosí, operated by the Japanese corporation Sumitomo (Tapia-Montecinos, 2011). Second, self-employed miners (referred to as 'cooperatives'¹⁵) experienced unprecedented growth. The sub-sector

¹⁵ The term *cooperativista* (cooperative miner) comes from the colonial period and refers to workers who took over Spanish mines and operated them illegally. In the context of today's Bolivian mining, 'cooperative' refers to the legal incorporation of most miners who have no formal employment relations. Mining cooperatives vary greatly in size and in organisational form. The larger ones tend to function as businesses, whereby a minority of members (*socios*) employ low-paid (and extremely precarious) wage labour (*peones*) and sub-contracting (Francescone and Diaz, 2013; Poveda, 2012). It is mostly small cooperatives, especially in mineral-poor areas, which tend to follow a horizontal style of organisation. In general, while maintaining a strong relation to their original communities, cooperative miners are perceived as acting in a predatory way, with little sense of social and environmental responsibility.

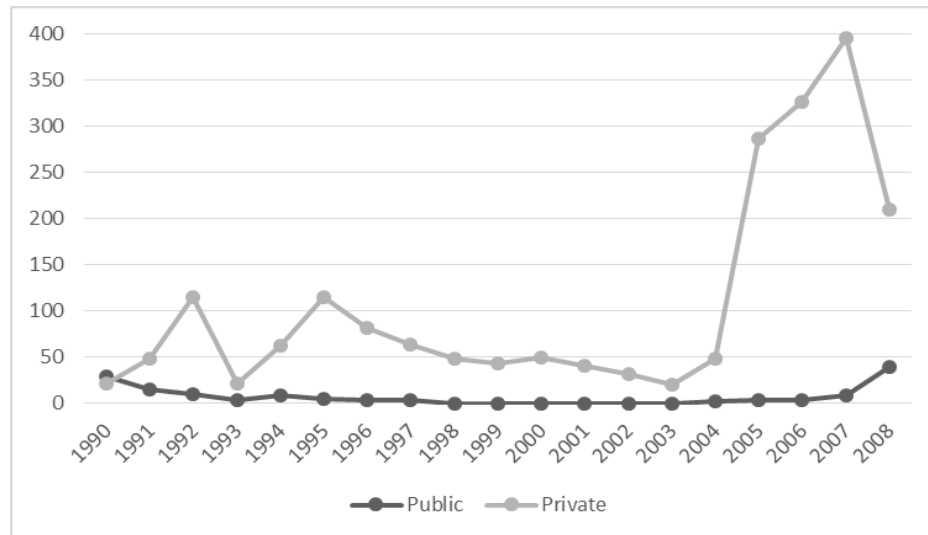
began to expand under neoliberalism. Neoliberal governments supported cooperatives, partly in order to absorb the workforce expelled from COMIBOL, but also as a way of countering the power of the more radical, salaried miners' unions (Francescone and Diaz, 2013). Cooperatives were assigned marginal mineral reserves and given fiscal incentives and technical assistance; the Mining Code, moreover, formalised cooperatives' rights to sign joint venture contracts with private firms and to sub-rent them concessions (Gobierno de Bolivia, 1997).

Figure 1.1. Price of the three main minerals produced (in US\$ per fine pound)



Source: Own elaboration with data from the National Institute of Statistics, Bolivia.

Figure 1.2. Investment in Bolivian mining (in millions of US\$)



Source: Own elaboration with data from the Ministry of Mining and Metallurgy, Bolivia.

During the Morales government, cooperatives experienced a second moment of strong expansion. They have been explicitly treated by this administration as a key

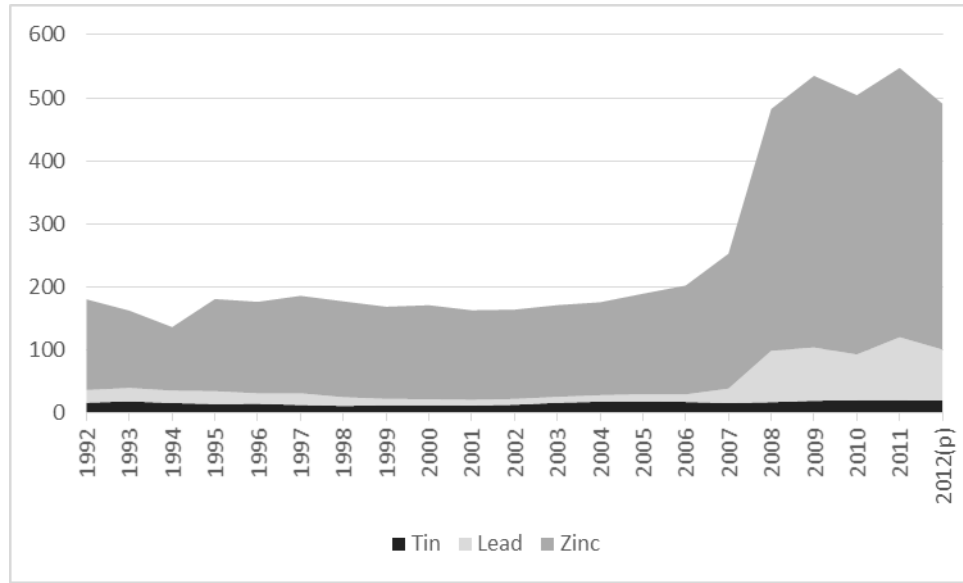
mining actor and political ally, deserving state support (Gobierno de Bolivia, 2009a, art. 369, 2007a, p. 158). As a result—and again, incentivised by high commodity prices—the number of cooperatives grew from 690 in 1995 to over 1,400 in 2012 (Francescone and Diaz, 2013, p. 38; Poveda, 2012, p. 29). The subsector's contribution to both exports and employment increased substantially—though, importantly, with limited contribution to revenues (Francescone and Diaz, 2013, p. 37). In 2011, a total of 60,067 miners worked in small-scale and cooperative mining; they contributed 31.1% of national production, but only 8.6% of tax revenue from mining. In comparison, COMIBOL employed only 5,732 miners, who account for 8.9% of production and contribute 1.9% of tax revenue, while private mining employed 4,650 people, but produced 60% of minerals in Bolivia, contributing 89.5% of the sector's tax revenue (Arellano-Yanguas, 2013).

In this context, mining extractivism in Bolivia registered a considerable expansion. Mineral production and exports boomed (Figures 1.3 and 1.4). The total value of exports increased from an average of US\$ 412 million for the period 1999-2005 to US\$ 2,258 million for 2006-2012—a staggering 448% increase (CEDIB, 2013, p. 26). Growth was associated primarily with booming transnational investment and a burgeoning cooperative sector; while state operations increased, their contribution to exports remained marginal. Revenue collection also increased substantially. The contribution of the mining sector to state revenues grew from US\$ 32 million in 2005 to over US\$ 290 million in 2010 (CEDIB, 2013, p. 15). Significantly, however, in percentage terms revenues remained very low. With the exception of the introduction of a 12.5% 'tax on enterprise income' for extraction of highly priced minerals (Law 3787 of 2007), there has been no significant increase in taxes and royalties under Morales. Taxes and royalties paid by companies averaged only 8% of the value of exports for the period 2006-2011, providing very favourable conditions for investors¹⁶ (CEDIB, 2013, p. 16). The reproduction of an enabling environment for the growth of transnational and cooperative operations, therefore, has been central to the expansion of mining extractivism.

¹⁶ This figure is four times higher than what was collected by the state in the neoliberal period, yet very far from the 36% average of the period 1952-1981.

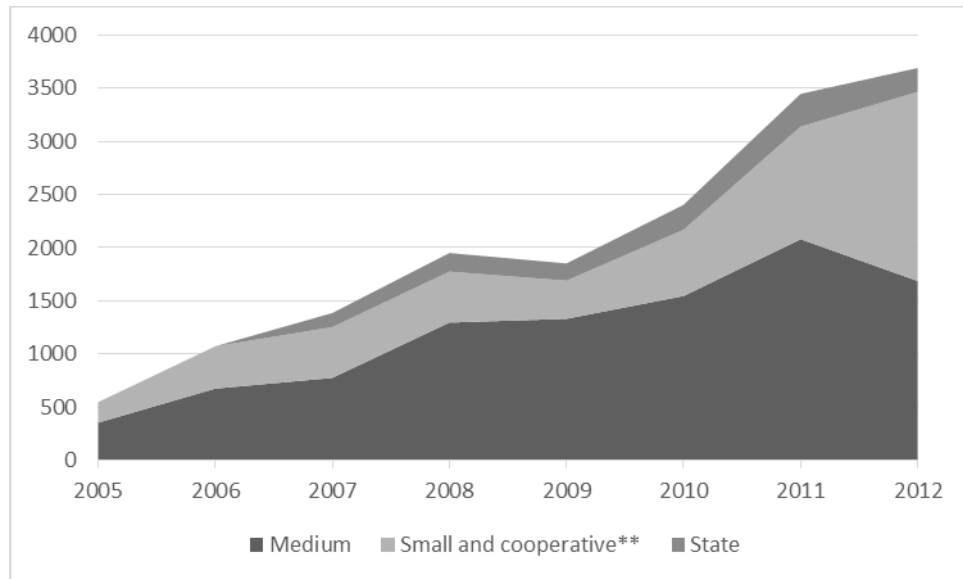
Chapter 1

Figure 1.3. Production of the three main minerals by volume*



Source: National Institute of Statistics, Bolivia. (p) = preliminary. *in thousands of fine metric tons.

Figure 1.4. Value of mineral exports by subsector (in millions of US\$)



Source: Own elaboration based on data from the Viceministry of Mining Policy, Bolivia.

**In the Bolivian legislation, “small mining” refers to private operations which produce up to 300 tons of mineral per day; “medium mining” (*minería mediana*) refers to privately run operations of over 300 tons per day of production. It is only after 2013 that the Ministry of Mining started to organise its data into cooperative, private, and state sector operations, irrespective of their size (personal communication by Lorgio Justiniano, head of the Statistics Unit of the Viceministry of Mining Policy, Bolivia).

4. The ambiguities of counter-neoliberalisation

In what follows, I discuss two aspects which exemplify some of the challenges and limitations of the counter-neoliberalisation process in Bolivian mining—namely, the ambiguities of nationalisation policies and the inability to improve socio-environmental regulation. I do so by looking at two intersecting struggles around the Huanuni tin mining project in the Oruro region, in the Bolivian highlands: *a)* conflicts related to cooperative miners’ demands for access to mineral resources and state employment, which resulted in the nationalisation of the Huanuni mine; and *b)* mobilisations by affected communities’ and indigenous-*campesino* organisations over greater socio-environmental regulation of the sector. I argue that, despite the government’s declared commitment to re-establishing state control over the exploitation of mineral resources, the nationalisation process has happened in haphazard and incomplete ways (often in response to conflicts) and in an effort to balance radical goals and demands with the maintenance of favourable conditions for cooperatives and transnational operations. At the same time, despite the greater importance given in legal documents to empowering indigenous-*campesino* communities, advances in the socio-environmental regulation of mining have been limited at best.

Nationalisation of the Huanuni mine

The Huanuni mining project—exploiting one of the largest tin deposits in South America—was the first mining sector nationalisation carried out by the Morales administration, in 2006 (Webber, 2011a). The nationalisation process, however, was not unambiguous. After the mine’s first nationalisation in 1952, it was privatised in 2000 through a joint venture contract between the Bolivian Mining Corporation (COMIBOL) and the British company Allied Deals (López, 2010). Following the bankruptcy of Allied Deals in 2002, struggles by Huanuni workers—affiliated to the Federation of Mineworkers Unions of Bolivia (FSTMB)—forced the government of Jorge Quiroga to lift the legal prohibition for COMIBOL to intervene directly in production and to return the operation into state hands. Part of the Huanuni deposits was operated by cooperatives to which COMIBOL granted concessions

(Collque and Poveda, 2010; Villegas, 2013). With the so-called ‘Huanuni nationalisation’ Decree of October 2006, the government revoked those concessions and established full control of the operation. This measure, however, had as much to do with the political power and boldness of cooperatives as with the state’s commitment to nationalisation and counter-neoliberal reform.

State intervention in Huanuni resulted from a confrontation between cooperative and unionised miners—at that time around 4,000 *cooperativistas* and 800 company employees. The cooperative miners wanted to take over part of the mineral deposits on Posokoni Mountain, while COMIBOL employees made an alliance with local communities, trying to consolidate their rights over their lands. The ensuing fighting resulted in 16 deaths and approximately 100 injuries. After a long process of mediation involving multiple civil society organisations and state actors, the government fully nationalised the mine and employed cooperative miners in the state company. This was a partial victory for FSTMB, which had been demanding greater state and workers’ control of the operation (Webber, 2011a). Thanks to the nationalisation, according to ex-political leader and miner Miguel Zubieta, the company was “re-born with a clear revolutionary vision”¹⁷. The Huanuni conflict also shows an underlying imbalance of power between a weakened miners’ union movement and an emboldened cooperative sector. As described in the previous section, the expansion of cooperatives is a legacy of neoliberal reform and a form of adaptation to the mass unemployment it created. While Huanuni’s trade union benefited from the nationalisation process, at the national scale the much more conservative Federation of Mining Cooperatives (FENCOMIN) has proven to carry the greatest political power (Kaup, 2014).

The government has shown no willingness to reduce the power of cooperatives. At an anniversary celebration of the Regional Federation of Gold Mining Cooperatives, in June 2012, for instance, Morales highlighted that “the most important social power within mining is the cooperatives” (Portal Minero, 2012). Several supreme decrees have been promulgated by the current government specifically to favour the cooperative sector, through fiscal incentives, credit and technical assistance

¹⁷ Interview by Isabella Radhuber, 14/06/2012.

(Francescone and Diaz, 2013). As the manager of the Huanuni Mining Enterprise, Vitaliano Ojeda, explained, cooperative miners have now much more power in the legislative and executive than other groups¹⁸. As I will show in Section 5, this has been clearly visible during the process which led to the approval of the new Mining Law, where cooperatives have been much more represented than unionised miners and other social sectors.

Re-nationalisation in Huanuni also shows the challenges involved in re-activating state-owned mining; that is, in creating a company with social and environmental responsibility, competitive in the national and international context. One of the most important effects that residents of Huanuni expected from the nationalisation process was job creation. The nationalised mine has indeed created an important number of jobs, by incorporating *cooperativistas*. After the conflict, the company's ranks swelled to 5000 employees. Currently, however, only 1500 workers would be needed to meet production needs. In the words of one its representatives, Oscar Roca, the company is "overpopulated," "inflated with personnel", a "social company"¹⁹. Because of lack of investment and planning, a conflictive relationship with the workers' unions and, since 2011, declining tin prices (Figure 1.1), production has been stagnating in the last years and the company has been facing prospects of bankruptcy²⁰ (Página Siete, 2014a).

The Huanuni case is but one instance of the challenges and contradictions which have characterised the counter-neoliberalisation process carried out by the Morales administration. The only other state-owned operation, the Colquiri tin mine in the La Paz department, was also re-nationalised in 2012 due to conflicts between cooperative and unionised miners. In this case, nationalisation was a demand of the cooperatives themselves, particularly their most exploited members, seeking to improve their work conditions (Ribera-Arismendi, 2012). The Vinto foundry in Oruro was renationalised in 2007 following a contractual issue in the sale from Allied

¹⁸ Interview by Isabella Radhuber, 10/05/2013.

¹⁹ Interview by Isabella Radhuber, 13/06/2012.

²⁰ The availability of mineral is not an issue, for the moment, in Huanuni. According to COMIBOL's president Édgar Pinto, "the reserves projected (proven) by Empresa Minera Huanuni show us that at the (current) rate [of extraction] of 1,800 tons a day, they have an estimated lifetime of 18 years. If this rate exceeds 3,000 tons a day (with the new processing plant), the life of the reservoir will be about eight years" (cit. in América Economía, 2013).

Deals to another multinational, Glencore (Collque and Poveda, 2010). In general, the most profitable silver, zinc and lead operations have remained in transnational hands (Villegas, 2013), while, as I have seen, the cooperative subsector has grown to become the largest and most politically influential (Kaup, 2014).

Mining and rural livelihoods

Mining in the Bolivian highlands also reveals tensions between indigenous-*campesino* communities and mining actors²¹ (Perreault, 2014, 2013). The main contradiction between mining and agricultural activities, in Huanuni and elsewhere, is access to water. Mining is a much more water-intensive activity than peasant, semi-subsistence agriculture as practiced in the semi-arid Andean highlands (*altiplano*) (Perreault, 2014, pp. 112–114). The Huanuni mine, for instance, consumes over 28 million litres of water a day, positioning it as the second most water-consuming extractive operation in Bolivia. Moreover, indigenous-*campesino* agriculture does not usually use chemicals, whereas mining does in great and increasing quantities, which has led to massive contamination in the area. Due to mining, the Huanuni River can no longer be used for irrigation. The lakes Uru-Uru and Poopó, downstream from Huanuni, have also been heavily affected. As a result, fish populations have virtually disappeared (along with traditional Uru fishing communities) and the whole basin suffers from water scarcity and declining soil fertility—aggravated by climate change and related soil salinisation processes (Perreault, 2013; Ribera-Arismendi, 2014). As Perreault (2013) has shown, contamination of soils and water dispossesses rural populations of their livelihood, including legally recognised indigenous-*campesino* groups—something which is functional to capitalist accumulation.

Weak socio-environmental regulation is also an indirect incentive to mining companies. A legal framework for environmental protection was created in Bolivia in the 1990s, with the passing of the Environmental Law (Gobierno de Bolivia, 1992) and a set of related bylaws. The law represented a clear step forward, as there was no legal framework for environmental protection before then. Nevertheless, it is

²¹ Miners and communities are, however, hybrid categories, as miners often maintain strong relations to their original communities.

considered by experts and practitioners to be lacking in important ways (Andreucci and Gruberg, 2016). First, sanctions for environmental irregularities and crimes are inadequate to the entity of damage and do not constitute a sufficient incentive for operators to comply with legislation. Second, the legal framework gives priority to compliance ‘on paper’ rather than in actual practice (López, 2010). Unless infringements are denounced, the state assumes that formally correct environmental reporting by companies is proof enough that contamination is under control. This is clearly not the case; Huanuni, for instance, despite holding an approved environmental licence, is the largest contaminator in the region.

The situation is aggravated by weak institutional capacity—lack of personnel, funds, and technical means to conduct more rigorous control of documents and, above all, inspections—and by a political unwillingness to threaten mining interests (Andreucci and Gruberg, 2016). This was clear under neoliberalism, when the mining elite had strong ties to central power. It has not, however, changed significantly under Morales, due to the ‘strategic’ economic importance of mining as well as political alliances with miners’ unions and cooperatives. Personnel of the Environmental Secretariat of Oruro’s regional government feel powerless to enforce implementation, due to aggressive resistance by miners and lack of support from the national government: “our hands are tied, all I do is in vain... it’s impossible, it can’t go on like this”²². The Secretariat, for instance, tried to revoke Huanuni’s operating licence on the grounds of environmental infringements three times between 2010 and 2013; all three times Huanuni’s workers resisted violently, blocking the city of Oruro and threatening to occupy the Secretariat’s offices if the measures were not revoked. The Secretariat, complained my informant, received no support from the national government, due to the obvious negative political and economic implications of shutting down the largest state-owned mining operation.

In recent years, growing contamination, due to expanding operations and increased use of chemicals in mineral processing, led to an increase in social struggles against socio-environmental impacts. Greater awareness of environmental and indigenous rights on the part of the local populations also influenced mobilisations. Opposition

²² Author interview, 30/07/2014. Unless stated otherwise, translations from Spanish are by the author.

to current mining practices in the *altiplano* has resulted from two main grievances. First, indigenous organisations—most notably the National Council of *Allyus* and *Markas* of the *Qullasuyu* (CONAMAQ)—complain that *originario* communities are not given the possibility to practice communitarian mining, as established by constitutionally recognised principles of pluri-nationality and co-government²³ (Padilla, 2010). Second, ‘environmental justice’ movements such as CORIDUP (*Coordinadora* for the Defence of the Desaguadero River and the Lakes Uru-Uru and Poopó)²⁴ claim that companies do not contribute to local development and, for the reasons outlined above, undermine the livelihood of affected communities (Andreucci and Gruberg, 2016). While these two social forces maintain separate projects and identities, they have converged in the years following the election of Evo Morales in demanding greater social and environmental checks to mining activities in the region.

The most important social mobilisation addressed the newly elected government and focused on demanding environmental remediation of the Poopó basin. Strong social pressure and a march to La Paz led by CORIDUP obtained the issue of Supreme Decree 0335 in late 2009. This decree declares the Huanuni sub-basin an ‘environmental emergency zone’—an unprecedented measure for mining contamination—and designs strategies for mitigation and the ‘integral remediation’ of the area (Gobierno de Bolivia, 2009b). Five years on, however, no significant improvement has taken place. As part of the decree, studies have been conducted which further detail the extreme seriousness of the situation in the Poopó Basin in terms of socio-environmental and health impacts generated by mining (Vargas, 2013). Mitigation and remediation actions have been completely inadequate to respond to such impacts, due to limited funds and organisational shortcomings

²³ According to this proposal, communities should be represented by a communitarian company, which would exercise social control and evaluate environmental impacts, since these communities understand best the significance that those impacts could have. This process could also be supported by the fulfilment of another demand of the communities: the formation of indigenous autonomies, which would become part of the state administration.

²⁴ CORIDUP was founded in 2007 in the Poopó basin by members of rural communities affected by mining. It was created with support from the Oruro-based Centre for Andean Ecology and Peoples (CEPA), an NGO affiliated to the National League for Environmental Defence (LIDEMA). CORIDUP is also indigenous-campesino in terms of its socio-cultural composition, but it is distinct from both rural-workers’ unions and indigenous organisations in terms of its agenda. For this reason I think it is more correct to refer to it as a ‘popular-environmentalist’ (or ‘environmental justice’) organisation in the sense adopted by Martínez-Alier and colleagues (2016).

(Andreucci and Gruberg, 2016). The main mitigation measure proposed—the construction of a tailings dam in Huanuni, scheduled for 2011—was yet to be completed at the time of writing (Ministerio de Medio Ambiente y Agua, 2014).

To conclude, the contradictions identified in the nationalisation process also apply to the government's attitude towards community demands for a more socially and environmentally just mining. Despite the greater importance given in legal documents to empowering indigenous-*campesino* communities, advances in the socio-environmental regulation of mining have been limited at best. The approval of Supreme Decree 0335 is in line with the post-neoliberal principles expressed in the 2009 Constitution, safeguarding the rights of communities to a healthy environment and to benefit from resource exploitation. The limited implementation of the decree, however, alongside a general lack of improvement in the socio-environmental governance of mining, signals once again a willingness not to counter the interests of the mining sector, including in this case state as well as private and cooperative actors.

5. Shifts in state–society relations

We have argued that the remaking of resource governance associated with counter-neoliberalisation reflects changes in the balance of power among social forces, played out through and influenced by the state. I identify two main shifts in this balance which have resulted in the current institutional configuration of mineral governance in Bolivia. First, a phase of growing political articulation among previously marginal social forces, at the centre of which were *campesino* and indigenous organisations. This led to the election of Evo Morales as Bolivia's president in December 2005, and shaped much of the post-neoliberal project which finds expression in the 2009 Constitution. A second shift, which started to emerge during debates around the Constituent Assembly in 2008 and became explicit since 2010, marked the marginalisation of indigenous demands around pluri-nationality and re-established the primacy of developmentalist and extractivist social forces (Tapia, 2011). These two opposing movements have influenced the shape and direction of Bolivia's counter-neoliberal reconfiguration.

From pluri-nationality to renewed extractivism

In Bolivia, a new balance of power among social forces began to emerge in the 1990s and led to a crisis of neoliberalism (Kohl, 2006). A wave of social mobilisations intensified after the Cochabamba ‘Water War’ in 2000, focused on resource re-appropriation and democratisation—particularly gas nationalisation (Perreault, 2006; Spronk and Webber, 2007). Some post-neoliberal proposals emerging in this period, however, also problematised the centrality of extractivism for Bolivia’s development, in two main ways. First, Marxist and structuralist-inspired positions identified the need for the state to initiate and direct a (more or less gradual) shift towards industrialisation and diversification of the productive matrix (Gobierno de Bolivia, 2007a). Unionised miners, for example, have stressed the importance of state-led industrialisation in order to reinstate national sovereignty over the mineral production chain (Federación Sindical de Trabajadores Mineros de Bolivia, 2014). Second, proposals articulated by the indigenous-*campesino* movement demanded (albeit implicitly) a shift away from extractivism as part of a profound rethinking of society–nature relations in Bolivia, within a ‘pluri-national’ state paradigm. In the years preceding Evo Morales’s election and in the first term of its government, these social forces were important enough to inform official plans for overcoming ‘primary export-based development’ via economic diversification.

Among post-neoliberal visions, the pluri-national state project had the clearest anti-extractivist dimension. In the context of struggles around gas nationalisation, *campesino* unions and indigenous organizations built a national alliance named the ‘Unity Pact’, which played a leading role in the articulation of social forces that led to the approval of a new constitution in 2009 (Garcés, 2011). The pluri-national paradigm, as articulated by the Unity Pact (Garcés, 2010), aimed to promote indigenous-*campesino* organisational and productive forms within a plural economy and society. The 2009 Constitution (Gobierno de Bolivia, 2009a) institutionalised this principle by *a*) recognising the *de facto* plurality of Bolivian society and the pre-colonial existence of indigenous-*campesino* nations and peoples; and *b*) recognising the importance of communitarian economies—a diversity of systems of production and reproduction founded on indigenous-*campesino* principles and visions—and promoting their development and articulation with other productive forms.

According to Juan Pablo Ramos²⁵—a former Vice Minister of the Environment who resigned due to disagreements over the government’s extractivist orientation—this conjuncture represented thus a ‘period of opportunity’, allowing for a profound rethinking of Bolivia’s development trajectory away from extractivism and towards pluri-nationality. This period of opportunity was followed, however, for Ramos, by a gradual reaffirmation of extractivist interests.

A counter-shift in the balance of power began to take place as a result of tensions and conflicts among competing social forces, which became visible especially in the final negotiations of the constitution in October 2008. First, conflicts between the government and the opposition forces. After right-wing opposition blocked the final approval of the constitutional text, parliamentary committees were created for negotiations. Following agreements between the MAS party and the opposition, greater autonomy was granted to regional governments (*departamentos*), as demanded by agribusiness and cattle ranching sectors. In the process, the rights to indigenous territorial autonomy, which should support indigenous self-governance within state administration—by many considered the heart of the pluri-national state project—were reduced (Tapia, 2014). A second, related line of conflict began to emerge between the indigenous and *campesino* factions within the social movements. *Campesino* unions supported the government’s moderate approach, as they focused their demands on redistributive policies; whereas indigenous organisations demanded self-government through indigenous autonomies and co-administration within the state, thereby opposing power concentration benefiting the MAS. These two lines of conflict marginalised indigenous groups in favour of other interests. Agreements between the government and opposition parties privileged regional rather than indigenous autonomies, while a focus on redistribution rather than pluri-nationalism privileged the *campesino* sector and undermined indigenous rights (Garcés, 2011).

These related trends were central to the emergence of a new balance of political power (Gutiérrez-Aguilar, 2011). This is consistent with a strategic-relational understanding of the state as a ‘social relation’ (Jessop, 2008), whereby institutional reconfigurations reflect or ‘condense’ changes in the balance of power among social

²⁵ Author interview, 16/09/2014.

forces (see Brand et al., 2011). However, the state is not a neutral actor: its functioning is characterised by what Jessop (2008) calls ‘strategic selectivities’, which can facilitate or obstruct competing interests and political projects, thereby influencing the balance of power itself. As became explicit in the second term of the Morales administration (2010-2014), power asymmetries which marginalised indigenous visions of pluri-nationality were reinforced by the government in various ways. Changes in the state’s strategic selectivity contributed to deteriorating relations between indigenous and *campesino* organizations, which led to the breaking up of the Unity Pact in 2011. The articulation of social forces demanding a pluri-national alternative to extractivism was thus politically demobilised.

The proactive intervention of the government in this demobilisation process is shown by two related trends. First, the main *campesino* unions’ confederations, such as CSUTCB (Unified Syndical Confederation of Rural Workers of Bolivia)—a key political actor in the cycle of anti-neoliberal struggles which led to election of Morales—were largely co-opted by the government as their leadership was integrated in the MAS ranks (Tapia, 2014). Second, government intercession contributed to the division and partial dismantling of the two largest indigenous organizations—CONAMAQ and CIDOB (Confederation of Indigenous Peoples of Bolivia)—representing highland and lowland indigenous groups, respectively. The government fostered internal divisions in the two organisations by offering logistical and financial support to their pro-MAS members. The headquarters of CIDOB were taken over by the faction supported by the government in July 2012, and the same happened to the offices of CONAMAQ in January 2014. These interventions significantly reduced the political influence of the indigenous sector. They also arguably reduced the mobilising power of rural communities *vis-à-vis* mining actors, *de facto* removing social obstacles to the deepening of extractivism.

The Mining Law as a condensation of social relations

The demobilisation of the indigenous-*campesino* bloc added to the state’s continued support of mining interests. This balance of power is clearly reflected in the Mining Law passed in May 2014 (Gobierno de Bolivia, 2014). The Law shows changes as well as important continuities with the neoliberal regime. In keeping with the

principles included in the new Constitution, it recognises more state presence and adopts the goal of redressing the primary-export orientation of the current framework. At the same time, however, it proposes to enhance opportunities for foreign investors—by guaranteeing legal security and a ‘competitive’ tax regime—and grants continued support to the cooperative sector. This shows that the potential for progressive change, contained in demands inspired by a post-neoliberal vision and capable of reversing enabling condition for extractivist expansion, confronted important contrary tendencies.

The contradictory character of the Mining Law reflects the greater ability of miners, particularly *cooperativistas*, to influence the debates and processes that led to its approval. On the one hand, cooperatives took a very aggressive attitude during the approval process. For instance, in April 2014, they organised nation-wide road blockades which ended in violent clashes with the military—in order to protect their ‘right’ to lease concessions to private enterprises and participate in joint ventures. The by then weakened indigenous sector, on the other hand, was completely excluded from the process. While the government claimed that the formulation of the Mining Law was inclusive and representative of all interests (Minería Noticias, 2014), organisations representing affected communities were not involved in discussions which led to the law (with the partial exception of the leadership of the Irrigators’ Association). Significantly, the ‘bases’ of *campesino* organisations participated in mobilisations, but their leadership was too tied to the ruling party to express any form of dissent. The Mining Law thus ‘condenses’ the growing asymmetry between an emboldened mining sector and disempowered indigenous organisations.

It is no surprise, then, that the Mining Law also reinforces the priority of mining activities over communities’ and indigenous demands. Even compared to the neoliberal code, the new law is seen by many critics as representing a step back in terms of socio-environmental regulation and indigenous rights (CEDIB, 2014; CEDLA, 2014). First, it limits indigenous rights to ‘free, prior and informed consent’ and to participation in the benefits of extraction. Second, constitutional rights to communitarian participation in resource exploitation and in shaping mining policies are not considered. Third, legal sanctions for communities’ opposition to mining

projects are increased—which is seen as a criminalisation of protest. Finally, no improvement has been introduced with regard to environmental management, which continues to be based on the lax institutional arrangements in place since the 1990s. A coalition of civil society, indigenous and affected communities' organisations was formed to counter the approval of the Mining Law (CEDIB, 2014). The weaknesses resulting from the dismantling of CONAMAQ and the lack of support from the *campesino* confederations' leadership, however, meant that the ability of this coalition to mobilise popular support was nearly non-existent. The demobilisation of post-extractivist forces was thus as important as the power of cooperatives in limiting Bolivia's counter-neoliberal reform process.

6. Conclusions

In analysing the complexities of counter-neoliberal reform in Bolivia, this chapter has aimed to shed light on the relationship between 'post-neoliberalism' and the continued expansion of resource extractivism. Scholarly attention has been drawn to the issue of increased dependence on resource extractivism experienced by 'post-neoliberal' countries, such as Bolivia, which had set for themselves the goal of increasing economic diversification. While the context of high commodity prices has provided important incentives for extraction, critical research has shown that neoliberal institutional conditions designed to encourage export-based resource exploitation have also been maintained. The reasons why this has been the case are several, including 'structural' constraints to change, short-term dependency on extraction rents and the persistent power of social forces which oppose directly or indirectly counter-neoliberal reform. In this chapter, drawing on a regulationist approach and on strategic-relational state theory, I have further explored the role of changing power relations among competing social forces in influencing the reconfiguration of resource governance and placed emphasis on the role of the state in mediating and influencing this process.

I have argued that, in the Bolivian mining sector, the reproduction of an enabling environment for transnational investment and 'cooperative' operations has been central to the expansion of extractivism. The reactivation of the public mining

corporation COMIBOL resulted in greater state participation in production and processing of minerals; the unprecedented increase in production and exports experienced during the Morales years, however, has been driven by booming transnational investments and a burgeoning cooperative sector. Despite the government's declared commitment to re-establishing state control over the exploitation of mineral resources, promote economic diversification and support communitarian productive forms, reform has been limited. First, like the Huanuni case has shown, nationalisations happened in haphazard and incomplete ways, often in response to conflicts. Second, community demands for improving the socio-environmental outcomes of mining and for greater participation in mineral extraction—included in the 2009 Constitution—have been largely ignored in practice. Limited counter-neoliberalisation resulted therefore from a dialectical tension between, on the one hand, demands for post-neoliberal change coming from different movements and social sectors; and, on the other, political and economic incentives and pressures for maintaining, restoring or expanding neoliberal conditions.

This has implications for the way we conceptualise post-neoliberal resource governance. First, I have argued that institutional reconfigurations aimed to stabilise accumulation in response to the crisis of neoliberalism are shaped by changes in the balance of power among social forces. In the Bolivian case, I identified a double shift in this balance—an initial empowerment of post-extractivist political projects, articulated around the pluri-national state proposal, later progressively disciplined and marginalised—which resulted in the current configuration of mineral governance in Bolivia. Second, I have maintained that these shifts in power relations played out through and were influenced by the state. Both the demobilisation of indigenous-*campesino* forces and the empowerment of mining actors (particularly cooperatives) were reinforced by proactive state intervention. While the Morales administration's support for mining cooperatives has been documented, less emphasis has been placed on government interventions which contributed to marginalising indigenous-*campesino* visions of pluri-nationality, thus removing social obstacles to the deepening of extractivism. Understanding the role of post-extractivist social forces—and how their proposals are selectively institutionalised, disciplined or marginalised by the

state—is thus central to understanding the contradictions and shortcomings of counter-neoliberalisation processes.

Chapter 2.

Struggles over hydrocarbons and Bolivia's passive revolution

1. Introduction

Extractive industries are typically associated with negative developmental implications and socio-environmental impacts, particularly at local scales (Bebbington et al., 2008; Bridge and Le Billon, 2013). Arguably the most important attempts to improve the socio-environmental outcomes of resource extraction have come, in recent years, from the indigenous-influenced policies of 'progressive' Latin American governments (de Freitas et al., 2015). The government of Evo Morales and the MAS (Movement Towards Socialism) party in Bolivia (2006-present), particularly, placed indigenous and environmental concerns at the centre of its political agenda, as part of ambitious plans for shifting the country's development model away from primary export-dependency and promoting less harmful society-nature relationships, informed by indigenous visions and practices. A decade on, however—despite important advances—the Morales administration has not realised this transformative potential in this sense: it has reinforced the extractive character of Bolivian development, without substantially improving its socio-environmental implications (Laing, 2014; Perreault, 2013).

In this chapter, I mobilise and critically extend the framework of resource governance (Bridge and Perreault, 2009) in order shed light on the reasons why such an ambitious political project has largely failed to improve the outcomes of resource extraction. 'Resource governance' is defined as "the act of governing resources and environments, and the ensemble of organizations, institutional frameworks, norms and practices, operating across multiple spatial scales, through which such governing occurs" (Perreault, 2008, p. 836). Geographers have drawn on neo-Marxian insights, particularly the 'regulation approach' (Jessop and Sum, 2006), in order to understand the ways in which institutional configurations for governing resources are remade, as a response to threats to accumulation arising from socio-environmental conflicts, crises and contradictions (Bridge and Perreault, 2009). Through institutional re-

alignments, in other words, accumulation is stabilised or ‘regularised’ in diverse (and non-intentional) ways (Huber, 2013; Jessop and Sum, 2006). The governance of resource extraction has been a central analytical focus of geographers. Mobilising a regulationist approach here means to study not only how growth in extractive economies is regularised, but also what effect these regularisation efforts have on populations and environments in extraction areas (Himley, 2013; Horowitz, 2015).

I apply the regulation approach to the case of governance of hydrocarbon extraction in Bolivia. Natural gas has been since the late 1990s the most important commodity exported by Bolivia, and it has since been at the centre of political disputes over nationalisation and rent distribution (Humphreys Bebbington and Bebbington, 2010; Kaup, 2013; Perreault, 2006). It has also been a main focus of struggles by indigenous groups for improving the outcomes of extraction at the local scales (Anthias, 2012; Hindery, 2013). Struggles over gas have been pivotal to placing indigenous and environmental rights in the context of resource extraction at the centre of the Evo Morales’s government plans (Radhuber, 2012; Schilling-Vacaflor, 2014b).

To this end, I address two main conceptual and analytical problems. First, while the ‘regulation approach’ is well-suited to capture changes in governance, this framework has been mobilised by resource geographers primarily in relation to neoliberalisation processes. These entailed a purported shift ‘from government to governance’; that is, a shift away from national state-centric forms of regulation, typical of Fordism, towards a greater regulatory role of corporate actors, multi-lateral institutions and non-governmental organisations, at supra- and sub-national scales (Bridge, 2000; Bridge and McManus, 2000; Himley, 2013). In an effort to capture processes associated with neoliberalism, geographers have explicitly distanced themselves from what they perceived as the excessive national state-centrism of early regulation theory (Bridge and McManus, 2000). ‘Post-neoliberalism’, however—as scholars have characterised the political economic changes associated with the Latin American ‘left turn’ (Yates and Bakker, 2014)—forces us to understand the ways in which resource governance may also change in ways that increase again the role of the state as well as of social processes taking place at the national scale (de Freitas et al., 2015; Perreault, 2008). Combining a regulationist approach with state theory, therefore, may be

necessary to account for how shifts in state-society relations affect resource governance in post-neoliberal contexts (Andreucci and Radhuber, 2015).

Second, while significant scholarly attention has been paid to processes associated with the post-neoliberal turn in Latin America, the debate around the reasons why progressive change has ultimately been limited remains open. As regards Bolivia, critics have emphasised, in various degrees, structural constraints to change (Kohl and Farthing, 2012); the legacies of neoliberalism (Kaup, 2013); political limitations inherent to the MAS's political project (Webber, 2011a); and the role of conservative social forces in limiting the extent of change (Kaup, 2014). They have also abundantly analysed the gap between the Morales government's self-positioning as environmentalist and pro-indigenous and the negative socio-environmental implications of its development strategies (Bebbington and Humphreys Bebbington, 2011; Laing, 2014; Perreault, 2013; Zimmerer, 2015). Recent contributions, inspired by Gramsci's theory of 'passive revolution', have focused more specifically on the dialectics of progressive change and successive restoration which characterised the trajectory of leftist experiments in the region (Hesketh and Morton, 2014; Webber, 2015a). They have not, however, explicitly related such a dialectics to changes in the governance of extraction.

In this chapter, through combining the regulation approach with neo-Gramscian state theory, I carry out a conceptually-grounded analysis of struggles over hydrocarbon governance in Bolivia, with two objectives. First, I mobilise a 'strategic-relational' understanding of the state (Jessop, 2008, 1990) in order to explain how the governance of extraction changed, in the context of the post-neoliberal shift, in relation to broader shifts in relationships between state and society. Second, I draw on Gramsci's (2000) notions of 'passive revolution' and 'transformism', in order to contribute to explaining why and how progressive changes in the governance of resource extraction have been limited, despite the potentially radical character of the political project which accompanied the election of Evo Morales. This will provide an entry point into broader theoretical discussions regarding the relationship between the state and resource governance and the nature of post-neoliberalism.

I make two interrelated arguments. First, I argue that initial, important advances in the governance of resources in Bolivia—aimed to improving the socio-

environmental outcomes of extraction—were followed by partial reversals, related to shifting power relations between social movements, the hydrocarbon industry, and the state. This points to the need of seeing changes in governance—and in the state more generally—as the ‘condensation’ of shifting power relationships among social forces (Poulantzas, 2000). Second, the coming to power of Evo Morales implied a ‘passive-revolutionary’ process whereby an initial radical break with the neoliberal order was followed by a gradual adaptation of radical political objectives to the existing political economic relations (Hesketh and Morton, 2014; Modonesi, 2013). This, I argue, resulted in the regularisation of resource extraction, though in significantly different ways than in a neoliberalisation process.

The chapter proceeds as follows. In the next section, I lay out the conceptual framework for the analysis. I extend the regulationist approach to include insights from strategic-relational state theory and political ecology, in order to account for resource governance processes related to post-neoliberalism. I also introduce Gramsci’s notion of passive revolution, as a conceptual framework for explaining the trajectory of transformation and partial restoration characterising post-neoliberal political change. In Section 3, I analyse the ways in which changes in the governance of gas extraction in Bolivia were related to broader shifts in relationships between state and society, resulting in a ‘double-movement’ of political empowerment and successive demobilisation of the indigenous movement. In Section 4, I contribute to explaining why progressive changes in the governance of gas extraction in Bolivia were limited, by exploring the ways in which—despite an initial partial rupture with transnational hydrocarbon firms and the national elites—the Morales government recomposed conflicts with ‘neoliberal’ social forces and shifted its attitude towards popular sectors in ways that marginalised indigenous demands. In Section 5, before concluding, I discuss the implications of these processes for how we understand the relationship between resource governance, the state and post-neoliberalism.

The empirical arguments presented in this chapter are based on the analysis of secondary and primary sources. The former include legal and policy documents produced by Bolivian institutions between 2000 and 2015, as well as social organisations’ position statements and media articles from the same period. Primary sources are drawn from a 12-month period of fieldwork conducted by the author in

Bolivia between 2013 and 2014. The latter has included 33 semi-structured interviews with hydrocarbon company representatives (6); state authorities at local, regional (*departamento*) and national level (8); experts of hydrocarbon and indigenous issues, including NGO representatives, intellectuals and former government members (17); and members of social and indigenous organizations (2). Interview questions centred on issues related to the governance of oil and gas extraction, the political economy of hydrocarbons in Bolivia, and broader political processes in the country. I also draw on data from focus groups (5), exploring indigenous community members' and leaders' perception of the socio-environmental impacts of oil and gas activities as well as the role of firms, the state and indigenous organisations in the governance of extraction.

2. Gramsci, nature and regulation

In order to capture changes in resource governance associated with post-neoliberalism, I suggest that the regulation approach be combined with a conceptualisation of the state which would productively extend a regulationist focus on the institutional embeddedness of the economy (Jessop and Sum, 2006), while at the same time being attuned to political ecology's textured, multiscalar analyses of society-nature interactions (Robertson, 2015). Neo-Gramscian state theory, as systematised in the 'strategic-relational approach' to the state (Jessop 1990; 2008), is well-suited for these tasks. I focus more specifically on two aspects of this framework. First, its insistence on the relational nature of the state—most typically associated with Poulantzas's (2000) definition of the state as a 'social relation'. Second, Gramsci's (2000, chap. 8) notions of 'passive revolution' and 'transformism', as conceptual elaborations on why and how dialectics of transformation and restoration may accompany processes of social change.

The state as a socionatural relation

Poulantzas famously argued that the state, like capital for Marx, is a 'social relation' (Jessop, 2008, pp. 118–119). The capitalist state, Poulantzas writes (2000, pp. 128–29

original emphasis), should be regarded as “*a relationship of forces, or more precisely the material condensation of such a relationship among classes and class fractions*”. Defining the state in this way, I suggest, enables us to conceive of changes in resource governance as reflecting broader shifts in the social balance of power. There have already been few but important steps towards bringing Poulantzas in dialogue with political ecology and resource governance research (Andreucci and Radhuber, 2015; Brand et al., 2011; Ioris, 2012; Jessop, 2007; Robertson and Wainwright, 2013; Wainwright and Mann, 2015). As Jessop argued, “were he alive today, Poulantzas would be a political ecologist” (cit. in Wainwright and Mann, 2015, fn. 8). Due to increasing recognition that capitalism is itself an environmental relation (Parenti, 2015), there is scope for modifying Poulantzas’s definition and argue that the state is indeed a *socionatural* relation rather than simply a social one (Wainwright and Mann, 2015, fn. 8; cf. Harris 2012). The relations of which the state is a ‘material condensation’, in other words, are themselves the product of struggles over alternative modes of resource mobilisation and socionatural configurations.

The *relational* character of this approach enables us to overcome the state-nature dualism of much political ecology. Considered in this way, the state and socionatural relations are both intertwined and mutually constituted (cf. Robbins, 2007). This aspect is surprisingly missing in most reflections on state-nature relationships in geography and political ecology. First, Marxist approaches, such as Parenti’s (2015), have been primarily concerned with the function of the state for capital accumulation, and the ways that the environment is enrolled (and ‘made’) in this process. Second, post-structuralist inspired work has focused on the ways that the state ‘sees’ and discursively produces the environment, in an effort to ‘normalise’ and ‘discipline’ socio-natural interactions (Bridge, 2014, pp. 199–121; Whitehead, 2008). Both approaches, in short, elude questions of how socionatural processes and related struggles produce changes at the level of the state. Lastly, while Gramscian political ecologists have extensively analysed the ways that nature is materially and symbolically mobilised in hegemonic struggles (Ekers et al., 2009; Karriem, 2009), they have, with few exceptions (e.g., Asher and Ojeda, 2009), stopped short of attempting to derive from this a relational conceptualisation of the state-nature nexus. Conceiving of the state as a socionatural relation, therefore, enables us to

account not just for how the state makes socionatures, but also for the myriad ways in which socionatures, and struggles over them, ‘make the state’.

Jessop also underscores that the state, for Poulantzas, is a *selective* condensation of relationships of forces. In other words, the state is not a neutral actor: “it helps to constitute that balance rather than simply reflecting it” (Jessop, 2008, p. 125). Specifically, it does so by integrating ‘strategic selectivities’; that is, “a complex set of institutional mechanisms and political practices that serve to advance (or obstruct) particular fractional or class interests” (Jessop, 2008, 127).

To sum up, then, adjusting this approach to reflect a political ecological sensitivity, the state can be more aptly defined as a *selective condensation of socionatural relations*. The SRA thus modified, I contend, can be posited as a broad conceptual framework for the study of the state in resource governance.

Post-neoliberalism as ‘passive revolution’

The trajectory of most post-neoliberal experiments has been characterised so far by an initial radical break with neoliberal rule, followed by a partial restoration of pre-existing conditions. For the purposes of this chapter, following Hesketh and Morton (2014), I suggest to adopt the Gramscian notion of ‘passive revolution’ in order to capture this dialectics of transformation and restoration. The notion of passive revolution was first introduced in the context of his discussion of the Italian unification process (known as *Risorgimento*); as Gramsci noted, however (2000, pp. 263–264), this thesis has broader scope for the “interpretation of ... every epoch characterised by complex historical upheavals”. Passive revolution describes historico-political processes in which social relations are profoundly reorganised, yet this is done in ways that reproduce exiting political domination while containing popular initiatives from below (Hesketh, 2010, p. 384; Jessop, 1990, p. 213). As Jessop (1990, p. 213, original emphasis) points out, “for Gramsci the crucial element in ‘passive revolutions’ is the *statization* of reorganization or restructuring”. In the process of institutionalisation of demands for social change, a passive revolution ends up absorbing, diffusing or destroying popular discontent, thereby restoring or

expanding existing capitalist relations (Hesketh and Morton, 2014, p. 150). This is why Gramsci also referred to this process as a *progressive restoration*, as it expresses

the fact that ‘progress’ would happen as a reaction of the dominant classes to the sporadic and disorganic subversivism of popular masses with ‘restorations’ which adopt to some extent popular demands, hence ‘progressive restorations’ or ‘revolution-restorations’ or also ‘passive revolutions’ (Gramsci 1975, p. 957, cit. in Voza 2004, p. 190, my translation).

Passive revolution is typically associated with what Gramsci dubs ‘transformism’ (*trasformismo*), defined as the “gradual but continuous absorption [into the ruling class] of the active elements produced by allied groups—and even those who came from antagonistic groups and seemed irreconcilably hostile” (Gramsci, 2000, p. 250; Hesketh and Morton, 2014). Through transformism, in other words, the ruling class or fraction aims at “weakening or paralysing one’s opponent or opponents by taking over their leaders” (Gramsci, 2000, p. 261), overtly or covertly.

This is related to the problem of incomplete or ‘limited’ hegemony (Jessop, 1990, pp. 211–213). While complete, ‘*expansive*’ hegemony mobilises the active consent of all social forces under the moral and intellectual ‘leadership’ (*direzione*) of a particular dominant class or fraction (the ‘power bloc’), *limited* hegemony can only advance the interests of particular popular forces (via *ad hoc* compromises and concessions) and needs to co-opt, marginalise or repress others (Gramsci, 2000, p. 261). Particularly targeted are those subaltern forces which may threaten the accumulation process—the economic base of hegemony—as well as popular-democratic movements which undermine the ideological bases of the dominant project (Jessop, 1990, p. 213).

The notions of passive revolution and transformism, in sum, help us to better account for the seemingly paradoxical process whereby an ostensibly progressive project may end up turning against emancipatory socio-ecological transformation. It sheds light how and why ‘counter-hegemonic’ projects (Karriem, 2009) can be demobilised through the strategic inclusion of limited popular demands in a progressive restoration project (Tapia, 2014), which redefines social relations and institutional configurations, without ultimately attacking existing relations of class and political domination.

3. Indigenous struggles and the governance of extraction

In this section, I explain how the governance of extraction changed, in the context of the post-neoliberal shift, in relation to broader shifts in relationships between state and society. First, the recognition of a set of principles for the protection of indigenous territories was obtained by the indigenous movement through mobilisations, a few months before Evo Morales's election, in a conjuncture of popular empowerment and political openness. Second, conversely, the limited implementation and partial reversal of these measures in the following years was related to a gradual political marginalisation of the indigenous movement and its successive demobilisation and dismantling on the part of the Morales administration.

Indigenous territorial rights

The inclusion in the 2005 Hydrocarbon Law (Gobierno de Bolivia, 2005a), of measures to protect indigenous territorial rights was Bolivia's first meaningful attempt to improve the socio-environmental outcomes and local developmental implications of oil and gas extraction in Bolivia, moving beyond the conservationist and multiculturalist focus of neoliberal initiatives (Anthias and Radcliffe, 2015). These rights were informed by indigenous principles of territorial self-government, as recognised in the International Labour Organisation (ILO) Convention 169 (1989), which also asserts rights for indigenous peoples to participate in resource governance and to receive benefits from extraction (ILO, 1989, art. 15). Such principles would later be included in the Bolivian Constitution of 2009, making it one of the worlds' most advanced legal texts on indigenous issues.

The indigenous territorial rights included in the Hydrocarbon Law were later turned into concrete measures which, while limiting somewhat the scope of such rights (Radhuber, 2012), created concrete procedures for their implementation. First, the 'prior consultation' bylaw (Gobierno de Bolivia, 2007b) obliged oil and gas firms to obtain 'free, prior and informed consent' (FPIC) by affected indigenous groups for all activities affecting their communities or territories. Second, the 'indigenous socio-environmental monitoring' bylaw (Gobierno de Bolivia, 2007c) established and regulated the functioning of multi-level committees composed by state and

indigenous organisation representatives for assessing and overseeing the impacts resulting from hydrocarbon operations. Lastly, a third bylaw instituted an ‘indigenous development fund’ (Gobierno de Bolivia, 2005b)—financed with a portion of the newly established Direct Tax on Hydrocarbons (IDH) and managed by indigenous-*campesino* organisations—as a way of redirecting oil and gas rents to the development of communities in extraction areas.

The recognition of these measures marked an important political success for the Bolivian indigenous movement. It was made possible by a combination of two main factors: *a*) a favourable political conjuncture, characterised by a crisis of neoliberalism, popular movements’ empowerment and the centrality of demands around the reform of gas governance; and *b*) important advances in the ability of the indigenous movement to organise, mobilise and articulate politically with other popular sectors and forces.

A FAVOURABLE CONJUNCTURE

The Hydrocarbon Law was approved in May 2005, a few months before the election of Evo Morales and the Movement Towards Socialism (MAS) party in government, at the height of a crisis of political legitimacy and stability precipitated by popular opposition against the neoliberal policies of the mestizo ruling classes then in power.

Gas governance was a central focus of political dispute. Since 1985, Bolivia underwent a process of aggressive neoliberal restructuring, characterised by massive privatisations, including the dismantling of state-owned mining and hydrocarbon companies. The neoliberalisation of the hydrocarbon sector was fully realised through the 1990s (Gandarillas et al., 2008; Kaup, 2010, pp. 125–129). It entailed the dismantling of the national hydrocarbon company YPFB (*Yacimientos Petroleros Fiscales Bolivianos*), the signing of favourable gas export contracts (primarily with Brazil) and control by foreign firms of production and distribution (Hindery, 2013; Kaup, 2010). The main effect was an empowered transnational extractive capital, together with a much decreased ability of the state to collect revenues and a corresponding erosion of political stability and legitimacy (Kaup, 2013; Kohl, 2006).

After a phase of primarily defensive—and largely ineffective—popular mobilisations against neoliberal governments, the tide turned in the spring of 2000 with what came

to be known as the ‘Water War’ (Perreault, 2006; Spronk and Webber, 2007). A process of self-organisation of labour, *campesino* and civic organisations successfully reversed the privatisation of water services in the city of Cochabamba. This inaugurated a cycle of popular counter-offensive which opened the way for a new political phase (Tapia, 2008). Natural gas began to be perceived in this conjuncture as a symbol of the dispossession of Bolivia’s poor majority (Perreault, 2006), carried out by foreign interests with the help of national elites. Ousting neoliberalism came to be identified with recovering gas for the Bolivian people.

The situation precipitated in 2003 with the so-called ‘Gas War’. A broad coalition of popular forces united around what came to be known as the ‘October Agenda’ (Perreault, 2006), which summarised the demands of the diverse anti-neoliberal movements with the slogan ‘*gas, constituyente, renuncia*’—gas nationalisation, constitutional process, and resignation of then Prime Minister Sánchez de Lozada, the main architect and executor of Bolivia’s neoliberalisation plans. Violent state repression of street protests in 2003 escalated social reaction which eventually forced Sánchez de Lozada to flee the country.

During the 2003-2005 period, tension in the country remained high, with gas permanently at the centre of contention. In 2004, former vice president Carlos Mesa took office. Pressured by popular mobilisation, Mesa called a referendum in which the Bolivian people voted in favour of gas nationalisation, the reactivation of the state-owned hydrocarbon company YPFB, and higher taxes and royalties on oil and gas extraction (Kaup, 2010, p. 128). Unable to fully implement these measures, also due to contrary pressures by the conservative national elites, Mesa resigned in June 2005 (Kaup, 2013; Webber, 2010). Shortly before that, however, the new Hydrocarbon Law was approved, raising royalties and taxes significantly (to 18% and 32% respectively of value of production, the latter in the form of a ‘direct tax on hydrocarbon’, IDH)—even though it stopped short of reinstating public control over the hydrocarbon production chain.

This period of crisis of neoliberal hegemony and of great social and political ferment allowed for a proactive role of popular sectors in influencing natural resource policy and demand a thorough re-founding the state. It is in this favourable conjuncture

that the indigenous movement achieved the recognition of territorial rights in the context of hydrocarbon extraction.

INDIGENOUS EMPOWERMENT

The 2000-2005 cycle of struggle was a period of unprecedented empowerment for the indigenous movement—the culmination of a process of political articulation among diverse indigenous organisations as well as with other popular sectors, particularly the *campesino* movement.

Building on a process of organisation begun in the late 1970s (García-Linera et al., 2010), struggles by indigenous groups in the Bolivian lowlands reacted to the threats posed to their territories and livelihood by agribusiness, timber extraction and, increasingly, oil and gas projects (Hindery, 2013; Anthias, 2012). These groups included the Guaraní as well as other indigenous peoples of the Chaco and Amazon which, in 1982, conformed the Confederation of Indigenous Peoples of Bolivia (CIDOB, originally called *Central Indígena del Oriente Boliviano*) (García-Linera et al., 2010, p. 217).

The issue of ‘territoriality’ was the central focus of the lowland indigenous movement in Bolivia. The Guaraní notion of ‘territorial integrity’, for instance, challenged the legal definition of land as simply a portion of soil and included instead the recognition of indigenous socio-cultural identity and political organisation and communities’ rights to self-government over resources (Anthias, 2012; Schilling-Vacaflor, 2014b). While direct confrontation with hydrocarbon companies remained one of the key strategies (Hindery, 2013), indigenous struggles in the lowlands also increasingly addressed the state and put forward broader demands (García-Linera et al., 2010).

The organisational process begun in the lowland constitutes the first step towards the articulation of a national indigenous movement as a political actor, whose most visible expression, since 1990, was the periodical organisation of Indigenous Marches (García-Linera et al., 2010; Paz, 2012). The 2002 mobilisation—the ‘Fourth Indigenous March for Popular Sovereignty, Territory and Natural Resources’—is of particular significance. In this march participated for the first time the main indigenous (*originario*) organisation of the Bolivian highlands, CONAMAQ (National

Council of *Allyus* and *Markas* of the *Qullasuyu*). Despite its different historical trajectory, CONAMAQ converged with lowland groups in reclaiming indigenous self-determination, as part of its goal of reconstituting ancestral territorial organisation (Perreault and Green, 2013). The Fourth March, therefore, marked the creation of a national indigenous front, which raised the stakes demanding a new constitution capable of fully recognising indigenous identity, territorial autonomy and collective rights.

In the conjuncture of struggles against neoliberalism, the indigenous movement also began to articulate with other popular forces. In August 2004, the two national indigenous umbrella organisations—CIDOB and CONAMAQ—called a historical meeting with representatives of the *campesino* movement, and formed the indigenous-*campesino* ‘Unity Pact’. For the first time, indigenous organisations allied with the country’s powerful rural workers’ unions into a common political front. During debates around the Hydrocarbon Law in 2004-05, while accepting gas nationalisation as an overarching objective, indigenous-*campesino* organisations successfully achieved the inclusion of demands around indigenous territorial rights in the new Law’s text (Ecoportal, 2005).

From recognition to marginalisation

The adoption of indigenous rights in the Hydrocarbon Law resulted in greater negotiating power for indigenous organisations—most notably the Assembly of the Guaraní People (APG)—*vis-à-vis* oil and gas companies (Soto et al., 2013). In general, however, implementation of the recognised indigenous rights remained limited.

First, the ‘Indigenous socio-environmental monitoring bylaw’ was never adopted. The reasons for this remain unclear: state personnel interviewed spoke of failure on the part of companies to provide funds; company personnel, on the other hand, blamed the state and indigenous organisations for not having agreed on the exact functioning of the Committees. The result was that environmental controls continued to be carried out by companies themselves, via private consulting firms. At the same time, Guaraní organisations resorted to negotiating voluntary participation in environmental monitoring directly with firms—a practice actively encouraged by

the hydrocarbon sector which, however, denied indigenous monitoring of any legal value.

Second, the 'Prior consultation bylaw' was implemented in increasingly limited ways. The rights to FPIC were detached from a broad understanding of indigenous self-determination and 'territorial integrity' (Anthias, 2012) to become a mere negotiation over monetary compensation for socio-environmental impacts, in violation of national and international laws. In this context, company personnel dedicated to community relations (*relacionamiento comunitario*) perceived the success of their 'socialisation' work by how much they would lower communities' demands for monetary compensation. Ostensibly in order to counter the misuse of funds on the part of indigenous leaderships, moreover, companies began to pay out compensations in the form of development projects. This represented a *de facto* reduction of an advanced set of indigenous legal protections into corporate social responsibility (CSR)-style interventions (Himley, 2013). The consultation processes also became less attuned to the legal obligation to carry out consultation in good faith and respecting the organisational forms and *usos y costumbres* of indigenous peoples (Schilling-Vacaflor, 2014b; Soto et al., 2013). Particularly in conflictive cases, state authorities as well as firms' representatives sought to influence the outcome of consultation using gifts and other forms of corruption as well as more or less direct threats (Laing, 2014; Pellegrini and Ribera-Arismendi, 2012).

The progressive emptying and increasingly limited application of the indigenous principles included in the Hydrocarbon Law was followed by the partial reversal of these measures. This was expected to happen through a new Hydrocarbon Law, which was discussed since 2010 but then never adopted (partly due to social opposition to the weakening of environmental and indigenous rights it would have entailed). Instead, however, in the first months of 2015, right after Evo Morales won his third re-election with ample majority (62%), the government partly reverted these measures through passing two supreme decrees which, respectively: *a*) facilitate hydrocarbon activities in protected areas (Gobierno de Bolivia, 2015a); and *b*) modify the 'Prior consultation bylaw' to limit the duration of consultation processes (Gobierno de Bolivia, 2015b). This marks a clear involution with regard to legal recognition of indigenous territorial rights in the context of oil and gas extraction.

This limiting and reversal of rights was part of a broader process of marginalisation of the indigenous movement. While the newly-elected government of Evo Morales began to institutionalise more systematically indigenous-*campesino* demands, in the process the latter started being gradually disciplined and eventually explicitly repressed. In order to understand the reasons why this shift in the relationship between the MAS government and the indigenous movement took place, in the next section I consider the broader process of class conflict and recomposition which characterised the trajectory of the coming to power of the MAS, as well as its effects on resource governance.

4. Gas and Bolivia's passive revolution

In this section, I contribute to explaining why and how progressive changes in the governance of resource extraction have been limited, despite the potentially radical character of the political project which accompanied the election of Evo Morales. First, despite an initial, partial rupture with neoliberal hydrocarbon governance, the Morales government was unable to reduce Bolivia's dependency on gas exports and the dominance of transnational firms in the sector (Kaup, 2010; Orellana-Aillón, 2012). This, I argue, led state actors to increasingly support the industry's claim that respecting indigenous territorial rights was an excessive and unfair burden placed on oil and gas firms. Second, at the same time, a gradual recomposition of the conflict with land-holding elites led to a shift in government policies and alliances which contributed to marginalising indigenous demands (Radhuber, 2014; Tapia, 2011). Continued opposition of the indigenous bloc resulted, particularly in the second term of the Morales administration (2010-2014), in a phase of explicit discursive and material repression of the movement and its ultimate demobilisation.

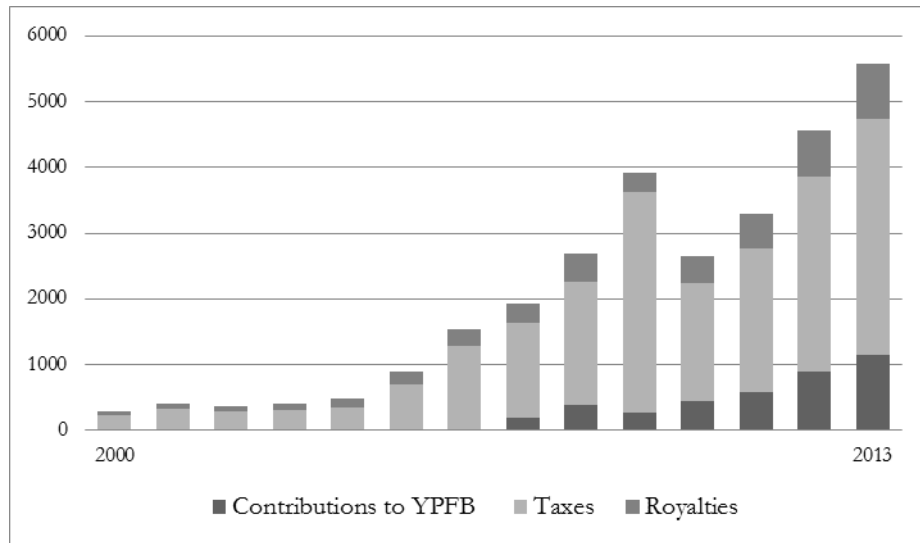
Rupture and recomposition

HYDROCARBON FIRMS

Reforming resource governance was a priority for the newly elected government of Evo Morales. This was expressed by two central aims, informed by popular demands.

First, in the short term, gas resources should be nationalised in order to increase revenues, consolidate state institutions, and fund social programmes. One of the first measures of Evo Morales's government was to declare the 'nationalisation' of hydrocarbons, with a supreme decree (Gobierno de Bolivia, 2006) announced in a public ceremony on the 1st of May 2006. Second, in the medium- and long-term, increased revenues from 'recovered' natural resources should be used to commence a transition away from primary-export dependency and towards 'pluri-nationality' (García-Linera, 2006b; Radhuber, 2012). The purported centrality of these two aims for the new government's agenda showed a clear rupture with the neoliberal model of Bolivia's development—based on transnationally-controlled export of natural resources—and entailed a potentially radical restructuring of power relationships among classes and social forces.

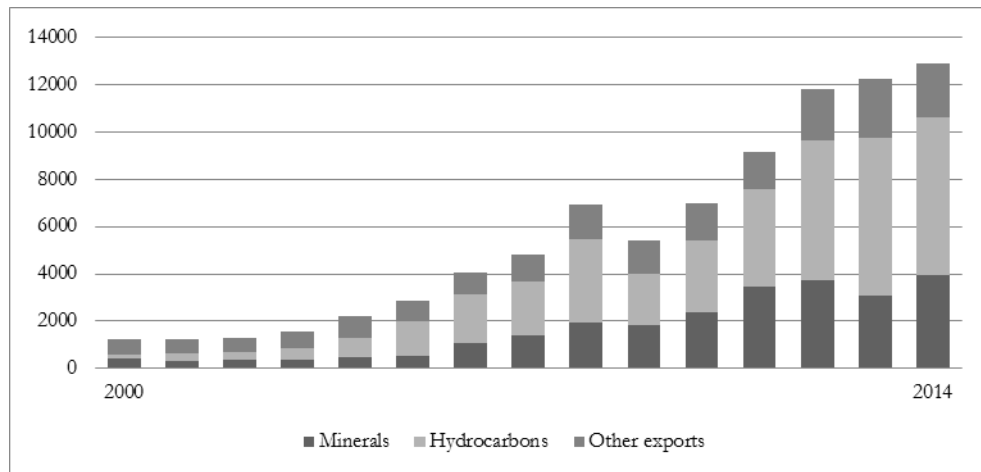
The way that these goals were turned into concrete policies and plans, however, betrayed a much more moderate approach to reform, centred on increasing rent collections through contract renegotiations and, in a small number of cases, limited industrialisation projects aimed at exporting primary commodities with greater added value (Kaup, 2013, chap. 7; Wanderley, 2013). This led to what Kaup (2010) defined as a 'neoliberal nationalisation'; that is, a 'nationalisation without expropriation' which left control of the hydrocarbon chain largely to transnational corporations. A renegotiation of exploitation contract, as required by the 2005 Hydrocarbon Law, greatly increased the ability of the state to collect and redistribute revenues (Figure 2.1). At the same time, however, the expansion of export markets (primarily towards Argentina), as well as a series of incentives, partly compensated firms for lost revenues (Orellana-Aillón, 2012). High commodity prices and re-established political economic stability, moreover, contributed to guaranteeing that firms' profitability was not threatened despite increased rents paid to the state. Advances in terms of the re-constitution of the state-owned company YPFB, moreover, were limited. This left unchallenged (and in time reinforced) the position of dominance achieved by transnational firms, particularly Petrobras.

Figure 2.1. Hydrocarbon revenues collected by the state, 2000-2013, in millions of US\$.

Source: Own elaboration, adapted from Fundación Jubileo (2014, p. 13), with data from YPFB statistical bulletins.

The new arrangements favoured strong growth in production and exports (Fundación Jubileo, 2014). Despite plans for economic diversification, Bolivia's dependency on gas exports increased significantly (Figure 2.2). Partly due to pressure to increase oil and gas reserves, moreover, the hydrocarbon frontier greatly expanded in the years following the election of Morales. The total surface titled to hydrocarbon companies grew seven-fold between 2006 and 2012 (Jiménez, 2013). As many of these concessions, particularly in the Amazon and Chaco region, overlap indigenous territories and protected areas, such an expansion placed increasing pressures on territories, and intensified conflicts and tensions with the indigenous movement (Jiménez, 2013; Soto et al., 2013).

Figure 2.2. Total value of exports by sector, in millions of US\$.



Source: Own elaboration based on data from the National Institute of Statistics, Bolivia.

Oil and gas companies pressured the government to reduce social and environmental protections in the Hydrocarbon Law, including indigenous territorial rights. First, companies complained that the process for obtaining an environmental licence was overly demanding, particularly in case of activities affecting indigenous territories, which required a process of ‘prior consultation’. Second, there was pressure to expand hydrocarbon activities into ‘non-traditional’ areas, primarily the Amazon. Despite being given concessions, firms protested that they were not allowed to carry out extractive activities due to environmental restrictions.

The state increasingly aligned itself with these requests. Representatives of both YPFB and the government came out publicly in favour of less strict socio-environmental regulations. The government, moreover, was under pressure to increase extraction due to the fear that the declining ‘traditional’ reserves would not allow Bolivia to honour its export contracts—a problem partly related to the fact that, since neoliberal times, companies had not complied with legal obligations to invest in exploration (Kaup, 2013). In this context, indigenous rights were seen as an obstacle to the smooth functioning of the sector, and measures such as prior consultation were increasingly opposed. Hydrocarbon companies and state officials accused indigenous leaders to have become ‘professional blackmailers’ aiming (with the help of NGOs) to extort as much money as possible from consultation processes and pressured for a reversal of indigenous rights.

NATIONAL ELITES

During its first term of government, the Morales administration faced growing opposition on the part of national conservative elites just displaced from power. Opposition was spearheaded by the land-holding elites based in the Department of Santa Cruz and in the eastern lowlands—the country’s main agribusiness and cattle-ranching regions. They opposed plans for land redistribution, but also feared that the hydrocarbon sector reform would limit the flow of oil and gas revenues to Departments—rents that local elites had secured during neoliberal times thanks to close ties with central power (Kaup, 2013). More broadly, eastern elites opposed the Morales government on the grounds of its class and ethnic bases, and strategized their reaction as a struggle for regional autonomy justified by a discourse of cultural and racial superiority of lowland mestizos (Perreault and Green, 2013).

Recomposing the conflict with the national conservative elites was key to consolidating the political position of the MAS (Webber, 2015a). The process which led to the approval of a new constitution in 2009 represented a pivotal moment in this sense. During negotiations between the MAS and the opposition, at the height of severe political tensions in 2008, the government renounced radical plans for land redistribution and met elites’ demands for an important degree of regional autonomy, which also led to sacrificing more ambitious plans for indigenous autonomies (Garcés, 2011; Radhuber, 2014; Tapia, 2011). This class compromise, however—together with the one struck with transnational extractive capital described above—limited the possibility for more radical reform. A further sign of the political realignment of the MAS is the more or less voluntary exit from the government of critical figures who had, in the first years of the new administration, guaranteed a degree of internal balance between conflicting class loyalties (Webber, 2015a).

Significantly, this led the MAS to shift its attitude towards popular sectors. As indigenous demands for territorial self-government and pluri-nationality appeared increasingly incompatible with the government’s development policies, the MAS strengthened its alliance with the *campesino* bloc and began to marginalise the indigenous movement. This led to increased tensions within the indigenous-*campesino* Unity Pact (see Section 3), partly related to differing positions around the extraction-based, developmentalist strategies of the government. Rural worker’s unions,

traditionally organised around reclaiming land for individual, market-oriented productive use, were much more open than the indigenous movement to renouncing demands for territorial self-government.

The greater degree of closeness of *campesino* leadership to the government is understandable, given that the MAS was created as the ‘political instrument’ of the *campesino* bloc. This alliance, however, was reinforced through material rewards, in ways which further marginalised indigenous organisations. As the MAS renounced ambitious plans for land redistribution, for instance, rural workers were explicitly encouraged to occupy land titled to indigenous communities. The most striking example of use of material rewards to reinforce indigenous–*campesino* polarisation, however, is perhaps that of the Indigenous Fund—one of the measures (discussed in the previous section) included in the Hydrocarbon Law of 2005 thanks to indigenous-led mobilisations.

Since the Fund was finally set to work in 2009, its mechanism for approving funds allocation was controlled by the *campesino* bloc. Between 2010 and 2013, as a result, 78% of funds went to projects benefiting rural workers’ unions; the Guaraní—which had demanded the fund in the first place as a form of compensation for being disproportionately affected by gas extraction—only received 1% of funds in this period (Soto et al., 2013, p. 72). Allegations of corruption, private appropriation of funds on the part of *campesino* leaders and the use of the Indigenous Fund to co-opt indigenous leadership become increasingly more frequent, and legal investigations are underway at the time of writing.

Indigenous repression

During the second term of Evo Morales (2010–2014), indigenous organisations started being attacked more explicitly by the government. A turning point in this sense was the conflict over the construction of a highway passing through the Isiboro-Sécure National Park and Indigenous Territory (TIPNIS)²⁶. During this and

²⁶ When local indigenous groups organised to resist the project—due to fears that the new road would open the way to the expansion of the coca-growing, timber and hydrocarbon frontiers in their territories—and demanded that their constitutionally-sanctioned rights to ‘free, prior and informed

other conflicts—notably around the expansion of hydrocarbon activities in the Amazon (Pellegrini and Ribera-Arismendi, 2012)—indigenous groups opposing extractive projects were depicted in official discourse not only as culturally inferior—as they refused opportunities for ‘progress’—but indeed as blocking development for the country’s majority (Bebbington and Humphreys Bebbington, 2011; Laing, 2012). This, besides troubling the government’s self-positioning as ‘indigenous’ (Zimmerer, 2015), marked an increasing ideological targeting of anti-extractivist positions. The attack, spearheaded by the vice president, García Linera (2012), publically accused indigenous organisations and the NGOs which backed them to conspire with ‘imperialist’ interests and the national right to sabotage the government-led Process of Change.

Mounting tensions culminated in the break-up of the indigenous-*campesino* Unity Pact in 2011-12 and its reconstitution as a government-controlled umbrella organisation. The two national indigenous federations—CIDOB (Confederation of Indigenous Peoples of Bolivia) and CONAMAQ (National Council of *Allyus* and *Markas* of the *Qullasuyu*)—were dismantled through government intervention in 2012 and 2013 respectively. Through co-opting part of their leadership, the government created parallel organisations by the same name and violently expelled the legitimately recognised leaders from their headquarters. While a gradual process of reorganisation has since begun, this resulted in a much-reduced ability of the indigenous front to mobilise and pressure the government. This was made clear by the passing of the Mining Law in May 2014, against which indigenous organisations issued several position statements but could not effectively mobilise.

consent’ be respected, the government responded with unprecedented aggressiveness. A national indigenous mobilisation was met with police repression but was successful in temporarily stopping the project, pending further consultation. More importantly, by turning into a national controversy, the TIPNIS conflict exploded the already-latent contradiction between the government’s development and class strategy and indigenous visions and demands (Laing, 2014).

5. Regularising extraction under post-neoliberalism

The recognition of indigenous territorial rights in Bolivia represented a conscious effort to increase the role of state institutions and indigenous organisations in the governance of hydrocarbon extraction—thereby explicitly moving away from ‘corporate-led governance’. There was an increasing gap, however, between the limiting of corporate-led governance on paper, and the reality on the ground. The Bolivian case shows that post-neoliberalism did not entail a fully-fledged counter-shift ‘from governance to government’. Despite its increased presence, the nation-state continued to be only one among many actors involved in the governance of extraction. Nevertheless, the ways that changing orientations of state policies and practices affected resource governance in Bolivia show the limits of a framework for the analysis of governance solely focused on neoliberalisation and the purported ‘hollowing out’ of the nation state. A consideration of the ways that changes in governance reflect shifts in the broader social balance of power is therefore necessary.

Governance as a condensation of socionatural relations

In Bolivia, the governance of hydrocarbon extraction clearly shifted in relation to broader changes in the social power balance. First, the institutionalisation of demands for indigenous territorial rights resulted from a conjuncture of popular empowerment in a moment of political openness favoured by a crisis of neoliberal rule. The indigenous movement transcended its specific interests and entered a broad ‘counter-hegemonic’ alliance (Karriem, 2009) with *campesino* unions and other popular forces. With the creation of the indigenous-*campesino* Unity Pact in 2004, the indigenous movement reached its highest point—the culmination of a ‘historical accumulation’ of struggles and organisation (Tapia, 2008). The Unity Pact became an important political actor in the years preceding Morales’s election and during his first term: it acted as the ‘organic intellectual’ of the country’s indigenous-*campesino* majority, shaping to a significant degree the Bolivian state’s discourse and plans (Tapia, 2011). Second, conversely, the limited implementation and successive reversal of progressive provisions for the protection of indigenous territorial rights in the

Hydrocarbon Law was accompanied by a demobilisation of the indigenous movement.

Since popular counter-offensive to neoliberalism began to articulate in 2000, the national state emerged as a key terrain for political struggles around resource governance. Changes in governance reflected changes at the level of the state, while the shifting power balance among social forces influenced the direction of such changes. The way that the state did not just passively reflect of shifting power balances, but was indeed an active force in shaping these balances, shows its ingrained ‘strategic selectivities’ (Jessop, 2008). In intervening in ongoing struggles over resource governance, the MAS government sought to contain popular demands perceived as threatening the stability of accumulation (Tapia, 2014). The limited implementation and successive reversal of newly acquired indigenous territorial rights in the context of hydrocarbon extraction can be understood against this background.

Struggles over the governance of hydrocarbon extraction were also, in important ways, disputes over alternative society-nature articulations. First, indigenous organisations put forward demands for a more socially and environmental just extraction, aimed at reducing its negative impacts on livelihood while increasing material benefits from extraction. In the process, they mobilised notions such as ‘territorial integrity’ (Anthias, 2012) which challenged the reduction of complex socionatural entanglements into discrete units—such as ‘resources’ and ‘land’—amenable to valorisation in capital accumulation processes. Seeking to scale-up indigenous principles of self-government, moreover, the ‘pluri-national’ state paradigm (Radhuber, 2012; Schavelzon, 2012) imagined a co-existence between the nation-state and spaces of indigenous territorial autonomy. Second, and opposed to this, visions of developmentalist social forces—such as land-holding elites, the upper strata of *campesino* unions and extractive capital—aligned around an extractivist and in many ways predatory vision of socio-natural interactions, whereby nature was seen a source of rents as well as use-values for market-oriented exploitation. The dispute around gas in Bolivia, therefore, was part of a dispute over socionatures, which became selectively condensed in the state.

Progressive restoration

The MAS government followed a ‘passive revolutionary’ trajectory, characterised by an initial partial rupture with the existing political order followed by a gradual recomposition. This ultimately succeeded in ‘regularising’ extraction and expanding accumulation. In the process of institutionalising demands around the governance of hydrocarbons, however, the Morales government absorbed, diffused or disarticulated popular discontent, thereby restoring or expanding existing capitalist relations (Hesketh and Morton, 2014, p. 150).

The process of reform of the hydrocarbon sector led by Morales and the MAS resulted from an attempt to respond to popular demands for recovering state control over the country’s gas resources, yet without threatening the interests of transnational firms operating in Bolivia. This resulted in what Kaup (2010) characterised as a ‘neoliberal nationalisation’, in which the state increased revenue collection significantly, but left intact the position of dominance of transnational firms. Moreover, plans to use recovered rents from ‘nationalised’ hydrocarbons to diversify the economy and promote a ‘pluri-nationality’ were not translated into concrete policies (Wanderley, 2013), thereby deepening dependence on gas exports. As a result, partly due to pressure to increase oil and gas reserves, the hydrocarbon frontier expanded significantly in the years following the election of Morales. In this context, the provisions for the protection of indigenous territorial rights included in the Hydrocarbon Law of 2005 began to appear to the oil and gas industry—and, increasingly, to the government—as a nuisance, and pressure to limit and reverse them increased.

A similar trajectory of initial rupture and gradual recomposition characterised the relationship with the MAS and the national right, spearheaded by the land-holding elites in Santa Cruz and the eastern lowlands. After aggressive opposition to Morales reached its peak in 2008, the government party managed to defeat the conservative bloc, making important concessions in the process. After Morales won the 2009 elections with ample majority, a politically disarticulated right accepted the government’s political economic plans, while the MAS established increasingly close relationships with eastern elites (Webber, 2015a). The Bolivian vice president (and well-known Marxist intellectual), Álvaro García Linera (2010a), wrote that, with the

solution of the political crisis, the MAS succeeded in achieving economic, political and ideological ‘hegemony’, thus securing the support of all social classes for its Process of Change. This view was contested by other leftists in Bolivia and elsewhere, creating something of a dispute over Gramsci (Webber, 2015b).

Jessop’s (Jessop, 1990, pp. 211–213) reflections on passive revolution come to mind here. As I argued in Section 2, passive revolutionary processes tend to be accompanied by ‘limited’ hegemony, whereby the active consent of all social forces under the ‘moral and intellectual leadership’ (*direzione*) of the power bloc cannot be achieved. As a result, while the interests of some popular sectors can be satisfied via *ad hoc* compromises and concessions, there remain a need to co-opt, marginalise or repress others (Gramsci, 2000, p. 261).

In Bolivia, the support of popular sectors aligned with the government, notably the *campesino* unions, was secured to an important extent through material rewards—material mobilisations of nature (Ekers et al., 2009), including redistribution of land, partly at the expense of indigenous territorial titles, as well as of hydrocarbon rents through the ‘hijacking’ of the Indigenous Fund. Furthermore, the conjuncture of simultaneous recomposition of the conflict with the right and co-opting of pro-MAS elements in indigenous organisations (which led to latter’s demobilisation), represented an instance of ‘transformism’. Lastly, those fractions of the indigenous movement which continued to threaten the material (that is, extractive) base of the MAS’s rule, as well as its ideological foundations (largely centred on neutralised indigenous notions such as ‘pluri-nationality’ and ‘*vivir bien*’) were explicitly repressed—alongside the intellectuals and activists which supported them. In sum, far from being a genuinely hegemonic project, as García Linera (2010b) argued, the MAS based its political reproduction largely on direct and indirect ‘domination’ (*dominazione*).

6. Conclusions

Commenting on the increasingly authoritarian, anti-indigenous posture of governments in Ecuador and Bolivia, Argentinian intellectual Maristella Svampa

(2015a) recently remarked that “the era of Andean promises has come to an end”. In this chapter, I have applied and critically extended the analytical framework of ‘resource governance’ to the case of struggles over hydrocarbons in Bolivia, in order to shed light on the reasons why the Morales government’s indigenous-informed plans for improving the socio-environmental implications of resource extraction have largely failed.

I have made two interrelated claims. First, progressive as well as regressive changes in the governance of hydrocarbon extraction in Bolivia in the last decade have reflected broader shifts in the social power balance, selectively ‘condensed’ into—and strategically modified by—the state. In struggles over gas governance, competing social forces mobilised alternative understandings of society-nature interactions, whereby indigenous visions of territoriality informed progressive legal changes but were ultimately marginalised. A ‘strategic-relational’ approach to the state, therefore, is useful in complementing the regulationist approach to governance, by considering ways of stabilising accumulation which go beyond the ‘hollowing out’ of the state. Moreover, combining this approach with insights from political ecology enables us to conceptualise the state in ways that contribute to overcoming the persisting state-nature divide in geography.

Second, the dialectics of progressive transformation and successive restoration which characterised the experience of the Morales government in Bolivia (and others in the region) followed the trajectory of a Gramscian ‘passive revolution’. An initial phase of confrontation and partial rupture with national and transnational capital built on the positive momentum of a cycle of popular struggles. A gradual recomposition of these class antagonisms over the years, however, led the Morales government to secure its political reproduction at the expense of more radical reform. Most notably, plans to reduce the country’s dependency on gas exports as well as the transnational domination of the hydrocarbon sector were abandoned, generating an increasingly explicit incompatibility with indigenous demands over territorial self-government and for a more just extraction. This sheds light on the shifting attitude of progressive governments, such as Bolivia’s, with regard to indigenous and environmental issues.

More broadly, these considerations have implications for how we conceptualise post-neoliberalism. Through passive-revolutionary processes, post-neoliberalism works as

Chapter 2

a partial rebalancing of the excesses of neoliberal orthodoxy, without altering fundamentally existing relations of social domination. This does not represent a return to, or ‘reconstitution’ of, neoliberalism; it works, nonetheless, as a stabilisation of capitalist relations in the face of crisis—albeit, at least in part, unintentional. Beyond the study of the governance of extraction, this opens up interesting space for further theorising regulation through a Gramscian political ecology lens.

Chapter 3.

Populism, hegemony and indigenous repression

1. Introduction

The political cycle of the Latin American left has arguably come to an end (Svampa, 2015a). In a conjuncture characterised by the return of the reactionary right throughout the region, a critical evaluation of the achievements and shortcomings of progressive governments is both a timely and necessary task (Modonesi, 2015). In this chapter, I contribute to this task through appraising the role played by official discourse in the context of the construction, maintenance and crisis of the left's hegemony.

Specifically, this chapter aims to shed light on the tension-fraught relationship between the radical discursive strategy of the left and its ambiguous policy orientations, particularly as regards resource-based development. Bolivia under Evo Morales (2006-) is perhaps the best case to explore this tension. On the one hand, the Morales administration's adoption of anti-imperialist, indigenous-inspired and radical-environmentalist discourse (Morales-Ayma, 2010) was one of the most innovative and politically promising features of the 'post-neoliberal' turn (Zimmerer, 2015). On the other, however, emphasis on indigenous and red-green language is clearly in contradiction with the growing dependency on natural resource extraction and the repression of social forces that opposed it (Bebbington and Humphreys Bebbington, 2011). We should neither ignore this contradiction nor dismiss it as mere hypocrisy or political betrayal; rather, we should carefully analyse and unpack the ways that discourse has been mobilised in an effort to maintain political legitimacy around resource-based development.

To this end, I draw on a critical approach to resource governance (Bridge and Perreault, 2009). Informed by regulation theory, this approach focuses on the institutional (re)configurations that work to stabilise (or 'regularise') accumulation in the face of contradictions and conflicts (Himley, 2013). 'Institutions' is meant here in

a broad sense, including not just legal frameworks but also social relations and cultural norms in which the economy is embedded (Perreault, 2008)—a meaning close to what regulationists call the ‘mode of regulation’ (Bridge, 2000; Jessop and Sum, 2006). Discourse is a central and perhaps underemphasised aspect of such institutional configurations (Bridge and McManus, 2000). There is, of course, a broad geographical literature dealing with the discursive ‘moment’ in environmental governance (e.g., Feindt and Oels, 2005). The role of discourse in regularising resource-based accumulation, however, has been less emphasised. The ‘return of the state’ associated with ‘post-neoliberalism’ (Yates and Bakker, 2014), moreover, pushes us to move beyond the focus on corporate initiatives which has characterised the literature on environmental neoliberalisation (Bakker, 2010; Himley, 2008) and consider more explicitly the role and significance of official narratives and discursive strategies.

Dealing with official discourse in the context of the Latin American left makes it almost inevitable to confront the issue of ‘populism’ (Panizza and Miorelli, 2009; Svampa, 2015b). The term ‘populism’ is often deployed with a pejorative connotation; detractors of progressive governments in the region, for instance, have typically used it to denounce the ostensibly irrational and anti-democratic postures of left-nationalist leaders such as Chávez and Morales (Panizza and Miorelli, 2009, pp. 39–40). Against this tendency, I draw here on the work of the late Ernesto Laclau. Besides being the most influential (and perhaps controversial) theorist on the topic, Laclau (2005b, 1977) has the merit to have ‘redeemed’ populism, both politically and theoretically, from its negative associations. He brought the concept in close dialogue with a Gramscian understanding of hegemonic strategy, and consequently emphasised populism’s potential as a radically transformative politics. Some commentators have deployed Laclau’s ideas in analyses of the political projects of the Latin American left (Errejón and Guijarro, 2016; Fontana, 2013; Svampa, 2015b). However, there have not been attempts to bring a Laclauian understanding of populism in dialogue with literatures on resource governance, in order to tease out the discursive moment in the regularisation of resource-based development.

In this chapter, I undertake an analysis of the populist discursive postures of the Morales administration *vis-à-vis* resource-based development in Bolivia, against the

background of changing political economic conditions and shifting correlations of forces. I address two specific objectives: *a)* to explore how the discursive strategy of the Bolivian government has related to the stabilisation of resource-based accumulation in the face of antagonistic social forces; and *b)* to understand how such discursive strategy changed in relation to different ‘threats’ to the Morales government’s hegemonic strategy, particularly opposition to extraction coming from the country’s indigenous movement. From this empirical exploration, I will derive conceptual insights into our understanding of populism and its relevance for the critical analysis of resource governance.

The chapter proceeds as follows. In the next section, I briefly discuss Laclau’s theory of populism and some of the critiques made to it by radical scholars. I argue that Laclau’s conceptualisation offers a promising tool for the analysis of hegemonic strategy, provided that the class relations and projects that underpin populism are brought to the fore. In Sections 3 and 4, I present the empirical arguments of the chapter. First, I argue that populism—as a way of constructing a popular identity, through articulating social demands in opposition to a common ‘enemy’—was effective in challenging the hegemony of neoliberal forces in Bolivia and favouring their replacement with a new, ‘popular-indigenous’ power bloc. Second, I show that, nevertheless, when indigenous demands that constituted the popular articulation—notably, ambitions to mobilise resource wealth for the promotion of ‘plurinationality’—became impossible to meet, the same discursive strategy was used by the government to legitimise its control over and repression of the indigenous movement. In Section 5, before concluding, I discuss the relevance of these arguments for our understanding of populism and for critical research on resource governance.

This chapter is part of a broader research project on the governance of natural resource extraction in Bolivia, for which I have conducted 12 months of fieldwork in the country, between 2013 and 2014. The arguments presented in this chapter are based primarily on the analysis of official discourse—particularly on the writings of Bolivian vice president (2006-) and well-known Marxist intellectual, Álvaro García-Linera (Bosteels, 2014). García-Linera is arguably the main ideologist of the MAS (Movement Towards Socialism) party. Over the last 15 years, he has produced a

number of essays, editorials and pamphlets that have sought to provide both theoretical grounding and justification for the policy choices of the Morales administration, and have both shaped and reflected upon the government's political and discursive strategies. This analysis is complemented by reliance on secondary literature on hegemonic struggles and the political economy of natural resources in contemporary Bolivia—as well as on 51 semi-structured interviews with Bolivian-based policy analysts, former and current government members and social movements' representatives, on the relationship between the state and social forces *vis-à-vis* resource politics.

2. Populism, discourse and social struggle

Populism as a logic of articulation

Over the last four decades, Ernesto Laclau has made the greatest effort to recover the notion of populism from its marginal position in social theory. Such a marginalisation is due to both widespread ethical condemnation of populism and to its analytical ambiguity. The former, for Laclau (2005b, p. 19) is a symptom of the liberal association of politics with techno-managerial rationalism; the denigration of populism, in this sense, mirrors the liberal denigration of 'the people' itself. The latter problem—the conceptual ambiguity of populism—is due to the fact that scholars have looked for a defining feature of populism in specific ideologies, political practices or historical circumstances (Laclau, 1977; Panizza, 2005). Populism, however, for Laclau, is neither a political programme nor an ideology, but a *strategy* that is equally available to social forces of all political colours. Therefore, it should not be defined on the basis of specific empirical features; but rather, as he puts it, in a “strictly formal” way—as a *logic of articulation* of political contents (Laclau, 2005b, p. 44).

In Laclau's analysis, the starting point of populism is the presence of social demands that an existing institutional system is unable to meet. If all demands are satisfied, they remain unrelated and social discontent is easily absorbed by the administrative apparatus (Laclau, 2005b, p. 78). When demands of multiple social groups go unmet,

however, solidarity can arise among them: demands cease to be circumscribed to their ‘differential’ nature and begin to share a common source of frustration, a ‘negative’ dimension. Such common frustration is the basis for the formation of a *chain of equivalence* among diverse demands. A central feature of populism is the creation, through equivalential chains among frustrated demands, of a collective identity—‘the people’—defined in opposition to a common enemy, as the common source of ‘negativity’. As Laclau puts it, therefore, “there is no populism without discursive construction of an enemy” (Laclau, 2005a, p. 39). The enemy, in other words, functions as *constitutive outside*—“a threatening heterogeneity against which the identity is formed” (Panizza, 2005, p. 17).

‘The people’ is constructed through the extension of the chain of equivalence among ever more diverse demands; as the chain of equivalence extends, some demands cease to represent their specific contents, and become symbols for the totality of revendications in the chain. These signifiers, for Laclau, are therefore tendentially *empty*: in order to be able to represent the totality of equivalences, they tend to lose their relationship with the contents of specific demands. This tendency—the increasing detachment between the demands and the signifier—reaches its limit when this homogenising or totalising function is no longer represented by a demand or set of demands, but by the name of the leader itself (Laclau, 2005b, p. 40—hence the importance of charismatic leadership in most populist movements). Through this operation, a populist articulation is constituted which allows social groups to transcend the particularistic character of demands, and to create a common counter-hegemonic bloc that identifies around some empty signifiers and in an antagonistic relation to a shared source of frustration.

Is populism post-political?

Laclau’s politico-theoretical defence of populism has encountered strong criticisms from many on the radical left. Slavoj Žižek has perhaps been the most vocal opponent of his theses. In an intervention in the journal *Critical Inquiry*, Žižek (2006) argued *contra* Laclau that, while the left today is clearly failing to inspire transformative popular mobilisation, it should nonetheless avoid the temptation to emulate right-wing movements in their ‘populist’ postures. For Žižek (2006, p. 567),

as a political strategy, populism is inadequate for achieving radical transformation: it is not an *active* construction of a genuine alternative, but a *passive* reaction to the threat of an enemy or ‘intruder’ (such as immigrants or bureaucrats). In this sense, he argues, populism contains an element of “ideological mystification” and thus “harbors in the last instance a long-term protofascist tendency” (Žižek, 2006, p. 557).

Moreover, while appearing as a critique of ‘post-politics’—as in the case of right-wing rejection of European Union technocratic rule—populism is, for Žižek, its necessary complement: it reinforces the post-political consensus by presenting an irrational, purely reactive alternative to it (cf. Žižek, 2009, p. 61). Populist political projects are *themselves*, ultimately, post-political, for two reasons. First, because, by attributing social ills to an external enemy, populists renounce replacing the system itself: “for a populist, the cause of the troubles is ultimately never the system as such but the intruder who corrupted it” (Žižek, 2006, p. 555). Second, because the elementary unit of populist articulation is that of a social demand, and because every demand addresses an Other—an institutional system which is supposedly able to meet it—populist politics ends up reinforcing the inevitability of an elite. By contrast, “the revolutionary subject no longer operates at the level of demanding something from those in power; he wants to destroy them” (Žižek, 2006, p. 558).

I argue that these critiques, more recently taken up by Swyngedouw (2010a), are partly misplaced. First, Laclau (2005a, p. 45) defines populism as the opposite of the post-political (or what he calls ‘institutionalist discourse’). It is true that demands are the basic unit of analysis of populism, and that these demands are addressed to an institutional system that acts as an Other (the elite, those in power). Populism, however, has the potential to *subvert* this order, through an accumulation of unmet demands that gives rise to the creation of an internal frontier whereby ‘the establishment’ itself is depicted as an enemy. Second, regarding populism’s supposed proto-fascist tendency, again this may be ungenerous. It is inevitable that an hegemonic articulation be based on an ideological moment, but the level of mystification in this articulation depends, once again, on historically-specific material circumstances. Whether the equivalential chain that holds ‘the people’ together is based on bourgeois ‘common sense’ or revolutionary ‘good sense’—to put in in Gramscian terms—is not determined *a priori* by the articulatory logic, but rather,

primarily, by the material-ideological circumstances from which the articulation emerges.

Populism or class struggle? Yes, please!

A second line of criticism, advanced primarily by Gramscian scholars (Hart, 2013; Jessop, 2014; Loftus, 2014), points precisely to reduction of hegemony to a purely discursive-rhetorical struggle. Laclau's positions on populism briefly exposed above are the culmination of a long trajectory of work, begun in the 1980s, in which the theorist (partly in collaboration with Chantal Mouffe), has sought to rethink the ontological bases of politics along 'post-Marxist' lines. Laclau and Mouffe (2001) famously presented this as an attempt to do away with the "last redoubt of economism" and class reductionism in Marxist theory. They redefine a theory of hegemony as an articulatory practice based on discourse, whereby social relations are formed within the articulation process itself and do not precede it (2001, pp. 105–114). In his recent work on populism, Laclau (2005b, p. 39) adopts this discursive approach, defining *hegemony* as the process of the elevation of particular demands to symbols (or signifiers) of the totality of social claims. The result is the displacement of class from the centre of both social analysis and radical politics (Jessop, 2014).

For many commentators, such a post-Marxist reading of Gramsci is extremely problematic. Žižek (2000, p. 98), argues that, by declaring the autonomy of politics-as-discourse from the economic sphere, postmodern theory such as Laclau and Mouffe's, at the same time as it seeks to re-politicise non-economic issues (like gender, race or ecology), depoliticises the economy itself. Similarly, for Jessop (2014), in an effort to liquidate economism, Laclau and Mouffe fall back into idealism, by excluding any reference to the play of material forces; as a result, "their whole approach lacks concepts to think the articulation of the economic and the political" (2014, no page number; see also Loftus, 2014). It is important therefore to link back these reflections with consideration of the material conditions existing in specific conjunctures and emerging from changing correlations of forces. Against the 'postmodern' Laclau, it is important to bring class relations and struggles to the fore, in order to ground populism and hegemony in the interplay of material and political-ideological struggle.

To this end, following Gillian Hart (2013, p. 304), I suggest to draw insights from Laclau's early work, in which the discursive moment of populism is still clearly theorised in relation to class struggle. In the essay 'Towards a theory of populism' (1977), Laclau starts from the consideration that—in order to transcend economic-corporate demands and begin to struggle for hegemony—a dominated class needs to engage in the political-ideological sphere. In doing so, however, it cannot simply rely on class-based discourse; it needs to interpellate members of other classes and fractions through engaging on the class-neutral terrain of popular-democratic struggles (what Gramsci calls the 'national-popular') and through mobilising non-class referents such as 'the people' or 'national interest' (Laclau 1977, p. 161). An hegemonic struggle is understood here as a struggle for articulation that takes place between antagonistic class projects, through mobilising non-class interpellations. It is in this non-class discourse that a 'strictly populist' element should be located: "populism starts at the point where popular-democratic elements are presented as an antagonistic option against the ideology of the dominant bloc" (Laclau 1977, p. 173). Populism is defined therefore as a popular articulation that places 'the people' at the centre of discourse, pitted in opposition to a dominant ideology.

This strategy—the appeal to the people against a dominant ideology—is of course available to dominant classes or fractions as much as to dominated ones. This is why, for Laclau (1977) the label 'populist' has been applied to projects as politically diverse as Nazism, Peronism or Maoism. The important analytical point here is the following: populism is neither above class, nor stems directly from it; it consists of popular-democratic interpellations and antagonism towards dominant ideology, both articulated with specific class projects (Laclau 1977, p. 175). This is not substantially different from Laclau's most recent definition of populism as a logic of articulation through equivalential chains. But it is clearly more explicit about its class contents and, as such, much closer to a Gramscian understanding of hegemony. Considering the politico-ideological moment in the articulation of hegemonic projects in the context of changing correlations of forces is the starting point for analysing the relationship between populism and resource regularisation in Bolivia, to which I now turn.

3. Constructing hegemony in ‘post-neoliberal’ Bolivia

Indigeneity and ‘gas for the people’

In Bolivia, the years between 2000 and 2005 were characterised by multiple popular struggles against neoliberalism, which precipitated a government crisis and led to the rise of Evo Morales and the MAS (Movement Towards Socialism) party—culminating in the electoral success of December 2005. In this conjuncture, distinct popular sectors put forward political demands for change; not just established union movements such as miners and *campesinos*, but also and primarily more recent social movements such as indigenous organisations, coca-growers and urban migrants (Gutiérrez-Aguilar, 2008; Postero, 2010, pp. 21–22). The MAS party, created in the mid-1990s as a ‘political instrument’ of the *campesino* and coca-grower unions—thanks to its flexible structure and distance from traditional elites—began to function as a representative for indigenous-*campesino* and leftist sectors and quickly extended its support at the national level (Postero 2010, pp. 23-24).

A populist strategy was central to the MAS’s articulating function (Anria, 2013; Errejón, 2014; Postero, 2010). Due to the nature of demands and the social groups that advanced them in this conjuncture, the constitution of a collective identity assumed two defining features. First, a centrality of *indigeneity* as a marker of shared subalternity and oppression—due to the colonial history of Bolivia and the continued reproduction of unequal race relations until neoliberal times. The identification of a multiplicity of social sectors as ‘indigenous’ gave a clear anti-colonial twist to the discursive articulation of ‘the people’ and created a ‘popular-indigenous’ collective identity as the base of the MAS-led counter-hegemonic strategy (Errejón Galván, 2014; Postero 2010). This resulted from a process of reclaiming and politicising indigeneity as an emancipatory category, begun in the 1970s with radical *indianismo* (García-Linera et al., 2010). Evo Morales, the figure of a leader who is both a subaltern and an indigenous—the leader of the coca-grower union of humble Aymara origin—come to personify this left-indigenous confluence, consciously emphasised in the MAS’s strategy. García Linera (2006a, p. 27) calls the latter *Evismo*, a form of ‘flexible indianism’ which includes other social sectors and forces in a ‘national-popular’ articulation.

Second, the slogan ‘gas for the people’ came to condense all *material* demands around the perceived dispossession of the Bolivian poor. Here gas is both the main strategic commodity (Spronk and Webber, 2007) and a symbol of natural resource dispossession. The October Agenda, emerging out of the ‘Gas War’ against the presidency of Sánchez de Lozada in 2003—the most intense point of anti-neoliberal struggle—rendered explicit this by demanding gas nationalisation alongside the president’s resignation and a new constitution (Perreault, 2006). Multiple and partly conflicting desires and imaginaries were projected into the slogan ‘gas for the people’: for most of Bolivia’s popular sector it signified primarily greater national sovereignty and wealth redistribution (Kohl and Farthing, 2012); for the indigenous organisations in gas extraction areas, nationalisation was seen as an intermediate step towards the promotion of local territorial autonomy with co-government of natural resources (Radhuber, 2012). What mattered at this stage, however, were not so much the differences between these demands as the *equivalences* among them, which formed the basis for a popular counter-hegemonic articulation.

Imperialism as the ‘constitutive outside’

The construction of the people is inseparable from the discursive production of an enemy, functioning as the ‘constitutive outside’ of the populist articulation (Laclau, 2005a). Popular-indigenous identity and its project based primarily on the reassertion of natural resource sovereignty ‘for the people’ was defined in opposition to an external enemy—neoliberal elites—which had two main features. First, the conservative forces then in power were as much ‘colonial’ as they were neoliberal. Particularly in the case of the white and *mestizo* land-holding and business elites based in the *Oriente*—the lowland eastern regions—they explicitly mobilised racist imaginaries to sustain their vested interest in keeping the indigenous majority out of power and in poverty (Perreault and Green, 2013). Second, to the extent that neoliberals facilitated the privatisation and foreign control of hydrocarbons and other key natural resource industries, they were perceived as traitors, *vendepatria*—literally, those who sell out the fatherland.

The common trait between the two is, of course, imperialism: neoliberals were depicted as complicit local elites acting as agents of foreign (especially US) interests,

both economic and of political control. A detonating factor of the 2003 Gas War, for instance—a cycle of protests demanding gas nationalisation, violently repressed by the government and ending in the resignation of then president Sánchez de Lozada (Perreault 2006)—was a plan to export gas to the US via a Chilean port. Anti-imperialist sentiments and discourse were also central to the long struggle of the coca-grower unions in the Chapare region against the DEA's coca eradication policies, led by Evo Morales since the late 1980s, from which the MAS emerged. Recovering control of natural resources, therefore, in popular struggles and imaginaries, overlapped with reasserting national sovereignty *vis-a-vis* 'northern' countries and transnational capital. At the same time, this implied rethinking the nation-state to enable the inclusion of traditionally marginalised subaltern classes of indigenous origin (in a 'pluri-national' configuration). Both these axes of 'enmity'—political-economic and socio-cultural—coalesced against the imperialist right.

The reactionary right, in this conjuncture, was not simply a 'spectre' evoked by a manipulative populist leader to win mass support. Throughout Morales's first term (2006-2009), the administration faced aggressive opposition on the part of national conservative elites just displaced from power, which brought the country on the brink of civil war. Opposition was spearheaded by the mestizo land-holding elites based in the region (*departamento*) of Santa Cruz, and the eastern lowlands—the country's main agribusiness and cattle-ranching region. They opposed plans for land redistribution (Valdivia, 2010), but also feared that the hydrocarbon sector reform would limit the flow of oil and gas revenues to *departamentos*—rents that local elites had secured during neoliberal times thanks to close ties with central power (Kaup, 2013). The right created a populist articulation of its own, combining reactionary politics with imaginaries of racial and class superiority (Peña-Claros, 2010). Despite widespread popular support for the Morales government, this resulted in a tense political conflict between the MAS and the conservative bloc—a 'catastrophic deadlock' (García-Linera, 2010a) which reached its most intense point in 2008.

'Point of bifurcation' and 'creative tensions'

The conflict with the conservative bloc was recomposed in 2008-'09, but the victory was only partial. In August 2008, the MAS won a referendum demanded by the

neoliberal right to revoke Morales's presidency. The conservatives in the east shifted then to a more violent approach, staging a failed 'civic coup' attempt and mobilising paramilitary violence, which caused strong popular reaction and widespread international condemnation (the conjuncture of left hegemony in the region was key in this moment). Electoral and military victory was, however, insufficient. During the process which led to the approval of a new constitution in early 2009 (Schavelzon, 2012), political negotiations between the MAS and the opposition were decisive in overcoming the conservatives' resistance. These negotiations implied limiting the transformative reach of the Constitution in key aspects—such as land reform and indigenous autonomy (Garcés, 2011)—but guaranteed that the right went along with MAS's Process of Change.

The end of the antagonism of the conservative bloc consolidated the political position of the Morales government, sanctioned by a landslide victory in the 2009 elections. For García Linera (2010, 2011), this was the moment in which the MAS consolidated its 'hegemonic' position: even if a few recalcitrant elements remained, the MAS—with the support of popular and progressive sectors in the streets and ballots—had won the decisive political battle. In the vice president's own analysis (García Linera, 2010: 40-46), control of the state on the part of the new 'power bloc' was obtained through securing support along three main axes: a monopoly on the coercive apparatus; control over the economic-productive sphere (enabled by the partial nationalisation of hydrocarbons); and the imposition of a new discourse, centred on issues such as decolonisation, pluralism and the 'productive state'. This led, after 2008, to a 'point of bifurcation'—or moment of stabilization after the crisis—in which the authority of the Morales government was fully re-established (García Linera 2010; 2011).

At this point, for García Linera (2011a), the only tensions that remained were within the popular base of the government. These were necessary, 'creative tensions', which did not question the model of society or the political economic horizon of the Process of Change initiated by the Morales government—ostensibly based on indigenous autonomy and resource industrialisation as the pillars of a 'pluri-national' paradigm (García Linera, 2011, pp. 11-12). None of these tensions, therefore—regarding state-society relations, class antagonisms and the contradiction between

resource extractivism and ‘*vivir bien*’ (‘living well’)—represented a threat to the hegemony of the MAS (Webber, 2015b). Rather, according to García Linera (2011, p. 72, original emphasis), “they are vivifying and dialectical contradictions of our Process of Change, *productive forces* of the revolution whose existence and democratic treatment will allow us to advance”. Other accounts from Evo Morales’s first years in power share—perhaps understandably in this conjuncture—an optimistic view of necessary but productive tensions (Postero 2010). Yet, the ‘end-of-history’ tale told by Bolivia’s vice president is not fully convincing.

I argue, on the contrary, that it was precisely in the moment that neoliberal elites were incorporated in the MAS’s project that the popular–indigenous articulation began irreversibly to crack (Webber, 2015a). As a renowned Bolivian intellectual, close to the government, explained²⁷, “it remains to be seen to what extent we can still read Álvaro [García Linera] as a theorist. He is—and it would say this himself—a propagandist. That is his task.” That García Linera’s account is not innocent is clear from his curious inversion of priorities in discussing Bolivia’s tensions. While dismissing arguably fundamental class and ecological contradictions as unimportant, he identifies as the only potentially dangerous tension what he calls a resurgence of ‘corporatism’—the presence of sectorial demands on the part of popular sectors that pit them against the government. García Linera considers corporatism especially dangerous because the recalcitrant elements of the conservative right are willing to exploit it to their advantage, to present it as a crack in the power bloc. What this concern disguises, however, is the discursive targeting of indigenous organisations criticising the government from the left, accused of putting their selfish interests before the universality of the Process of Change (Webber, 2015b). This first, somewhat veiled, attack on the indigenous movement (and leftist intellectuals who sided with it) signalled, I claim, the beginning of the end of the MAS-led popular–indigenous hegemony.

²⁷ Author interview, 03/03/2014.

4. Legitimising indigenous repression

Cracks in the MAS's hegemony

García Linera (2011), as well as sympathetic commentators (Errejón and Guajira 2015), argued that the MAS's ability to win the support of popular classes and 'patriotic' capitalists alike was key to its hegemonic consolidation. The vice president (2011, p. 40) recognised the risk of weakening in this way 'hegemony' through overextending its reach—of including collective interests that cannot be kept under the control of the indigenous-popular leadership—but considered this an inevitable aspect of constructing hegemony. Securing political stability through adjusting to existing capitalist interests, however, is far from a Gramscian understanding of 'expansive' hegemony—and much closer to what the Sardinian called 'passive revolution' (Jessop, 1990). A passive revolution need not be politically conservative in character—and in the case of the Morales government, in many respects it was not (Modonesi, 2013). Nevertheless, it ultimately resulted in moderate reform and, importantly, a deepened dependence on the conservative bloc and on transnational capital (Hesketh and Morton, 2014; Webber, 2015b).

Two further considerations can be made here. First, as the Morales government came politically closer with traditional elites and renounced broader changes, it deepened its dependency on transitionally-led resource extraction. This relates to another, underplayed 'creative tension', the contradiction between extractivism and *vivir bien*—the constitutionally-sanctioned goal to promote non-capitalist socio-natural relations, particularly on indigenous-*campesino* territories. García Linera (2011, pp 62-72) sees this as a temporary tension that the government is in the process of recomposing in its path towards constructing 'communitarian socialism', giving priority to use values over exchange values. Unfortunately, there is no evidence that such a path exists. Since the election of Evo Morales, transnational-led production and export of minerals and hydrocarbons skyrocketed, incentivised by high commodity prices but also proactively promoted by the government (Andreucci and Radhuber, 2015). This became a central point of contention between the MAS and rural and indigenous groups affected by resource extraction.

Second, another aspect that the discourse of creative tensions obscures is that, by renouncing more comprehensive reform, the MAS effectively excluded demands that were key to the popular–indigenous articulation described above—especially indigenous projects in the direction of territorial resource sovereignty (Tapia, 2011). Overcoming the conflict with the conservative bloc, in this sense, implied the creation of another antagonism—perhaps more dangerous to the extent that it created a caesura within ‘the people’ itself. As Jessop (1990, p. 193) points out, passive revolution results in a ‘limited’ (rather than ‘expansive’) form of hegemony, ultimately incapable of including the interests of all popular sectors in the power bloc. This is the other side of the ‘overstretching’ of class alliances mentioned above. If the interests of capital cannot be threatened—landholding elites and transnational extraction firms are good cases in point—popular demands that antagonise them are necessarily frustrated, at least in part. To an extent, *ad hoc* material concessions and forms of co-optation—what Gramsci calls ‘transformism’—can secure support of some these sectors, providing a ‘fix’ to the class contradiction. When popular sectors continue to advance revendications, however, they present a threat to the power bloc—by disrupting its accumulation base, ideological strategy, or both—and are likely to face state repression. A failure of both ‘moral and intellectual leadership’ and *trasformismo*, in other words, leaves the state with no option but coercion.

The demise of pluri-nationality

The conflict in 2011–12 over a highway cutting through the Isiboro-Sécure natural park and indigenous territory (TIPNIS) inaugurated a conjuncture of open tension between the government and the Bolivian indigenous movement (Laing, 2014). The conflict resulted in a crisis of the popular–indigenous articulation on which the MAS based its hegemonic strategy. Most notably, it led to the break-up of the *Pacto de Unidad*—the indigenous–*campesino* ‘Unity Pact’—and its reconstitution as a government-controlled umbrella organisation. This formal alliance between the two main rural movements—the *campesino* unions and indigenous-native organisations—was established in 2004 and represented the main channel through which indigenous–*campesino* political proposals were formulated. The principal contribution of the Unity Pact was the ‘pluri-national state’ proposal (Garcés, 2010; Radhuber, 2014)—an

attempt to articulate principles of indigenous territorial autonomy and economic and cultural pluralism within the structure of the national state. These principles were included in the 2009 Constitution, which redefined Bolivia as a Pluri-national State funded on anti-colonial struggles.

Perhaps inevitably, the process of institutionalisation entailed a ‘domestication’ of pluri-nationality and indigenous autonomy (Garcés, 2011). One of the most problematic aspects of the ‘pluri-national’ articulation as included in the Constitution was the ‘invention’ of a collective legal subject called ‘indigenous-native-peasant people’. This lumping together of diverse identities, projects and trajectories generated all sorts of tensions, particularly between the *campesino* and indigenous-native blocs (Fontana, 2014). Divergences had long existed, of course; the process of popular–indigenous articulation against neoliberalism however, had allowed these groups to place emphasis on commonalities (‘equivalences’) rather than differences. For instance, while, for indigenous and native organisations, gas nationalisation was as a temporary step towards territorial autonomy and the overcoming of extractivism through economic diversification (Radhuber 2012), other popular movements—including the *campesino* bloc—saw it primarily as a source of wealth redistribution and an assertion of national sovereignty (Perreault 2006). Such divergences—a similar one concerns land redistribution—were irrelevant during the conjuncture of anti-neoliberal struggles. In the institutionalisation phase, however, although the MAS made it its official goal to use revenues from gas ‘nationalisation’ to promote pluri-nationality (García Linera, 2011), it became clear that its policies were promoting ‘primarisation’ rather than plurality (Svampa, 2013). The indigenous-native movement grew increasingly discontented, and found itself directly opposed to *campesino* leadership who remained loyal to the government.

During the TIPNIS conflict, such divergences surfaced and the popular–indigenous articulation broke down. The tensions were clearly not just about identity, but primarily about incompatible political projects (Tapia, 2014). Nevertheless, they rendered it problematic for all rural movements to share the label of ‘indigenous’. We can argue that indigeneity ceased to function as a *signifier* around which a collective identity coalesced. It is interesting to note, in this sense, that Evo Morales, in the context of the TIPNIS affair, for the first time distanced himself symbolically from

the indigenous movement by declaring: “I never considered myself to be the first indigenous president, but the first trade-unionist president” (Cit. in Laing, 2012, p. 1052). In the following year’s Census, indigenous-self identification—which had reached 62% of the Bolivian population over 15 years of age in 2001—dropped to 41%. While the results are partially attributed to a change in the survey question—now asking to indicate a specific ethnic affiliation—the drop can also be interpreted as a reversal of what had been a *politicisation* of indigeneity as a marker of subalternity (Schavelzon, 2014). The repression suffered by the indigenous movement and its supporters during and after the TIPNIS dispute marked an end to the ‘indigenous’ character of the popular articulation.

Spectres of imperialism

The way that the MAS’s policies and postures exacerbated the tension between the *campesino* and indigenous blocs shows that what García Linera (2011) called a ‘resurgence of corporatism’ was arguably a legitimate response to the exclusion of indigenous political demands from the strategy of the power bloc. The indigenous movement’s opposition to extractivist expansion came to be perceived by the government as one of the main threats to its accumulation strategy—also due to pressures by the hydrocarbon industry in this sense. Nevertheless, indigenous repression clearly contradicted the overall discursive strategy of the MAS as a popular-indigenous government promoting *vivir bien*. The aggressiveness with which the indigenous movement was treated, with episodes of brutality unusual for the Morales government—as in the case of the violent expulsion of members of the highland indigenous federation CONAMAQ (National Council of *Allyus* and *Markas* of the *Qullasuyu*) from their headquarters in late 2013—may seem unnecessary and paradoxical. Indeed, the necessity to expand export-oriented resource extraction put the MAS in the uneasy position: how could it remove the threat coming from indigenous organisations, while at the same time maintaining an indigenous-informed discourse, however diluted, as the basis of its populist strategy?

The solution could only be the *disappearance* of anti-government social forces—primarily indigenous organisations, but also leftist political figures and intellectuals aligning with them. This is what the MAS set out to do, since 2011, in two main

ways. First, it divided and disarticulated the main indigenous organisations, in order to control them. Commencing in 2012 with the lowland indigenous federation, CIDOB—Confederation of Indigenous Peoples of Bolivia—the government identified members and cadres aligned with the party, or willing to be co-opted. It created parallel organisations under control of the MAS and isolated and marginalised the remaining—that is, legitimately elected—leadership and members. This formed a split between pro-government (*MASista*) and independent (*organico*) organisations. An identical pattern was followed in late 2013 with the above-mentioned highland native federation CONAMAQ (Perreault and Green, 2013). This allowed for the formal reconstitution of the Unity Pact, this time fully controlled by the government. The MAS could thus continue claiming that it was, after all, the political expression of indigenous interests. It was still left, however, with the problem of the recalcitrant members of the two indigenous movements, who not only refused to be corrupted into submission, but were indeed attempting to reorganise and attracted the sympathy of progressive sectors of society.

As a result, the government discursively targeted members and supporters of the independent or *organico* CIDOB and CONAMAQ, as well as their supporters, as ‘enemies of the Process of Change’. Once again, García Linera led the charge. In a booklet published in 2012, titled *Geopolítica de la Amazonía*—Geopolitics of the Amazon—the vice president undertook a disquisition on the ethnography and political economy of Bolivia’s lowland regions. He argued that extractivism is a necessary and inevitable aspect of all modes of production, and therefore there is nothing fundamentally wrong with it, as long as it helps the state to generate and redistribute wealth. Consequently, the indigenous organisations opposing the expansion of resource frontiers in their territories are doing so because they are manipulated by NGOs, in turn controlled by national landed capital and imperialist interests, with the goal of weakening the Bolivian state’s presence in the region (Beaulieu and Postero, 2013).

Another booklet, published the previous year, had the Leninist-sounding title *El ONGismo, enfermedad infantil del derechismo*—NGOism, a right-wingers’ infantile disease. García Linera (2011b) attacked primarily a number of leftist intellectuals and former government members, disillusioned with the MAS’s trajectory, many of whom

working with research and advocacy NGOs and guilty of having signed a Manifesto in June 2011 calling ‘for the renewal of the Process of Change for the people and with the people’ (see Almaraz, 2012). They were accused of sabotaging the government and aiding a conservative comeback. As the subtitle of García Linera’s booklet put it, the renewal of the Process of Change they were calling for was nothing other than ‘neoliberal restoration’. In a later crackdown on NGOs in 2015, García Linera revealingly referred to leaders of anti-extractivist organisations as ‘green Trotskyists’ (Mealla, 2015).

Attacking discursively indigenous organisations and their supporters was necessary to ideologically legitimising their repression. Those who could not be co-opted needed to be ‘othered’—through depicting them as internal enemies. What is interesting to note here is that, even though US-friendly neoliberal elites were then much less of a *real* enemy—being politically disarticulated and in friendly relationship with government (Webber 2015b)—they were still invoked as a threat, with the principal purpose of assimilating the indigenous movement to imperialism. The MAS could thus claim that the indigenous movement was firmly on board with the government’s project, and that only a deviant fraction of the indigenous organisations, misguided by agents of imperialism, kept criticising the Morales administration. Therefore, the overall populist strategy of the MAS—as representing the interests of a popular-indigenous majority, *contra* neoliberal and imperialist enemies—could be maintained. There was, however, a fundamental shift both in ‘the people’—no longer indigenous, if not culturally—and in the ‘constitutive outside’—the spectre of past enemies now replaced by new and unlikely agents of imperialism.

5. Regulating through discourse

As the preceding discussion shows, the adoption of an indigenous-informed discursive posture in the first term of the Morales government did not simply signal a commitment to emancipatory socio-ecological transformation—to promote a novel form of ‘communitarian socialism’ (García-Linera, 2015) capable of saving *Pachamama* from capitalism (Morales Ayma, 2010). Rather, this discursive posture emerged from the process of constructing a collective, ‘popular-indigenous’ identity,

as part of a populist (counter-)hegemonic strategy (Postero, 2010). While theoretical elaborations of leftist intellectuals were central to determining the form of articulation (Baker, 2015), the main elements of such an articulation were the demands of indigenous and *campesino* organisations—alongside other popular sectors—which converged into a joint proposal for a ‘pluri-national state’ (Garcés, 2010). Since the main aim in this conjuncture was to create and stabilise an hegemonic bloc capable of seizing state power and defeating the neoliberal right—and indigenous-*campesino* movements were determinant to that end—it is inevitable that the agenda and discourse of the MAS reflected indigenous goals and ambitions to an important extent.

In terms of material demands, reasserting Bolivia’s natural resource sovereignty was the most important focus of popular movements. Recovering gas ‘for the Bolivian people’ was the broadest common demand (Perreault, 2006; Spronk and Webber 2007). It cemented the alliance between rural and urban popular classes—indigenous, *campesinos*, miners, urban migrants—and progressive middle classes. The heterogeneous composition of ‘the people’ meant that different social groups projected different—and at times incompatible—ambitions onto the prospect of resource nationalisation. At this ‘counter-hegemonic’ stage, however, all popular sectors saw nationalisation as a common goal and a necessary step towards attaining other objectives.

Most importantly, perhaps, gas was to finance a transition away from dependency on primary exports—deemed as the cause of the country’s historical poverty and marginality (Gobierno de Bolivia, 2007a)—through resource industrialisation and the promotion of small scale and communitarian productive forms (García-Linera, 2011a). The MAS capitalised on these ‘popular imaginaries’ (Kohl and Farthing, 2012), making gas ‘nationalisation’ one of its central keywords. Although reform of the hydrocarbon sector had begun before the election of Morales—and despite the less-than-radical nature of the reform itself (Kaup, 2010)—increasing state participation in production and revenue collection meant winning initial resistance from a powerful industry and going against the received neoliberal wisdom. This achievement was only possible thanks to the strength of the articulation of popular-indigenous forces that demanded it.

In this conjuncture, the identification of popular classes with a common ‘indigenous’ descent worked as a symbolic counter-part to the coloniality, whiteness, and US-friendly orientation of neoliberal elites, deemed responsible for Bolivia’s social, political and economic ills. Land-holding and agribusiness interests in the eastern provinces were the main stronghold of an aggressively classist and racist conservative bloc. Neoliberal governments, moreover, in charge in Bolivia since 1985, were also responsible for the privatisation and liberalisation of natural resource sectors, such as mining and hydrocarbons (Kaup 2013). Lastly, they were backed by and aligned to the US, which had long history of economic and geopolitical influence in Bolivia. In the populist articulation led by the MAS, the unholy alliance of imperialism with the national conservative bloc was therefore, understandably, identified as the ‘enemy of the people’. Here we see how the ‘constitutive outside’ need not be a spectral threat invoked to ideologically manipulate masses (Žižek, 2006; Swyngedouw, 2010). There might have been an element of rhetorical amplification of the antagonism—after all, the MAS already from 2004 had adopted a relatively moderate political stance on many counts (Webber, 2010). Yet, as the escalation of tensions and coup attempt of the following years demonstrated, the threat was all too real. Most importantly, perhaps, this people-enemy opposition can very well—and did—express a *class antagonism*, however partly reframed in non-class (racial and regionalist) terms.

First as tragedy, then as farce

After the 2008 political crisis was solved and the conflict with the conservative bloc was recomposed, it became increasingly clear that the MAS was not going to confront capitalist interests in strategic sectors to make space for a substantive implementation of pluri-nationality (let alone ‘communitarian socialism’). Progressive reforms did take place, and their reach should not be underestimated. Lands were redistributed to smallholders or titled as indigenous territories, though without fundamentally altering agrarian class relations (Brabazon and Webber, 2014). Increased revenue collections from hydrocarbons—and, to a lesser extent, mining—went to finance social programmes and were reinvested in ‘resource industrialisation’ projects, however limited (Radhuber, 2014). Yet, taking seriously the promotion of pluri-nationality implied a much deeper change—which in turn rested on greater

efforts to limit the power of national and, especially, transnational capital in resource-export sectors—most notably, hydrocarbons. To what extent this was due to ‘structural constraints’ as opposed to political calculations is a thorny issue that cannot be fully answered here (or perhaps anywhere). What is clear, however, is that—as the government’s main accumulation strategy was predicated on expanding export-oriented resource exploitation, controlled by transnational capital—the demands of the indigenous movement became increasingly incompatible with the MAS’s agenda.

At first, the MAS government sought to control the tension between radical transformative ambitions and its more limited plans through ‘domesticating’ popular-indigenous demands. Indigenous demands around territorial autonomy and plurinationality, for instance, were formally recognised in the new Constitution—and discursively appropriated—but implemented only in limited form (Garcés, 2011). The contradiction between the extractivist accumulation strategy and indigenous autonomy could not, however, be contained with mere symbolic gestures. Not only did the expansion of agribusiness, mining and oil and gas extraction—as well as related infrastructure, as in the case of the TIPNIS highway—into indigenous (and *campesino*) territories represented a source of increasing conflicts. Legal mechanisms devised to reduce tensions—such as environmental legislation and rights to ‘prior consultation’ for affected populations (a key conquest of the indigenous movement)—were also bypassed or ill implemented in order not to threaten extractive industry profits (Andreucci and Radhuber, 2015). Faced with the increasingly vocal complaints from the indigenous movement, the MAS was no longer able to discursively reconcile the antagonism of the latter with extractive capital.

The political dilemma that the MAS had to face since the beginning of Morales’s second term (2010-2014) was the need to eliminate the indigenous threat to extractivist expansion, yet without ceasing to claim to be the legitimate representative of indigenous Bolivians, thereby undermining its populist strategy. The only option available was therefore to make indigenous opposition disappear, as it were, by either co-opting indigenous leaderships or discursively assimilating them to the conservative-imperialist bloc in order to repress them. To be sure, the MAS did not only use the latter strategy against the indigenous-native bloc and its supporters, but

also at different times against mineworkers and other popular sectors that were equally ideologically threatening (by criticising the government from within ‘the people’). However, the amount of effort that went into repressing indigenous organisations—and of ink that went into justifying it—was much greater than with other popular sectors.

The interesting aspect here is not just the need to assimilate a part of ‘the people’ to the enemy—to ‘other’ it—in order to repress it, which is quite a common feature of the legitimisation of state violence (cf. Foucault, 2003, p. 255). What is striking is that the threat of a conservative reaction was no longer, in this conjuncture, a real one. The external enemy existed now only as a *spectre* (Swyngedouw, 2010a), whose function as a ‘constitutive outside’ was nonetheless discursively reproduced as a way maintaining a degree of unity among the people—and, most importantly, in order for this vacant outside to be occupied by the ‘internal’ enemies of the Process of Change—indigenous organisations and their ‘green-Trotskyist’ allies. What happened as a tragedy—the deadly clash with the conservative bloc—returns here as a farce (Žižek, 2009). The class antagonism on which the populist articulation stands is now a *staged* one, precisely as the material disappearance of such antagonism caused the MAS’s hegemonic strategy to crack.

Populism and resource regulation

The case of Bolivia shows that there is a link worth exploring between the type of discursive articulation that Laclau (2005a) defines as ‘populism’ and the regularisation of resource extraction—or resource-based accumulation—in the face of social opposition to it. It is important to stress that, generally speaking, the relationship between an institutional reconfiguration and its stabilising effect on accumulation is neither necessary nor intentional (Huber, 2013)—it would be absurd to claim that the Bolivian Process of Change was meant to stabilise extractivism all along. Nevertheless, it is evident that, in certain contexts, official narratives can be and are mobilised with the objective of building legitimacy around controversial accumulation strategies.

The Bolivian case makes this clear. A popular articulation created a collective indigenous-popular identity that coalesced around the goal of reclaiming gas ‘for the people’. This was an accumulation of popular struggles and demands—not a top-down strategy—which found in resource nationalisation and pluri-nationality signifiers around which to build an hegemonic articulation. This discursive articulation, however—based on popular demands and including a strong indigenous element—eventually turned against the indigenous movement itself. As mobilising gas resources was key to the MAS’s project, the indigenous that opposed extractivism were seeing as sabotaging the Process of Change and therefore repressed. Paradoxically, therefore, a discursive articulation that formed the basis of a counter-hegemonic strategy—centred on reforming natural resource governance—ended up being deployed as a way to *stabilise* resource extraction and arrangements around it, through justifying the repression of those who opposed it.

Here, perhaps, we see why radical leftists like Žižek (2006) see in populism an element of ideological mystification. Laclau (2005b) himself warns about the peril of discursive articulation degenerating into manipulative rhetoric. In the institutionalisation of the populist rupture, he argues, the equivalential discourse risks becoming the ‘*langue de bois*’ of the state. When this happens, “the increasing distance between actual social demands and dominant equivalential discourse frequently leads to the repression of the former and the violent imposition of the latter (Laclau 2005b: 46-47, original emphasis)”. In other words, in the process of institutionalisation of a populist articulation, a signifier of equivalence, appropriated by the state, can turn into a manipulative rhetoric that accompanies the repression of actual social demands.

Should this lead us to conclude that populism is a problematic political strategy—one that, as Žižek (2006) has it, harbours in the last instance a ‘protofascist’ tendency? I hope I have demonstrated that, in Bolivia, the problem was not populism *per se*, but the class project that was articulated *through* populism. As Laclau (1977) pointed out, populism can be a conservative strategy as much as it can be the ‘highest form of socialism’—a popular articulation of the oppressed, targeting the state itself as their common enemy. Most frequently, perhaps, populism is associated with class mediation strategies and passive revolution. The populism of the Morales

government after its institutionalisation phase, for instance, looked very much ‘post-political’, as it served to displace social antagonism and foreclose transformative possibilities. Yet, once again, this is not a necessary feature of populism, but of the political project that expressed itself through it. The theoretical implication, I think, is clear. In order to understand the political nature of populism, one must get out of discourse, and consider the changing class relations and shifting correlations of forces that underpin it.

6. Conclusions

In this chapter, I aimed to shed light on the tension-fraught relationship between the radical discursive strategy of the Latin American left—understood as an instance of ‘populism’ in a Laclauian sense—and its less-than-radical policy orientations, particularly as regards resource-based development. Through the case of Bolivia, I explored how the populist discursive strategy of the Morales government—characterised by a novel combination of left-nationalist, indigenous and radical-environmentalist themes—related to the goal of stabilising resource-based accumulation in the face of conservative reaction as well as social opposition ‘from below’. I found that populism—as a way of constructing a popular identity, through articulating social demands in opposition to a common ‘enemy’—was effective in challenging the hegemony of neoliberal forces and favouring their replacement with a new, ‘popular-indigenous’ power bloc. Nevertheless, when indigenous demands that constituted the popular articulation—notably, ambitions to mobilise resource wealth for the promotion of ‘pluri-nationality’—became impossible to meet, the same discursive strategy was used by the government to legitimise its control over and repression of the indigenous movement.

I argued, therefore, that official discursive strategies, as part of a ‘mode of regulation’, can be mobilised to reduce social opposition to resource-based accumulation. In the case of Bolivia, this went from building on popular struggles and imaginaries in order to push through a progressive institutional restructuring of natural resource industries, to turning the same discursive articulation against sectors opposing the expansion of extractivism. In the latter case, populist discursive strategy degenerated

into ideological manipulation, deployed to justify repression. This led me to side with Laclau—against some of his critics on the left—in defending the transformative potential of populism, and to argue that the degeneration of discourse observed in Latin American left governments signals a problem not with populism *per se*, but rather with the political and class projects that these governments put forward. In the present conjuncture—characterised by the end of a political cycle and the aggressive comeback of the right—it is important, therefore, to resist the temptation to blame the left's shortcomings on their populist strategies. Rather, we should focus on these governments' problematic politics and the ways they turned, at least in part, against the very popular forces that made their ascendance to power possible.

Discussion.

Governing extraction, changing the state

In this chapter, I present a summary of the main empirical finding and discuss how they contribute to relevant scholarly debates. First, I identify the most important changes as regards the governance of mineral and hydrocarbon extraction during the years of Evo Morales in government and relate such changes to shifts in the balance of power among social and political forces influencing, directly or indirectly, the politics of extraction. Second, through combining a regulationist approach, as adopted by political ecologists, with neo-Gramscian political theory—particularly as concerns understandings of the state, hegemony and ideology—I contribute to recent conversations on the politics of ‘post-neoliberalism’ and post-neoliberal resource governance. I argue that expanding the regulationist framework in this way may help researchers to better capture why and how changes in institutional configurations for governing extraction take place, as well as to address previously under-explored issues such as limits to progressive socio-environmental change and the role of ideology in regularising resource-based accumulation. Before concluding, I reflect on some of the limitations of this study as well as on possible avenues for future research.

1. Contradictions of the ‘Process of Change’

Changes in the governance of extraction

The significant expansion of mining since the election of Evo Morales in 2006 was associated primarily with booming transnational investment and a burgeoning self-employed miner (‘cooperative’) sector. Although the presence of the state-owned firm COMIBOL (Bolivian Mining Corporation) increased, as a result of targeted

nationalisations as well as greater state participation in private operations, its contribution to production and exports remained marginal. The reproduction of an enabling set of conditions for the growth of transnational and cooperative operations, inherited from the neoliberal period, was central to the expansion of mining extractivism, in two ways. First, the encouragement of foreign investment and a low level of taxes and royalties continued to characterise the strategy of the Morales government, despite emphasis on nationalisation (often framed with an anti-imperialist rhetoric adopted from the mineworkers' union movement). Second, favourable socio-environmental legislation on key aspects and weak institutional capacity for ensuring compliance provided an indirect incentive to mining companies and cooperatives. For these reasons, socio-environmental conditions on the ground have not improved with the current government, and in many cases have worsened. This generated important tensions with rural populations.

As well as mining, hydrocarbon activities expanded greatly and grew increasingly 'primary-export' oriented. In this case too, transnational firms controlled the bulk of production and exports, despite a relative increase in state presence, including the reactivation of the state-owned company, YPFB (Bolivian State Petroleum Deposits). Unlike in the mining sector, indigenous rights and environmental protection were given central consideration in the legal and institutional framework regulating oil and gas extraction. Principles regarding the respect of protected areas and, especially, indigenous rights, were included in Hydrocarbon Law of 2005 and later turned into specific bylaws (*reglamentos*). However, these measures resulted in limited improvements on the ground. While some of the most active indigenous organisations—particularly the Assembly of the Guaraní People (APG) in the Chaco area—were able to exploit these legal spaces for stopping projects or obtaining compensations for socio-environmental impacts, overall these measures have not obtained the desired results. Companies continued to avoid compensating for impacts whenever possible, while their 'community relations' personnel specialised in negotiating compensations downwards. Moreover, there was a trend in recent years towards further limiting consultation procedures. At the same time, other principles—such as indigenous-led environmental monitoring—were never implemented in practice.

These developments related to changes in the balance of power among social forces *vis-à-vis* Bolivia's main extractive sectors. As regards mining, the increase in the relative power of transnational firms and, even more clearly, cooperatives has played a central role in limiting the extent of reform, particularly as concerns the political economic configuration of the sector (Kaup, 2014). These are the subsectors that would be more directly threatened by increased taxation and greater state presence. While the influence of transnationals was less direct, the cooperative subsector gained a strong influence on the government, defending its 'economic-corporate' interests through aggressive mobilisation tactics. When it came to socio-environmental regulations, all subsectors, including the otherwise politically radical mineworkers' union FSTMB, aligned in rejecting stricter controls and legislation, perceived by cooperatives as an unfair burden on already volatile gains and by other mineworkers as a threat to jobs. At government level, moreover, there was a clear unwillingness to threaten mining sector profits excessively, not only due the influence of the sector on the government and state more broadly, but also to the economic significance of mining (the second most important sector in terms of revenue generation).

The hydrocarbon sector was the main focus of social struggle in the cycle 2003-2005. In this conjuncture, popular-indigenous sectors demanded and partly obtained progressive reforms. Transnational interests were forced to accept the new government's conditions, including increases in taxes and royalties and targeted nationalisations. After initial resistance, firms generally accepted the new conditions, thanks to a series of state incentives and compensations, as well as an improved business environment characterised by growing prices and expanding export markets. Yet, despite emphasis on 'nationalisation'—no doubt a gesture towards popular movements—the Morales government did not antagonise hydrocarbon corporations, leaving them free to operate in Bolivia ('as partners, not bosses'). At the same time, while YFPB was reactivated, it lacked the human resources and technology to become an important player in the industry. In time, transnational firms consolidated their dominant position. Most popular forces were satisfied by the reform, and shifted their focus on protecting these advances as well as on issues of rent redistribution. The only sector that continued to actively fight for improvements was

the indigenous movement, which insisted on a full application of the rights and principles obtained through years of struggle.

Indigenous marginalisation

Against this background, it is easy to understand why social forces demanding progressive socio-environmental transformation *vis-à-vis* the governance of extraction were marginalised. Indigenous-*campesino* demands appeared as incompatible with the smooth functioning of accumulation in natural resource sectors, and were actively opposed by ‘extractivist’ interests, including firms, workers and sectors of the state.

In the context of mining, most active social actors in struggling for improving the socio-environmental outcomes of extraction were the highland indigenous (*originario*) federation CONAMAQ (National Council of *Allyus* and *Markas* of the *Qullasuyu*) as well as ‘popular-environmentalist’ organisations of populations affected by mining. Indigenous groups affiliated to CONAMAQ struggled primarily for rights to territorial self-determination *vis-à-vis* mineral extraction, including demands for rights to ‘free prior and informed consent’ and to participate in extraction through the institution of ‘community mining’ operations. These principles were partly recognised in national legislation, yet indigenous rights were completely ignored in the legal-institutional framework for the mining sector. While the 2014 Mining Law included explicit reference to rights to consultation, it did so in very limited form (more aimed at disciplining rights than at making them work for communities). Despite the scarce advances obtained in terms of legal change, CONAMAQ actively critiqued the Morales government policies for the mining sector, and was decisive in resolving some important mining conflicts (such as in Mallku Khota, Potosí), in favour of communities. Partly for this reason, it was divided by the government in late 2013 and reconstituted under MAS control.

Organisations of communities affected by mining, such as CORIDUP (*Coordinadora* for the Defence of the Desaguadero River and the Lakes Uru-Uru and Poopó) in the Oruro region, while also generally accepting the presence of mining, focused their demands on the full respect of socio-environmental legislation in place. CORIDUP’s main achievement is the recognition of Supreme Decree (SD) 0335 in 2009, declaring

the lake Poopó Basin in the Oruro region in a state of ‘environmental emergency’ due to mining contamination, and putting in place a plan for the ‘integral remediation’ of the area. In my research, however, I found that the plan did not obtain even marginal improvements in the socio-environmental conditions of the area, due to scarce funding and dubious political commitment. CORIDUP was not directly targeted by the government, but it suffered from the closing down of spaces for dialogue with the state in recent years, as well as from the divisive effects of lack of implementation of the decree, and generally of scarce advances, which has weakened their local support. Last but not least, the strong presence of mineworkers in the area made it all the more challenging to organise in the Oruro area without institutional support.

As I noted above, in the hydrocarbon sector, the gradual emptying and partial reversal of indigenous rights was due, at least in part, to the industry’s opposition. Hydrocarbon companies complained time and again that these rights, particularly consultation mechanisms, excessively slowed down the process of obtaining an environmental licence. Company representatives I interviewed perceived that these mechanisms were used by indigenous organisations for ‘blackmailing’ companies to obtain monetary compensations. State personnel shared the same views. More broadly, I detected a striking alignment between firms and sectors of the government, including members of the Ministry of the Environment, in considering the respect of indigenous rights as an unfair burden to firms. A further example of indigenous marginalisation in the context of hydrocarbon politics is the case of the Indigenous Fund, a development fund financed with a portion of gas rents. This was obtained by indigenous mobilisations in the context of struggles around the 2005 Hydrocarbon Law. Yet, the Fund’s organisational structure made it possible for it to be controlled by *campesino* union leaderships aligned with the government. Moreover, the functioning of the Fund was plagued by corruption, including allegations that it was used by the MAS to co-opt social movement leaders.

These disputes around mining and hydrocarbons reflect the overall evolution of the relationship between the MAS government and indigenous-*campesino* organisations nationally. These organisations denounced, at first cautiously, the slow advances in the direction of pluri-nationality and expressed concerns over the extractivist

direction of government policies. During the TIPNIS (Isiboro-Sécure Indigenous Territory and Natural Park) conflict, these tensions turned into an open dispute of national relevance, as a result of which the main indigenous organisations, CIDOB (Confederation of Indigenous Peoples of Bolivia) and CONAMAQ were internally divided and reconstituted as government-controlled organisations. This resulted in the break-up of the indigenous-*campesino* 'Unity Pact' and marked the *de-facto* abandoning of pluri-national ambitions of the Morales administration.

The extractivist consensus

Why did the Process of Change take this sort of trajectory, whereby the initial phase of openness to progressive transformation of the state was followed by a partial restoration of previously existing political economic relations? There is no one definite answer, of course. Based on existing literature as well as on what I found in my own research, however, it is possible to point to a number of factors that may have played a part.

First, a full-fledged radical transformation of the political economic configuration was never part of the plan. Reform in key sectors was limited by a commitment on the part of the Morales government to pursue 'responsible' macroeconomic management, such as control of inflation and public spending (Webber, 2014). This, after initial opposition, in time gained the Morales government the praises of economically conservative bodies such the IMF and World Bank. As regards Bolivia's extractive sectors, despite the centrality accorded to nationalisation in the government agenda, the changes planned were clearly less than radical. In documents such as National Development Plans and the 2009 Constitution, the increased role given to state, cooperative and communitarian production sat alongside respect of private property relations as well the continued promotion of foreign direct investment. For this and other reasons, described above, transnational capital increased its presence in the extractive sectors during the Morales years (Kaup, 2013). This reproduced Bolivia's dependency on transnational extractive capital, which inevitably put significant pressure on sectors of the state to align with 'extractivist' interests.

Second, internal political relations, particularly relationships with the national conservative bloc, contributed to limiting the extent and radicality of reform. In the first years of Morales, aggressive opposition from conservative forces with strong support in several provinces (and US backing, however low-profile) was an objective obstacle to reform. Some critics, however, saw the crux of the matter in the unwillingness of the MAS party to confront the conservative right in key conjunctures. There were two defining moments in this sense. The first was during the 2003-2005 presidency of Carlos Mesa, whereby the MAS distanced itself from more radical demands coming from popular-indigenous movements, particularly as regards hydrocarbon nationalisation, in order to win over moderate electorates (Webber, 2010). The second was the conflict between the MAS and the conservative bloc ended in 2008. The government, despite its greater ability to mobilise popular support, sought a compromise solution with the right on contentious issues such as land reform. This unwillingness to confront the conservative bloc, while not directly concerning the extractive sectors, established clear limits to the extent of reform in the direction of both nationalisation and pluri-nationality (Tapia, 2011).

All this was reflected in a gradual change in the internal composition of the state and government. The first MAS government was internally diverse, including more moderate elements but also incorporating political figures with a strong commitment to promoting transformations in the direction of pluri-nationality and more radical reform. These included, for instance, Raul Prada, an intellectual who, as member of the Constituent Assembly and as a Vice Minister of Strategic Planning put forward important proposals for the implementation of pluri-nationality principles; Alejandro Almaraz, Vice Minister of Land pushing for substantive land redistribution; and Juan Pablo Ramos, Vice Minister of the Environment in the first government, responsible for the passing of DS 0335 mentioned above and critical of the government position during the TIPNIS conflict. These figures left the government more or less voluntarily by the beginning of the second term, and became vocal critics of the government. In the words of Ramos²⁸, this marked a shift from a 'period of opportunity' to a consolidation of extractivist positions. Such a trajectory underlies

²⁸ Author interview, 16/09/2014.

the reconstitution of an identity of interests between the government and extractive capital which I have noted above.

Discursive strategies

A last dynamic that I have explored concerns the mobilisation of political discourse and its significance for the politics of natural resource extraction, particularly in terms of how shifting ideological strategies were mobilised with the effect of securing consent around the MAS's extractivist project.

Commentators have noted a contradiction between, on the one hand, the MAS's drawing extensively on indigenous-*campesino* referents in its ideological self-positioning; and, on the other, the repression of indigenous organisations opposing the government's extractivist orientation. Political discourse was one of the most innovative aspects of the project of the MAS, one that gained Evo Morales widespread support on the part of sympathetic observers, particularly abroad, as Bolivia's 'first indigenous president' and the leader of a 'government of social movements'. At the same time, since about 2009, and particularly in the second term of the Morales administration (2010-2014), this ideological strategy sat in a contradictory position *vis-à-vis* the reality of an open conflict between the MAS and the indigenous movement. This contradiction needed solving because, particularly after the TIPNIS dispute, significant sectors of the population began to question the commitment of the MAS to progressive socio-environmental change. In this context, Morales took symbolic distance from the indigenous movement, declaring that he preferred to be recognised as a unionist rather than indigenous president (Laing, 2012). But this was clearly a dangerous move, given the importance that the MAS accorded to presenting itself as a government of the popular-indigenous bloc.

I argued, therefore, that the MAS opted instead for 'disappearing' indigenous opposition, in two ways. First, it divided the main indigenous federations—CIDOB and CONAMAQ—and reconstituted them as government-controlled organisations. In this way, it restructured the Unity Pact with the *campesino* bloc, now fully aligned with the MAS, thereby neutralising its critical potential and giving the government legitimacy to claim to be representing indigenous-*campesino* forces. Second, residual

indigenous opposition—an ‘organic’ CIDOB and CONAMAQ, parallel to the government-controlled ones—was ideologically assimilated to the conservative bloc. Discursive mobilisation played a central role in this. Indigenous organisations opposing the government were repeatedly targeted as ‘enemies of the Process of Change’, manipulated by right-wing parties and NGOs (the latter, in turn, accused of being ‘agents of imperialism’ or even ‘green Trotskyists’). As I noted, this was not just a public posture. Negative tropes about indigenous organisations as ‘professional blackmailers’ manipulated by environmentalist NGOs were shared by state functionaries and extractive companies alike, something which no doubt influenced state attitudes in the context of disputes around extraction and as concerns resource governance.

Through such strategies, the MAS could marginalise the indigenous movement and its supporters without contradiction—that is, without seeming to repress its own popular bases. I have noted, in all this, a strange inversion of the ideological referents of the MAS. First, Morales continued to present itself as leading a government of popular-indigenous movements, while it identified a significant section of the indigenous movement as its chief political enemy. At the same time, although the conservative bloc was in relatively friendly relations with the government since 2009, the right-wing and imperialist ‘threat’ was evoked by the MAS with the clear purpose of assimilating left-indigenous opposition to it, thereby displacing the source of ideological critique from within its popular-indigenous base. This strategy of co-optation and discursive ‘othering’ effectively functioned to demobilise the indigenous movement, while leaving intact the legitimacy and popular support of the MAS government, reaffirmed at the 2014 general elections. While it did not reduce local conflictivity and indigenous-*campesino* opposition to extractivist extraction, it made it much easier to contain local and single-issue conflicts (such as mobilisations around the approval of a new Mining Law in May 2014) from spilling over into national political crises.

2. Regularising extraction under post-neoliberalism

Governance as a social relation

The regulationist approach considers ‘governance’ as the reconfiguration of institutional arrangements that mediate nature-society relations, so as to stave off accumulation crises (Bridge and Perreault, 2009). In the case of natural resource industries, political ecologists have explored how regulatory arrangements and corporate practices have been refashioned in the last three decades with the aim of containing crises related to increasingly untenable and contested socio-environmental impacts (Bridge, 2000). Such realignments have been consistent with a broader array of changes associated with the rise of ‘environmental governance’, entailing a shift away from the centrality of the national state as the main regulatory body, and towards a greater role of ‘civil society’ and corporate actors. All this is seen as part and parcel of the broader trend, extensively explored by political ecologists, towards the ‘neoliberalisation’ of environmental management and nature-society relations in contemporary capitalism (Bakker, 2015). There is indeed a strong association between environmental governance and neoliberalism; yet, it is problematic to consider the institutional restructuring associated with the Latin American left cycle, including arrangements around resource extraction, as instances of ‘neoliberalisation’ (de Freitas et al., 2015; Perreault, 2008).

As I have shown in the Bolivian case, overall, the regulationist hypothesis remains valid: accumulation in the extractive industries was no doubt regularised as a result of the reforms associated with political change. However, this outcome was neither guaranteed, nor fully intentional. For instance, the upswing cycle in commodity prices—something over which Bolivians had no control—was determinant in this sense. At the same time, it would be wrong to argue that the reforms of the extractive sectors associated with the coming to power of Evo Morales were explicitly intentioned at reactivating and stabilising resource-based accumulation. While this was likely the desired outcome of the industry as well as sectors of the new power bloc, the reforms were the product of social struggles and competing interests, which contributed to shaping the new government’s agenda and mediated its practical implementation. Governance, understood as an instance of the mode of

regulation, is therefore the reflection of shifting power relationships among competing social forces and projects, which (temporarily) crystallises into an institutional configuration securing accumulation²⁹ (Jessop, 1990, chap. 11). This means that the association of governance with neoliberalisation is contingent rather than necessary.

The unresolved issue remains of how such an institutionalisation of social relationships takes place. This, of course, can only be determined empirically, through analyses of the social forces in struggle and their relative political power in a given conjuncture. I have argued, however, that a ‘strategic-relational’ approach to the state helps to guide such empirical analyses. A central tenet of this approach, building on Gramsci and Poulantzas, is to consider the state as ‘social relation’, or more precisely, as a ‘condensation’ of power relations among classes and other social forces (Jessop, 2008). This relational view blurs the distinction between state and society, and therefore helps us to account for the ways that shifting social power relations are reflected in the orientation of state policies and interventions—and by extension of governance configurations. The state, in this view, is not merely an instrument of capital’s domination, but it is fully intermeshed with social and power relations. It is itself a terrain of struggle, therefore also open to being changed in profound and potentially transformative ways³⁰.

Limits to counter-hegemony

If the state is a condensation of social power relations, why, then, is it so difficult for emancipatory socio-environmental transformation to take place—even when popular forces struggling for such change are a politically empowered majority, such was the case in Bolivia prior to the election of Morales?

²⁹ A key difference with classical regulation theory, here, is that the latter saw the mode of regulation—in the case, for instance, of Fordism—as guaranteeing long term coherence and stability to an accumulation regime. When we look at specific economic sectors, especially volatile ones such as the extractive industries, the mode of regulation is no guarantee of long-term stability, but rather a way of fixing contingent and fluid crisis-tendencies, such as those associated with resource depletion or tensions generated by socio-environmental impacts.

³⁰ This does not necessarily imply that those struggling for emancipatory socio-environmental change should aim to ‘take the state’. Quite the opposite: changing the social power balance, through what Gramsci called a ‘war of position’ in civil society, is the necessary starting point of any meaningful change. It does mean, however, that the state cannot be ignored, analytically or indeed politically.

To address this question, a relational understanding of the state may be complemented with a consideration of the ‘selectivity’ (or ‘selectivities’) ingrained in the form and *modus operandi* of the state (Jessop, 1990, chap. 9). While generally reflecting the social power balance, the state is a *selective* condensation, whereby the pursuit of certain political projects is more difficult than others. It is hard to empirically pin down the workings of selectivities in a detailed fashion, but some indications have emerged from my research. The most important selectivity regards the dominant accumulation strategy, which is also the necessary economic base for the hegemony of the power bloc. Poulantzas considered this *the* ‘structural’ selectivity of the capitalist state, meaning that, no matter how the state is open to being modified in its form and functioning, it will have in the end to guarantee capital accumulation. I have argued, with Jessop (1982), that this formulation is problematic, in that it reproduces the ‘economism’ of orthodox Marxism it seeks to overcome, and its view of the state as a political instrument of the bourgeoisie. It is clear, however, that this is the most difficult aspect for social movements to challenge.

In the Bolivian context, at the time of Morales’s election, resource-based accumulation was the main (and expanding) source of state revenues. It would have been unthinkable for popular-indigenous movements to demand the complete and immediate abandoning of extractivism (in fact, even the most progressive organisations did not think for a second of doing it). During the Morales years, at the same time, social groups economically relying on resource rents increased substantially. One example of this is the booming number of self-employed miners, which I noted in Chapter 1. More importantly, the growing reliance of the state on rents from gas, oil and mining for redistribution purposes, both direct (through targeted social programmes and an expanding clientelistic network) and indirect (through growing investment in physical and social infrastructure) increased the number of social sectors with a vested interests in securing the functioning of resource-based accumulation. This may account, at least in part, for the deepening of extractivism in this period, despite plans to diversify the economy and overcome ‘primary-export development’. It is also an example of how ‘structural’ limitations to

change are necessarily produced and reproduced through political actions and processes³¹.

Considering the state as a relational as well as selective terrain for socio-environmental struggles is important for political ecology. First, I have pointed out that political ecologists working of environmental conflicts seldom reflect on the obstacles encountered by socio-environmental movements trying to affect meaningful political change, and that this is partly due to a lack of analytical attention to the state as the terrain of ‘hegemonic’ struggles. Second, more broadly, a ‘strategic-relational’ understanding of the state may provide a useful complement to critical approaches to environmental governance (see Robertson, 2015), through enabling analysis of how the state and socio-environmental relations are mutually co-constituted. Further conceptual elaboration and refining of this framework, including through empirical operationalisation, would of course be needed to this end. But I think there is space for fruitful integration of political ecology with neo-Gramscian conceptualisations of the state (Brand et al., 2011; Ioris, 2012; Robertson and Wainwright, 2013; Wainwright and Mann, 2015). This is not the only theory of the state available to political ecologists, of course (see Bridge, 2014; Harris, 2012; Robbins, 2007; Whitehead, 2008). Nevertheless, it is ideally suited to the goal, shared by many in political ecology, to understand socio-natural interactions and struggles explicitly against the backdrop of the political economic and class relations which underpin them (Mann, 2009; Parenti, 2015).

³¹ It is interesting to see how this interacted with another, more fluid selectivity. During neoliberalism, and for most of Bolivia’s history, control of politics and the economy were the exclusive domain of white and mestizo elites. With the election of Morales, an important change regarded the unprecedented access of groups of Aymara, Quechua and other indigenous origin to positions of political and economic power, such as a much increased presence in state institutions as well as the emergence of a national agrarian and merchant bourgeoisie of Aymara descent. The ‘politically’ indigenous, however—those pertaining to *originario* and *indígena* organisations, such as CONAMAQ and CIDOB—were not equally empowered, and have been in fact significantly marginalised and politically disarticulated in the Morales years (see Tapia, 2014). This is because, as I hope to have demonstrated in this thesis, their political agenda and demands were directly threatening to resource-based accumulation, and therefore directly opposite the new state-social movement consensus around extraction. The hostility shown by state actors towards the indigenous sector, as well as the conflicts within the now defunct indigenous-campesino bloc, are therefore to be understood against the background of such a structurally-significant selectivity, operating above and beyond any ethnic and identitarian tension (cf. Fontana, 2014).

Progressive restoration

A further conceptual challenge has been to account for the trajectory of potential transformation followed by the restoration, and in some case deepening, of pre-existing conditions, strongly associated with neoliberalism. Webber (2011a) provocatively referred to the situation of Bolivia under Morales as one of ‘reconstituted neoliberalism’, resulting from the application of policy principles of ‘neo-structuralism’ and aimed to stabilise through minimal adjustments, rather than challenge in any substantive ways, previously existing political economic arrangements. While there is some truth in this, I have argued that it is too crude a formulation, and ultimately analytically incorrect in considering that the policy changes which followed the election of Morales resulted from the unmediated application of internationally-mandated prescriptions and explicitly aimed at restoring a neoliberal configuration. Besides the obvious empirical issue that some of the policy changes in Bolivia were antithetical to what neoliberal institutions have long prescribed, the problem is that, as I have argued throughout this thesis, the extent and direction of change is always necessarily mediated by social struggles which contribute to shaping the design and implementation of political agendas.

The concept of ‘post-neoliberalism’ may also be inadequate to capture the dialectics of change and restoration. Post-neoliberalism is a broad and slippery term, which may equally refer to political agendas and desires for overcoming neoliberalism; to concrete policies that, in different and often ambiguous ways, try to do so; and, lastly, to the actual conditions existing ‘after’ neoliberalism. I have found it useful, therefore, to distinguish between post-neoliberal *agendas*, counter-neoliberalisation *policies*, and ‘actually existing’ post-neoliberal *configurations*. This has heuristic value for unpacking, in specific contexts and conjunctures, the interaction between transformative programmes and ambitions and the processes and changes they give rise to. It also to account for the hybrid and contradictory political economic configuration of actually-existing post-neoliberalisms, such is the case of Bolivia. As an analytical lens, therefore, post-neoliberalism is a step forward from ‘reconstituted neoliberalism’, ‘neo-extractivism’ and similar characterisations (though it loses of course their polemical punch). Ultimately, however, it stops short of constituting a

useful explanatory framework capable of advancing our understanding of *why* the cycle of the Latin American left resulted in such a trajectory.

To this end, I have drawn on the notion of ‘passive revolution’, used by Gramsci to refer specifically to the dialectics of progress and restoration resulting from historical ‘upheavals’ which, however profound, stop short of substantively altering dominant political economic relations (Hesketh and Morton, 2014; Modonesi, 2013; Webber, 2015a). What I think is the added value of adopting this notion, besides its greater sensitivity to the temporality and historicity of such processes, is that it allows us to account for the seemingly paradoxical process whereby a progressive project may end up turning against the emancipatory socio-environmental movements which formed its popular base in the first place. It complements the notion of ‘selectivity’ through showing how the trajectory of change diffuses a ‘counter-hegemonic’ project through partly institutionalising its agenda, while filtering out precisely those demands which would imply a substantive restructuring of relationships *vis-à-vis* capital. The end result is, Gramsci notes, a ‘progressive restoration’ (Voza, 2004).

In the language of regulation theory, this amounts to an important (though, we have seen, not unambiguous) refashioning of the mode of regulation, and a corresponding consolidation of the dominant, resource-based accumulation strategy. Once again, it is worth stressing that there is nothing automatic in all this. I have emphasised throughout this thesis the centrality of multiple struggles and changing contingencies in determining the specific form and content of political (and governance) change. The overall trajectory, however, seen in hindsight through the lens of passive revolution, seems strikingly predictable. The potential strategic implications are important here. Doesn’t every political ‘upheaval’ that renounces substantially restructuring relations of production risk restoring or even reinforcing previous conditions of domination? This message may be seen as disempowering, perhaps—as ‘setting the bar too high’ for any movement with counter-hegemonic aspirations. But it is also a sobering one, which can hopefully help the next cycle of rebellion to ‘fail better’, or at least be more prepared to respond to a passive-revolutionary outcome.

Ideology and social struggle

My research has shed light on the relationship between the politics of discourse and the issue of resource regulation. In the Bolivian context, several scholars (and social actors) denounced the gap between the radical, indigenous-environmentalist ideology of the Morales administration and its problematic policy direction, especially as regards the aggressive expansion of resource extractivism (Laing, 2014; Zimmerer, 2015). They have not, however, analysed in much depth the relationship between such discursive strategies and their role in stabilising resource-based accumulation. At the most basic level, it can be argued that discursive mobilisation on the part of states or other actors contributes to regularising extraction through seeking to increase legitimacy and social acceptability around the socio-environmentally problematic outcomes of resource-based accumulation (cf. Bridge and McManus, 2000). Here again, however, it would be reductive to treat the state as the locus of the production of political discourse, isolated from the broader context of social and power relations. I have found it useful, therefore, to draw on the notion of ‘populism’, as elaborated by Ernesto Laclau (1977), in order to analyse discourse explicitly in relation to hegemonic strategies in changing conjunctures.

This was partly inspired by the work of Íñigo Errejón (2014), who draws on Laclau to explore the role of discourse in the construction of the counter-hegemonic articulation of popular-indigenous forces which brought Evo Morales and the MAS to power. Laclau’s (1977) argument, which I endorse here, is that a degree of populism is necessary to ‘counter-hegemony’ because, without appealing to ‘popular-democratic’ referents, an articulation of forces capable of transcending the particularistic demands of class-based or ‘eco-territorial’ struggles simply cannot take place. As the Bolivian case shows, building a successful counter-hegemonic articulation was only possible through the creation of a broad alliance of social forces, coalescing around key demands and constructing a common, ‘popular-indigenous’ identity pitted against a common ‘enemy’. Yet, what is troubling in all this is that the same set of popular-indigenous ‘signifiers’ was later equally mobilised, in distorted form, in an attempt to legitimise the repression of the indigenous movement (while at the same time reaffirm the popular-indigenous character of the

MAS)—something which apologists of the Morales government, including Errejón himself, fail to notice (Errejón and Guijarro, 2016).

This is the problem, noted by many on the left, of the degeneration of populist logics into ideological manipulation turned against ‘the people’. A key moment in this is the process of institutionalisation of change, because it is in this moment that collective identity is most likely to dissolve. Institutionalisation has fragmenting effects on the popular articulation. First, if a common set of demands is what makes different social sectors develop a sense of solidarity, then, in the moment of its institutionalisation, the sense of shared oppression from which the solidarity arose is likely to get lost (unless it is somehow renovated). Second, the uneven institutionalisation of demands creates imbalances among the social groups previously articulating in a common counter-hegemonic bloc (think of the tensions between indigenous and *campesino* organisations in Bolivia). Third, at the same time, what is shared is often not the demands themselves—which, to an extent, are necessarily particularistic—but overarching ‘signifiers’ which stand in the place of specific revendications. These can be appropriated by the new power bloc in ways that detach the signifier from the demands, and repress the latter. In this process, ideology turns into manipulation (Laclau, 2005a).

All this points to the association of populism with passive revolution and ‘post-politics’. In Bolivia, the demands and the collective identities emerging from popular-indigenous struggles were certainly transformative but, to a large extent, ultimately remained within the framework of capitalist relations and accepted the liberal state apparatus (while seeking to changing it ‘from within’). This made it inevitable for a degree of ‘degeneration’, not just of the political project, but also of the ideological strategies that sustained it. Does this mean, however—as Žižek (2006) and Swingedouw (2010a) have argued—that populism is necessarily associated with post-politics, and ultimately condemned to degenerate into a ‘proto-fascist’ form of ideological mystification? I have argued that this outcome is possible, and perhaps probable, but by no means necessary. As Laclau (2005b) argues, populism refers precisely to the ideological articulation that enables the creation of a hegemonic bloc capable of subverting the *status quo*. Whether the outcome of this is genuinely

transformative depends on the class projects underlying the articulation of demands and the overall power balance in each moment, not on its ‘populist’ element.

3. Limitations and future research

The overarching question that motivated this thesis—of why radical socio-environmental transformation is so difficult to achieve—is ultimately impossible to answer in a complete and conclusive way. In dialogue with existing research, I have sought to ‘attack’ this problem from multiple perspectives, considering and exploring a number of factors and their significance. This has been also, as Burawoy (1998) suggests, in constant dialogue with theory. I have started from a theoretical proposition—the regulationist hypothesis for explaining shifts in resource governance—and have sought to improve it by adjustments and additions, through drawing insights and concepts from allied bodies of theory. Because of the nature of this process and the openness of the research question, however, there are several aspects that I did or could not include in the research design or fully explore in the analysis. In the rest of this section, I reflect on some of these limitations and on related avenues for further research and conceptualisation.

After post-neoliberalism?

The Latin American conjuncture that attracted the attention of many political ecologists is that of the last decade and a half, characterised by the unique coincidence of a commodity export boom with a cycle of progressive political change. Yet, this cycle is now arguably coming to an end (Modonesi, 2015; Svampa, 2015a). First, from about 2013, the region has experienced a period of commodity ‘bust’, related to over-production and a slow-down of economies such as China that had led increase in demand. This has generated a contraction in revenues and, in many cases, of output. There is much uncertainty regarding how long the downswing in the prices of hydrocarbons and minerals, among other commodities, will last and with what consequences on resource-exporting countries such as Bolivia. Second, the political landscape in the region is changing, with a return of conservative forces in

Brazil and Argentina, and the looming threat of a conservative comeback in Venezuela and elsewhere. This is still not an immediate danger in Bolivia, but recent episodes such as the defeat of Morales at the 2015 referendum about the possibility of his re-election, as well as intensifying social mobilisations, may be signs of incipient crisis.

This new conjuncture will be an important test for understanding how profound and durable the progressive changes associated with ‘post-neoliberalism’ may be. The relative resilience of counter-neoliberal reforms or, on the contrary, the relative ease with which they will be reverted, may provide further bases for understanding the historical significance and legacy of the now exhausting leftist cycle (and, perhaps, the appropriateness of the term ‘post-neoliberal’ to characterise such a cycle). It will be important to continue paying attention to how the politics of natural resource extraction will evolve in this changing landscape. While, as I noted, there is a crisis in extractive sectors, ‘extractivism’ and the corresponding resource-based accumulation strategy remains unquestioned and is being deepened as a response to the crisis. There are already signs of a reduction of social and environmental protections to facilitate extraction, which I also observed in Bolivia, and of a partial reversal of the trend in terms of revenue distribution, now shifting again in the favour of extractive capital.

All this relates to the ways that the issue of resource governance has been, in many ways, depoliticised by progressive governments such as that of the MAS in Bolivia. If, as Hogenboom (2012) noted, the cycle of popular struggles at the turn of the century resulted in a widespread repoliticisation of the issue of natural resource extraction, we can say that current left-of-centre administrations in Latin America have again foreclosed political spaces. This is not to say, of course, that political tensions and conflicts around extraction have disappeared—quite the opposite. Yet, unlike in the 2000-2005 cycle of mobilisations in Bolivia, we see again a proliferation of localised, defensive and ‘economic-corporate’ struggles, which stop short of articulating into broader transformative movements. This de-politicisation is in part the result of the twin process of disarticulating indigenous-*campesino* organisations while at the same time allowing right-wing opposition to re-organise. In critically appraising the legacy of the left (Gudynas, 2015), it is important that further research

focuses on the way that these processes may be facilitating a conservative comeback, through empowering political opposition while alienating popular support.

Extraction and global capital

In explaining the limits to emancipatory socio-environmental transformation, I have focused primarily on the role of shifting power relations among social forces in reproducing certain ‘selectivities’ in the operations of state power, which ultimately filtered out those political projects whose realisation would have challenged the dominant, resource-based accumulation strategy. A key limitation in my work in this sense has been not having considered more directly the role of international actors and forces in reproducing limits to change. I have considered the role of transnational extractive capital and, to a less extent, the changing relative influence of US geopolitical reach in the region. But I have treated those factors as a background against which national politics played out. More empirical work would be needed to this end, in order to consider more closely the role of, say, Chinese capital or the Brazilian Development Bank, in shaping the agenda of the Bolivian government on matters from mining and hydrocarbon exploitation and industrialisation to hydropower generation, infrastructural integration and soybean exports.

A broader point to consider here regards theorisations of extraction itself as a global phenomenon. Too often the focus of political ecologists concerned with extraction conflict has been on local scales—on the point of extraction—or national decision-making. The notion of extractivism, for instance (see Gudynas, 2013)—despite its incredible popularity and its ability bring the issue of natural resource politics to public debates—is problematic in this sense, as it implies that extraction is something that governments more or less willingly chose to do, free from a broader web of drivers, constraints and pressures. I too have often referred, here, to the ‘extractivist’ policies of the Morales administration. At the most basic, descriptive level, this is both useful and unproblematic, as it is governments that in the end pass (or implement) legislation that make it all possible. But this approach simplifies the matter a great deal and, significantly, it is not consistent with the relational understanding of the state which I have adopted and defended throughout the thesis.

Extraction is the localised manifestation of the functioning of the global political economy and ecology of capitalism and we should make a greater effort to consider it as such. I am not saying that political ecologists have not considered the global character of extraction and its determinants (e.g., Bridge, 2008; Conde and Kallis, 2012). Ecological economists, for instance, have long insisted that the increase in extraction and related ‘local’ conflicts in recent decades is the result of the intensified social metabolism of the global economy, whereby growing demand for materials and energy, combined with a decline in the relative availability of resources, pushes commodity frontiers to expand (Martinez-Alier et al., 2010). At the same time, however, this gives us a rather mechanistic framework to work with, whereby demand-driven growth in metabolism in industrial centres automatically results in growing extraction and conflicts in resource-rich regions, without the mediation of political processes and struggles at multiple scales, crystallising in institutional orientations and policies.

I suggest, therefore, that the materiality of ‘social metabolism’, as understood by Martínez-Alier and others (2010), should be analysed alongside another materiality: that of capital, and of the uneven geographical development it contributes to shaping. To this end, researchers may need to recover, with the necessary adjustments, the global and dialectical outlook of ‘dependency theory’ and similar approaches (e.g., Amin, 1977). Recently, there have been attempts to move in this direction. A promising and welcome example is Martín Arboleda’s (2016) extension of Lefebvre’s framework of ‘planetary urbanisation’ for exploring the dialectical relationship between the recent commodity boom and the global expansion of the urban form. In a more tentative fashion, some of my colleagues and I have reflected on the implications for socio-environmental (including resource) struggles of the ongoing shift in the functioning of capital, from the primacy of value generation through commodity production to the increased visibility of what we call ‘value grabbing’ through rent extraction and appropriation (Andreucci et al., forthcoming).

A note of caution is important here: in considering the uneven and contradiction-ridden dynamics of global political economy (Harvey, 2014) as a driver of extraction, we should not fall back to a view of the state as a mere ‘transmission chain’ of the interests of global capital (cf. Robinson, 2013). Rather, consistent with a relational

approach, we should see the state and transnational capital in a relation of mutual co-determination. Conceptually, this entails giving greater consideration to what Poulantzas calls the ‘internalisation’ of global forces into the national power balance (2008, pp. 315–316). In other words, if the state is to be considered as a crystallisation of relationships of power among social forces, then the latter clearly (and increasingly) include transnational actors and relations which are also—selectively—condensed in state power.

Indigeneity and class

Much of the analysis in the thesis has been dedicated to unpacking the obstacles and challenges faced by indigenous-led mobilisations in seeking to advance in the construction of an alternative socio-natural configuration, specifically in the form of substantive pluri-nationality. I have explored the role of antagonistic social forces, the difficult and evolving relationship with the MAS and its political project, and the way the overall trajectory of the Morales government resulted in the foreclosure of possibilities for overcoming resource-based accumulation (therefore rendering pluri-nationality a *de facto* impossibility). However, I have not been equally critical of the pluri-national project itself and of the political agenda and strategies of the indigenous-*campesino* movements that put it forward. The focus on pluri-nationality, and the characterisation, in Chapter 1, of indigenous-*campesino* projects as ‘post-extractivist’, are, I think, justified. The pluri-national paradigm is the practical formulation of a project embodying the most advanced ambitions in terms of constructive alternatives to resource-based accumulation and, potentially, to capitalist nature-society relations more generally. But there remain important issues, which call both for (self-)critique and further analysis and conceptualisation.

First, the association of indigenous-*campesino* agendas with anti-capitalism is in many ways problematic. Indigenous-*campesino* movements in Latin America and Bolivia have historically overlapped with class struggle in important ways, and continue to do so (Webber, 2011b). However, in the present Bolivian conjuncture this is a troubled

relationship. This is clearest in the case of the *campesino* unions³²; yet, such a characterisation is problematic for the indigenous movement too. Indigenous organisations in Bolivia do not have a clear self-identification as a leftist force, but rather see their agenda as above any left-right divide. They focus on the reconstitution of ancestral land or, in more pragmatic versions, on the defence of territories as spaces of material and symbolic autonomy. This leads many observers to consider indigenous struggles as the cutting edge of ‘struggles against accumulation by dispossession’ (Harvey, 2003) or as the repository of ‘environmental rationalities’ alternative to that of capitalist modernity (Porto-Gonçalves and Leff, 2015). At the same time, a clear gap remains between indigenous and anti-capitalist agendas, not least because, however successful indigenous groups may be in constructing virtuous political ecologies locally, there still remains the problem of universalising these configurations beyond the limits of a bounded territory.

A second, related issue regards the political strategy underpinning indigenous struggles, such as the pluri-national proposal. Hesketh and Morton (2014, p. 162) recently pointed out the paradox of a transformative movement based on rights-based claim. For them,

the dialectic of passive revolution in Bolivia is also part of a political paradox shaping Latin America whereby insurrectionary strategies have pursued emancipatory claims with appeal to the politics of ‘difference’ and rights-based politics while demoting class politics. Consequently, a contradictory combination of two processes has emerged: the state apparatus responds to the fluorescence of demands for new rights, ensuring limited entitlements and circumscribing identities, while subaltern reactions pursue emancipatory politics through appeal to social and ethnic difference as a popular and wider form of resistance but at the risk of neutralising the dynamics of class conflict.

This type of contradictory dynamic is reminding of Charles Hale’s reflections on neoliberal multiculturalism as recognising cultural and ethnic rights while at the same time ‘domesticating’ indigenous movements and struggles, especially as regards political economic empowerment. Hale (2004) famously labelled this the politics of

³² The political vision of Bolivian *campesinos*, particularly after its ‘Indianist’ currents were marginalised in the early 2000s, is far from being anti-capitalist or ‘post-developmental’. Like other *campesino* movements in the region, they struggle for land redistribution and for improving their integration in and conditions towards the market (there is nothing wrong with this, of course).

the '*Indio permitido*' or 'authorised Indian'. Certainly, the last ten years in Bolivia represented a very important step forward in terms of the ability of social sectors of indigenous background (including rural and *campesino* groups, not just indigenous organisations) to enter political and economic spheres traditionally reserved to whites and *mestizos*. At the same time, however, the contradiction noted by Hale seems to have been reproduced, even though the boundaries of what is '*permitido*' have no doubt been extended.

It is interesting to note that Hale borrowed the phrase '*Indio permitido*' from Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui (see Hale, 2004, p. 17), a Bolivian sociologist and Aymara intellectual who has long researched and advocated for political Indianism (see, e.g., Rivera-Cusicanqui, 2010). Rivera is today one of the most vocal critic of the MAS government (Página Siete, 2014b), whose project she recently characterised as "capitalism with an indigenous face" (and that's about the nicest thing she said of Evo Morales in the last years). While, as it has been noted for neoliberal multiculturalism, concession of indigenous rights and spaces of relative autonomy can occasionally be exploited by movements in emancipatory ways (Anthias and Radcliffe, 2015; Postero, 2006), the danger remains that they will continue to have important divisive and exclusionary effects on indigenous struggles. This aspect deserves further attention. Particularly, while some scholars have reflected (as I have in this thesis) on how the most ambitious aspects of the pluri-national paradigm were domesticated, perhaps we should ask the more fundamental question of whether the paradigm itself had the (unintended) effect of self-disciplining indigenous struggles from the very beginning, so as to render them compatible with the institutional architecture of the liberal state.

Beyond 'policy' and 'activism'

A last avenue for further research and conceptualisation concerns the role of political ecologists *vis-à-vis* those engaged in struggles for a more social and environmentally just world. As I have argued in the Introduction (and implicitly tried to show throughout this thesis), documenting conflicts and injustices is not enough. Denouncing the direct and indirect, physical and epistemic violence entailed by capitalist expansion and restructuring is, of course, of great importance, in part

because it shows that seemingly innocent ‘development’ policies are in fact highly politicised and hotly contested processes generating a great deal of dispossession and conflict. However, if, as political ecologists, we want to take seriously our own ambition and pretension to be normatively and politically committed, we must also be able to turn the findings of our research into knowledge that contributes to informing emancipatory transformation. In recent years, there have been calls in political ecology to move ‘beyond critique’ and towards inspiring socio-environmental change (e.g., Braun, 2015). In practical terms, however, this is easier said than done.

One way in which political ecologists can effect change is to engage with the sphere of policy (McCusker, 2015). Yet, there are at least two major problems with this. First, the type of research that political ecologists do is often not suitable to be turned into targeted solutions to practical problems (see Robbins, 2015). This is a strength of our discipline rather than a limitation. As I have shown in the case of critical approaches to ‘environmental governance’, for instance, the advantage of a political ecology perspective lies precisely in questioning the apparently neutral political status of ‘governance’ as a problem-definition and solving exercise (Bridge and Perreault, 2009). Second, policy makers may not be the most desirable audience for the message we want to send. I share with others on the left a suspicion against ‘policy recommendations’ as a quintessentially post-political device (Graeber, 2004, p. 9). The language of policy recommendations inevitably forces one to reduce the political implications of one’s research into some ‘techno-managerial fix’, sometimes absurdly inadequate to the import of the problem at hand. A genuinely political attitude, on the contrary, may very well entail the disappearance of the *status quo* of which the realm of ‘policy’ is the discursively sanitized expression³³.

A related debate regards the relationship between political ecology and ‘activism’. This issue regularly crops up in academic meetings, at times turning into an anxiety-ridden soul-searching exercise as to how researchers should relate to, be useful for, or engage in activism. The problem is that, while most political ecologists want to

³³ Erik Swyngedouw (2010b, p. 201) nicely captures this attitude with a joke: “An IRA man in a balaclava is at the gates of heaven when St Peter comes to him and says, ‘I’m afraid I can’t let you in’. ‘Who wants to get in?’ the IRA man retorts. ‘You’ve got 20 min to get the fuck out!’”.

contribute to progressive socio-environmental change, they are clearly *not* (at least not primarily) activists (Loftus, 2015)³⁴. I share here with Paulo Freire (2000, p. 65) a suspicion of the word ‘activism’, as a form of action for the sake of action, “action without reflection” (cf. Žizek, 2008). Rather, Freire (2000) argues, we should talk about *praxis*, understood in Gramscian sense as the reciprocal relationship of reflection and action, as ‘practical-critical activity’. As Loftus (2015, p. 180) recently noted, although political ecologists are not activists, their research can and should be attendant to activist practices and the knowledge emerging out of them:

political ecology, when practised well, involves a search for a theory which is adequate to an existing practice, as well as an adequate practical form for the theories with which we work. Instead of having to choose between interpreting the world and changing it (or having to choose between activism and arm-chair theorising), political ecology can be framed as an effort to heighten the capacity to know and act within [a] politicised environment.

This results in a form of knowledge that reflects on the conditions of possibility for change, grounded in an understanding of practice and the material circumstances within which it is embedded.

Such an attitude, I suggest, may be combined in future research with a way of doing praxis-based research which Jessop (2012) calls ‘*conjunctural analysis*’. Informed by the Marxist tradition, conjunctural analysis means to study a concrete situation from the point of view of the existing balance of power among social forces and with attention to the strategic possibilities that it opens or forecloses for transformative movements. It pays attention to existing structures and ‘path-dependencies’, but it is also open to ‘path-shaping’, to the possibility that social forces can re-articulate the present configuration. A conjunctural analysis explores “the uneven, differential strategic implications of this ‘con-junction’ or coming together of multiple processes, actions, and events” for the strategic possibilities of different social forces (Jessop, 2012, no page number). In this way, one could understand, for instance, how a period of crisis may (or not) present opportunities for popular forces to move from defensive struggle to counter-offensive mobilisation. This is not the task of a single researcher,

³⁴ Many of us have first-hand experience of this tension. I have often found myself at meetings where the shared outrage for a pressing global problem was followed by a Monty Python-esque ‘call for immediate discussion’ (“we should publish a special issue about it!”).

of course, or of any sort of intellectual or political vanguard, but a type of knowledge co-produced through reflection on and participation in concrete action, and which therefore blurs the boundaries between armchair theorisation and unreflexive ‘activism’.

4. General conclusions

In this thesis, by drawing on a regulationist approach to resource governance and expanding it to include insights from neo-Gramscian state theory, I have sought to explain why progressive political change in Bolivia did not result in emancipatory socio-environmental transformation *vis-à-vis* natural resource extraction, as demanded by the popular-indigenous mobilisations that brought Evo Morales and the MAS to power. I have found that the consolidation and expansion of resource-based accumulation during the Morales years was related to two set of changes in the governance of extraction. The first is a refashioning of political economic arrangements around resource exploitation, resulting in an increase in the portion of rents accrued by the state but with a concomitant increase in the share of production and exports controlled by private and transnational actors. The second is an improvement of the legal and institutional framework for managing the socio-environmental impacts of extraction, including, most notably, recognition of indigenous rights. In this case too, however, practical results were contradictory, and it is safe to argue that improvements on the ground in specific cases were overall outweighed by the increased socio-environmental pressures of expanding extraction.

Changes in the governance of extraction, and their uneven and contradictory outcomes, were related to important shifts (and counter-shifts) in power relations among social forces *vis-à-vis* natural resource exploitation. First, initial government plans entailed (though not unambiguously) a reasserting of the relative position of power of the state; yet, private and transitional firms were challenged in only limited ways, and over time consolidated their position of domination in the hydrocarbon and mineral production chains. Second, concomitantly, the relationship between the MAS government and the national conservative bloc went from open (and at times highly conflictive) antagonism to reconciliation. Winning over the consent of right-

wing opposition entailed, however, giving it some important concessions, and generally reassuring the country's entrepreneurial and landholding elites that the MAS's project would not threaten their interests. Third, the social sectors, particularly indigenous organisations, which continued to demand full implementation of measures for territorial sovereignty and co-government over natural resources, were targeted as the main threat to the functioning and expansion of resource-based accumulation. All this contributed to the demobilisation and repression of the indigenous movement, accompanied by official discursive strategies seeking to 'other' indigenous opposition.

The concrete exploration of the Bolivian case has served as an entry point for contributing to debates regarding 'post-neoliberalism' and post-neoliberal resource governance. Although the notions of 'neo-extractivism' or 'reconstituted neoliberalism' capture important aspects of contemporary Latin American processes, they are too crude in considering the restructuring associated with left governments as a set of intentional interventions, explicitly aimed at legitimising extractivism and resource-based accumulation. Rather, the form that 'actually existing' post-neoliberalism takes, and its contradictory outcomes, were co-produced through social and political struggle that mediate, shape or challenge political agendas and policy prescriptions. This, I have argued, has relevance for understanding how changes in resource governance are produced, beyond assumptions that such changes reflect a trajectory of neoliberalisation. Governance, and the 'mode of regulation' closely associated with it, change in ways akin to the state, understood in a relational sense as the 'condensation' of social power relations. This is not a way of narrowing down the regulationist framework so as to make it applicable to the exceptional case of post-neoliberal politics; rather, it enables us to analyse resource governance, and the institutional realignments associated with, in relation to a broader array of historically and geographically configurations and contexts.

This relates to the key question that has motivated my research, regarding the structural limitations and strategic challenges encountered by movements seeking to transform socio-environmental relations in emancipatory ways. In the Bolivian case, explanations offered by critical scholars have emphasised, to a different degree, either 'structural' limitations to change—including the 'path dependencies' of

neoliberalism—or political ‘agency’, particularly the unwillingness or inability of the MAS government to more directly confront capitalist political power. Through mobilising the notion of ‘strategic selectivities’, I have contributed to this debate by showing that structure and agency are dialectically interrelated. I have argued, for instance, that the dependency of the Bolivian state on revenues from extraction increased under Morales, due, paradoxically, to the empowerment of traditionally excluded social sectors, now holding greater expectations around the ability of the government to redistribute resource rents. I have argued, furthermore, that the dialectics of progress and restoration which characterised the present configuration corresponded to a trajectory of ‘passive revolution’, whereby initial challenges to dominant political economic relations were followed by a partial restoration and consolidation of previously existing arrangements. This—and the shifts in power relations which underpinned it—resulted in the necessity to co-opt, marginalise or repress popular sectors which, unable to benefit from the new political economic arrangements, posed an increasingly visible economic and ideological threat to the power bloc.

Finally, although I have stopped short of attempting to turn these insights into a coherent theoretical framework, I hope to have shown that combining a regulationist approach to governance with a neo-Gramscian understanding of the state, politics and ideology is of much relevance for political ecology. First, it enables us to see that the state not only contributes to ‘making’ nature for the reproduction of capital, but it is itself fully intermeshed with, and mutually co-constituted by, socio-environmental relations and struggles. Second, the state, in its ‘integral’ sense, is therefore a key terrain for socio-environmental struggle, open to being changed in profound and potentially transformative ways. Greater consideration to the way the state power crystallises power relations among social forces, and to how this relates to the existence of (always mobile) selectivities, can inform analyses aimed at unpacking opportunities and challenges for emancipatory socio-environmental transformation in specific conjunctures. This can help political ecologists to inform social and environmental movements, in ways that transcend both post-political ‘policy recommendations’ and problematic pretensions to academic ‘activism’.

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