RESEARCH ARTICLE

Counter-Hegemonic Narratives and the Politics of Plurality: Problematising Global Environmental Governance from Latin America through the Case of Bolivia

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This article seeks to problematise current frameworks of global environmental governance by examining how the neoliberal model continues to rely on the state to suppress plurinational justice. Firstly, it discusses the creation of counter-hegemonic discourses through the emergence of new centres of epistemic production. Secondly, it analyses the ways in which these narratives interact, or fail to interact, with state policies on a local, national and international level through the case study of Evo Morales' Bolivia. The article argues that one of main challenges confronting environmental governance will be to reformulate sovereignty as an epistemic and relational – as well as political and territorial – set of relationships.

A central question in the evolving theories and practices of global governance is how to articulate sovereignty. The expanding networks of actors involved in decision-making processes affecting communities across and beyond the political and legal boundaries of the nation-state require increased international cooperation (Bhagwati 2004). Understandings of the present and future of global governance are increasingly fluid, so much so that some argue that a definition of global governance comes down to developing new tools to adapt to swiftly changing power relations (Held and Hale 2011). The interactions and alliances between private and public governance is at the core of current practices. Informed by the free market principle, the logic of global capitalism apparent in carbon offset programmes like REDD++ has led to an era of 'free market environmentalism' (Lohmann 2010). Similarly, while most Latin American countries recognise indigenous peoples' territorial rights, notably through the adoption of international mechanisms such as the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) and the International Labour Organisation Convention No. 169 (ILO 169), in practice these are often made null by state contracts with private investors for land use and resource extraction.

Global environmental governance is broadly defined as 'the process of formulating and contesting images and designs, and implementing procedures and practices that shape the access, control and use of natural resources among different actors' (de Castro et al. 2016: 6). However, as this paper will demonstrate, the role of the state needs to be reassessed in light of a wider and deeper formulation of sovereignty and of what this might mean for the future of global governance. While 'global governance is arguably inevitable for the survival of the human race in present and future generations' (Jang et al. 2016: 3), the proliferation of potentially conflicting international and intranational actors vis-à-vis the system of sovereign states raises the issue of a reproduction of globalised capitalism in which the nation-state insures the juridical space for transactional activities on a global scale. Purdy considers the dominant form of global environmental politics to be a dystopic scenario that he calls 'the *neoliberal Anthropocene*', which 'simply envisions ever-intensified management of the globe, carried forward by market means, beginning from our vast present inequality' (2015: 48). Latin American environmental governance practices, which over the last decade have been set within the global North-South framework, offer rich insights into the contradictions, as well as the possibilities, that are emerging in several countries in the region from the heterogeneous character of multiple intrastate claims to sovereignty challenging the current state-business alliance model of global governance.

Firstly, this paper seeks to reappraise notions of global South from the longer-term perspective of universalising

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narratives by offering a critical discussion of Latin American critiques of hegemonic discourses since the late twentieth century. The first section shows how Latin American cultural critics appropriated the notion of 'hegemony' in the 1980s in order to articulate their countries' hybrid and heterogenous forms of socialisation, which the homogenising model of the liberal nation-state was insufficient to account for. Furthermore, it explains how the notions of hybridity and heterogeneity were used in the 1980s and 1990s to deconstruct monolithic narratives of modernity that did not fit Latin American socio-cultural realities. At the turn of the century, this critical apparatus converged into an intellectual movement that has produced original alternative categories for approaching global developmentalist theories. In this respect, the paper will address the extent to which the current patterns of global governance can be considered as a reproduction of the classic centre-periphery framework (Wallerstein 1974). The second section analyses the emergence in the twenty-first century of an environmental turn in the Latin American decolonial movement through the formulation of notions of relationality and pluriversality, which disrupt the theoretical foundations of national sovereignty.

Over the last ten years or so, some Latin American countries have applied the principle of plurality in their constitutional systems by including both human and natural subjects (Lalander 2016). In the final section, the case study of Evo Morales' decolonial project in Bolivia since 2007 will be analysed in order to show the conflicting stances that are at play in the relation between private, state and intrastate actors within the current pattern of global sovereignty, whereby the homogenising discourse of the nation-state continues to be instrumental to international private capital (Alvik 2011; Wallerstein 2004). This analysis will be primarily based on media reports and official reports between 2006 and 2018. Overall, the article problematises current frameworks of global environmental governance by bringing to light some of the ways in which the neoliberal model continues to rely on the state to suppress plurinational justice and argues that, as Latin American decolonial movements show, a future challenge will be to reformulate sovereignty as an epistemic and relational – as well as political and territorial – set of relationships.

Deconstructing Hegemonic Narratives in Latin America

Following the end of the Cold War in the 1990s, the world order was no longer divided along the lines of First, Second and Third World but was instead split between the "global South" and the "global North". Although geographically ubiquitous, the term combines the North-South polarisation with an increasingly integrated market economy. According to some critics, the global South should be considered from the perspective of continued western imperialism. The implicit suggestion that this new geopolitical assemblage intersects the traditional boundaries of earlier world-system divisions by creating a criss-cross of networks on a global scale, may mask the historic dichotomic set of relations of western and non-western,

center and periphery, and developed and underdeveloped (or developing) worlds, for which the colonisation of the Americas was essential (Quijano and Wallerstein 1992). For Levander and Mignolo, the global South incorporates not only the tensions between First World and Third World, but also between east and west (2011: 4). At the same time, for the people living in the global South, the latter also denotes places where 'decolonial emancipations are taking place and where new horizons of life are emerging' (ibid. 5).

In the case of Latin America, the North-South polarity can be said to preserve and reiterate, in terms that are historically and ethnically more neutral, the nineteenth-century divergence between the Anglo-Saxon and Latin blocks. This preceded the notion of the west, designating a civilisational disparity that created symbolic convergences between Latin America and Europe – especially with France and Southern Europe –, while offering an anti-US platform (Coletta 2018; Mignolo 2008). The idea of 'Latin' America served the purpose for international powers to create a Latin block that could counterbalance the Anglo-Saxon compound (Degiovanni 2008). Over the last four decades, much of Latin American historiography on the nineteenth and twentieth centuries has revealed the persistent role of cultural and civilisational constructs to understand the continuity of colonial structures. The notion of 'informal empire' describes Latin America's relations with European powers – especially France, Spain and Great Britain in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and with the USA during the rest of the twentieth century –, through new forms of imperialism that did not involve territorial annexation and direct political control. This kind of informal interventionism is primarily exercised in the broad sphere of 'culture' (Brown 2008; Salvatore 2006).

Symbolic supranational constructs have been instrumental in allowing national elites to push through the liberal political and economic agenda. The imaginary afforded by the universalist principle of modernity was crucial to the creole elites of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to gain access to the cosmopolitan transnational community of the so-called civilised world (Coletta 2018). Escobar argues that 'Latin America has been haunted by the ghost of modernity for centuries' (2014: 61). Considered as a hegemonic narrative, modernity can be said to have helped to frame the region's submission to the nineteenth-century principle of progress first, and to the twentieth-century model of development later, in spite of the fact that the Latin American socio-political reality has been far removed from these modernising and democratising ideals. In fact, '[Latin America's] historical-structural dependence [on] the Global Coloniality of Power [...] [was not] eradicated or altered sufficiently to give place to a democratic production and management of the state' (Quijano 2012: 17). The 1970s theory of dependency was based on the premise that 'underdevelopment is not a phase that precedes development, but rather its consequence', critiquing the fact that 'conventional development economics did not adequately take into account historical situations or power relations' (Lang and Mokrani

2013: 17). The blanket principle of a global agency allows the global elites to produce profitable alliances between state and capital. It has been argued that the critical value that the idea of a 'global South' initially had for scholars and social analysts has virtually been lost in its institutionalised usage (Schwarz 2015).

The hegemonic value of modernity, of which globalism can be considered its most recent version, is given by a strong correlation between the cultural, the political and the economic spheres. The creation of a material and symbolic world system, which Wallerstein (1974) characterised as one based on a centre-periphery logic, is mirrored by the process of internalising identities emanating from a central locus of knowledge, which cultural scholars of Latin America have defined as 'peripheral modernity' (Sarlo 1988). This sense of deficiency in fulfilling the modernist ideal has produced a rich historiography on the failures of the Latin American nation as a cultural and political project. Most Latin American critics who have engaged with post-colonial forms of imperialism by delving into the specific traits of Latin American modernity have critiqued the notion of culture as instrumental to the expansion of Euro-modernity. In this context, it is little surprise that Gramsci's (1891–1937) notion of 'hegemony', understood as the consolidation of socio-economic relations of power through the symbolic sphere, became popular in Latin America before anywhere else (Modonesi 2013: 261). The emphasis that Gramsci placed on the extent to which power relations were exercised through cultural normativity was productive for Latin American intellectuals to account for the co-existence of, and mutual contamination between, modern and non-modern structures.

In the 1980s, Latin American cultural studies scholars used the Gramscian notion of cultural hegemony in their analysis of hegemonic-subaltern relations. García Canclini argued that the category of hegemony was much more appropriate than that of domination in describing the 'political and ideological direction' of those in power through 'alliances with the other classes' (1984: 73–74). Everyday life practices such as consumption were seen as a space of interaction through symbolic and material exchange, as well as of protest and subversion. New forms of consumption and communication meant that the relationship between different social groups was fluid in a way that was unprecedented. The notion of hegemony was useful due to its diffuseness, in that it made room for forms of cross-fertilisation between the hegemonic and the subaltern. These were essential to explain not only the coexistence in Latin America of capitalist and pre-capitalist forms of social, political and economic interaction, but also the insurgence of new interconnected forms of protest through 'multiple irruptions' (García Canclini 1984: 75) that do not fit in with the homogenising top-down logic of the nation-state.

Developing this framework into the theory of 'hybridity', García Canclini (1990) claimed that because of the multiplicity of the continent's histories and traditions, Latin America epitomises the impure character of the modern nation-state, and the fundamental inconsistency and failure of liberal democracies. The principle of democratic representation that the liberal Latin American nations adopted when they established their constitutions is reflected, for Canclini, in the same processes through which national institutions modernise culture by incorporating tradition into an abstract sphere which is insufficient to account for the multiplicity, plurality and complexity of social realities. Hence the crisis of modernity – and of the modern nation-state as the sole entity with a legitimate claim to sovereignty. This crisis of democratic nations corresponds to the crisis of the modern project as a whole in so far as they are both based on the principles of individual freedom and abstract rationality.

Modernity's attempt to level out conflictivity within the boundaries of the nation was further challenged in the mid 1990s by Cornejo Polar (2013), for whom several conflicts were at play between western and non-western elements of postcolonial nations where the western canon is disrupted from within. The category of hybridity did not fully challenge instances of syncretism: new articulations are necessary 'to explain sociocultural situations and discourses in which the dynamics of the multiple intercrossings *do not* operate in a syncretic way, but instead emphasise conflicts and alterities' (Cornejo Polar 2004: 117). The notion of tradition as functional to a hegemonic modernity was replaced by Cornejo Polar by the notion of the heterogenous. One example of this 'heterogeneity' is the culture of orality, which interferes and throws into confusion the monolithic construct of the modern subject. Both the disruption of the homogenising principle of the nation-state and a notion of the subject not just as plural but also as relational, make these interpretative frameworks relevant and illuminating in the context of more recent Latin American decolonial critiques.

Rearticulating the Global as Plural in Latin American Decoloniality

Latin American critical thinking in recent decades has increasingly been focused on the ways in which the paradigm of modernity has 'othered' nature. The schism between 'culture' and 'nature' is reflected in the schizophrenic distinction between what Purdy calls 'the Bankers' nature' and 'the Backpackers' Nature' (2015: 239). Is the dichotomic structure of the human-world distinction still possible in the Anthropogenic era? Can, for example, future advancements in human technology, such as geo-engineering, be enough to prepare the planet for the tremendous challenge represented by growing and richer human societies? It is widely recognised that the Anthropogenic epoch – whether it is considered to be a result of capitalist modes of production and consumption or as having started with the beginnings of agriculture 5,000 years ago – requires unprecedented efforts. Since at least the mid twentieth century, Latin Americans have engaged with the performative value of the universalising model of modernity by questioning the relevance of a single centre of knowledge for their countries' social, ethnic and cultural realities. Gramsci's notion of cultural narratives as instrumental for controlling power relations continues to be greatly relevant to Latin American decolonial critics, who are shifting the monolithic rhetoric

of multi-cultural global modernity towards a politics of plurality ingrained in unique processes of knowledge (Grimson and Bidaseca 2013).

The hegemonic model of globalism reiterates pre-existing institutional alliances between the private and the public sectors; however, it can also open up new networks, as it is the case with the global South agenda. According to Mignolo, the global South can 'struggle between logics of coloniality and domination, on the one hand, and independent thought and alternative freedoms, on the other' (2011: 7). Scholars such as de Sousa Santos talk about 'epistemologies of the South' and the creation of South-to-South networks that do not subscribe to the 'divisions carried out by the global lines' (De Sousa Santos 2014). In Latin America over the last two decades, a cognitive and epistemic shift has advocated to move away from modernist paradigms and to adopt epistemological and ontological narratives in which rearticulating the natural environment's role is paramount (Coletta and Raftopoulos 2016). The question of the historical as well as the theoretical legacy of modernist categories across disciplines has led to the notion of 'decoloniality' (Dussel 2000; Quijano 2000) and the search for new ways of understanding and approaching the region's post-colonial status.

Latin American scholars such as Quijano have conceived of decoloniality as an epistemic and political project whereby epistemological decolonisation needs to be undertaken in order to break away from the linkages between modernity/rationality and coloniality. The colonial matrix of power, expressed through the four interrelated domains of control of the economy, knowledge and subjectivity, authority and racism, and gender and sexuality, enabled Europe to impose its colonial dominance around the world. The imposition of this global hegemonic model, which involved a historical reidentification through the allocation of new geo-cultural identities, continues to be present in postcolonial societies today. It is marked by the ongoing pronunciation of western epistemology through the control of subjectivity and objectification (Quijano 2000; Escobar 2008). The politics of difference and sameness remains profoundly sculptured by the myths of universality and cultural superiority that were established during the colonial period and still dominate Latin America to date through the subordination of non-Eurocentric cultures and knowledges to modernist thought (Escobar 2008).

This pattern of domination and suppression is clearly visible in the rationalistic subject/object dichotomy that lies at the heart of modernity, which has 'in the last centuries determined the division between nature and society, a colonial distinction between modern and non-modern indigenous peoples, the myth of progress as a unidirectional linear path, and a strong confidence in Cartesian science' (Gudynas 2011: 447). The Cartesian distinction between a thinking subject and the object of the subject's thought which was reproduced in the European mind's objectification of the new world's nature, presents 'a deep ideological impediment to the genuine recognition of all "others"' (Grear 2015: 85). The idea of the 'other', which 'denies the idea of the social totality' (Quijano 2007: 173),

was critically missing from this dichotomy. This made it possible 'to omit every reference to any other "subject" outside the European context', including the question of nature (ibid.). However, the systematic repression of the 'other', often through violence, has been accompanied by the continual production of diverse knowledges by subaltern groups, 'generated in the ceaseless process of living at the epistemic borders of the modern colonial world system' (Escobar 2008: 12). Subaltern knowledges shaped by the experience of coloniality and emerging through social movements and indigenous organisations, have the potential to become spaces for the articulations of alternative projects and facilitate the pluriversality of socionatural formations (ibid.).

The denial of otherness is vital to understanding the pivotal role nature has historically played, and continues to play, in the global model of capitalism. Mignolo (2011: 10) suggests that 'nature' could easily be considered the fifth domain of the colonial matrix, instead of being considered as part of the economic domain. As Escobar argues, 'it is the nature of coloniality to enact a coloniality of nature' (2008: 120). The Euro-modernist perspective of nature based on the Cartesian epistemological and ontological model, which sees it as separate from society, are increasingly being questioned under the category of decoloniality, while silenced histories, repressed subjectivities, subalternised knowledges and languages are being re-appropriated. For Mignolo (2007), decoloniality essentially means to delink from the colonial matrix of power and logic of coloniality by engaging in other epistemologies and alternative principles of knowledge and understanding other than modernity. The concept of 'nature' has become incorporated into the struggle for control of the colonial matrix of power, while the delinking process has given rise to pluriversal concepts such as *pachamama* or Mother Earth, which do not distinguish between nature and culture and pose a challenge to Cartesian thought. Accepting pluriversal socio-natural formations like *pachamama* implies an acceptance that the human world is intrinsically connected to the non-human world.

In trying to rid culture of the assumption that it consists of a 'symbolic structure that continues to support the belief in the existence of […] a world constituted by a single world that' (Escobar 2014: 17), Escobar defines it as 'radical difference' (2014: 17). While the former version implies the structures of modernity and, within it, the 'invisibility of the Afro-indigenous and of sustainability', the latter reveals hidden multiple ontological premises such as '"civilisation", "cosmovision", "epistemic difference" and "communal logic"' (ibid.). This project of questioning and redefinition of the symbolic in ontological terms results, on the one hand, in the political project of '*problematising "national" identities*' and, on the other hand, in the existential project of '*problematising life*' in the face of the current ecological crisis (ibid., 19). This clearly demands a redefinition of sovereignty through a 'political ontology of territory' (ibid.). Breaking with the single-world project means affirming a multiplicity of world ontologies and interfering with the 'neo-liberal globalising project of building a Single World' through the dominant discourse

of modernity with its 'dualist ontology' (ibid., 76). In this sense, the global North and global South discourse risks reiterating the modernist dualism between 'us' and 'them', between developed and underdeveloped, in a way that is potentially even more pervasive given its lack of geographical constraints and its ubiquitousness.

Escobar, on the other hand, envisages a new existential project of living well with dignity, which parallels a new political project based on territorial organisation and governance according to a relational ontology: 'territory is both material and symbolic, biophysical and epistemic, but above anything else it is a process of socio-cultural apprehension of the nature and the ecosystems that each societal group implements from its own "cosmovision" or "ontology"' (2014: 91). Such ontology does not fit the modernist epistemic frame which has been defined by anthropocentrism (Querejazu 2016). Furthermore, pluriverality as an ontology calls into question the essentialist or constructivist divide around which nature epistemologies are usually organised (Escobar 2008). While the decoloniality of knowledge opens up new possibilities for different epistemic and political conceptions of nature, there are, as Mignolo notes, many 'issues that emerge from the analytic of the coloniality of nature (that is, its control and management) and in decolonial thinking and doing on environmental issues' (2011: 10). Furthermore, it is questionable how ecological challenges, such as climate change and natural resource management, can be addressed when, according to western thought, they can only be framed within the Cartesian epistemological and ontological model which is grounded in the idea that nature is an unlimited resource, devoid of any rights (de Sousa Santos 2014). As Escobar points out, nature epistemologies are key to how the current environmental crisis is viewed and addressed (2008: 120).

This politics of knowledge is what, according to Blaser, 'trouble[s] the troubled waters of a modernist ontology' as it is the case in the Andean countries of Peru, Ecuador and Bolivia 'through the political activation of earth-beings such as *pachamama*' (2012: 51). Blaser uses the notion of heterogeneity in defining the unsettling of the categorisation of culture by ontology's 'hetegorenous assemblages' of culture-natures, which defy the modernist notion of 'cultural difference' by assuming a multiplicity of worlds rather than multiple views on a single world (2012: 50–52). Similarly, for Walsh, post-modern forms such as multi-culturalism are nothing more than a tool for the nation-state's dominant groups to maintain and extend their power through the state's institutional practices (Walsh 2009). The 'monocultural' model of the nation-state should be replaced, according to Walsh, by a 'plurinational' state on the basis of which an 'intercultural' state can be constructed, whereby the interests and cultures of non-dominant groups have political agency (2009: 68–69). In Latin America, Bolivia has been the first country to recognise itself as a plurinational state: one of the elements on which this new national constitution is based is that of a plurality of nations 'which seeks the articulation of the different nations' administrations of justice in equal terms within the state' (Walsh 2009: 73). The architecture

of the new constitution of the Plurinational State of Bolivia, adopted in 2009, is based on three major axes: plurinationality, autonomy and the new productive economic model (García Linera 2015). As Lalander explains, the plurinational character of Bolivia is related to 'decolonialisation and the historical-symbolic recognition of legal pluralism, indigenous autonomies in parallel to the traditional politico-territorial division of the state, as well as a broader reconfiguration of the political society based on indigenous participation' (2017: 47). Furthermore, '[it] is precisely that of the plurality of nations, which promotes the rights of different indigenous nations to articulate political demands and administer justice within the Bolivian nation' (ibid.). It seems apparent that the issue of sovereignty is at stake both in the notion of ontology and in the project of plurinationality in a global governance context in which national and inter-national interests prevail through state-capital alliances.

Contesting the Global environmental Agenda? The Case of Bolivia

In Bolivia, environmental governance has become closely entwined with debates related to natural resource extraction, nationalism, indigenous identity and sustainability. During his inaugural speech, Morales reaffirmed his pledge to take back control of Bolivia's vast natural resources, nationalising oil and gas under Supreme Decree No. 28701 that same year. Critical to the processes of change and the 'cultural democratic revolution' proposed by Morales was the concept of decoloniality whereby state action would be orientated towards breaking free from the 'Colonial matrix of power' (Quijano 2000; Mignolo 2007), allowing Bolivia to 'move beyond radicalised systems of servitude and structural inequalities to a new and more equitable society' (Postero 2017: 12). Morales' election brought with it widespread optimism that finally a Bolivian government would transcend modernist development paradigms and break imperialist dependency by offering radical alternatives to socio-economic development discourses and reconceptualising socio-natures beyond existing political and economic paradigms.

Environmental policy during the early years of Morales' first administration was shaped around two Andean indigenous concepts: *buen vivir* and *pachamama*. Following the adoption of its new constitution, Bolivia redefined itself as a plurinational and communtarian state in a post-colonial context and incorporated *buen vivir* [live well] principles into its national development plans an attempt to strengthen plural cultural identities (Gudynas 2011). Furthermore, it incorporated far-reaching indigenous political, cultural and developmental rights, including the right to free, prior and informed consultation but not consent (Powęska 2017). Critically, this has allowed the state to maintain its sovereignty over its natural resources and has paradoxically contributed to the subordination of ethnically defined rights in favour of class-based human rights, considered more urgent than conserving the environment and protecting indigenous communities by the state (Lalander 2017), thus endangering the possibility of an intercultural state.

The inclusion of strong environmental and intercultural components into the rhetoric of *buen vivir* runs contrary to modernist development ideas and marks a significant move away from traditional anthropocentric perspectives towards a more eco-holistic conception of life and society built upon the notion of 'the communal' (Mignolo 2009: 2). A form of social organisation that existed prior to the European colonialisation of Latin America (ibid.), social movements in Bolivia mobilised around the discourse of 'the communal' during the Water Wars of 2000 and later in the Gas Wars of 2003 (Fabricant 2013). The concept of *buen vivir* represents an alternative model of environmental governance based on indigenous cosmologies. It calls into question the Cartesian distinction between subjectivity and objectivity in that it advocates harmonious living between the human and non-human, the rights of nature with regard to existence, maintenance and regeneration of its life cycles, and important equilibriums such as quality of life. It also importantly focuses on biocentric concerns oriented towards protecting non-human organisms and nature. Unlike anthropocentrism, which 'promotes the preservation of the environment as a means to an end rather than an end in itself', biocentrism regards the environment's well-being as a 'moral imperative independently of its impact on human flourishing' (Rottman 2014: 1). However, while the notion of the 'ecologically noble native' has been frequently used by both the MAS government and oppositional indigenous groups, indigenous people are not a homogenous group unified in their stance on extractivism. Although the environment may be a concern of indigenous peoples, identity-based concerns has at times outweighed ecological concerns within the extractive development dilemma (Lalander 2017).

The adoption of the Law of Mother Earth in 2010, later upgraded by the National Legislative Assembly as the Framework Law of Mother Earth and Integral Development to Live Well, legally incorporated the principles of *buen vivir* into the Bolivian Constitution (Lalander 2017). The law set a global precedent by recognising the rights of all living things and giving the natural world equal status to human beings. The construction of an alternative environmentalism to western dominant environmental discourses has played an important role in MAS's decolonial political project and has become a key aspect of Bolivian foreign policy within the arena of global environmental politics. This is hardly surprising given Bolivia's increasing concerns over the impact of climate change as well as the engagement of local social movements and indigenous groups such as the Bolivian Platform for Climate Change (*La Plataforma Boliviana Frente al Cambio Climático*), which have influenced Morales' radical position in international climate change negotiations (Fabricant 2013). On an international level, Morales has actively sought to politicise environmental issues through the global climate change politics by employing a 'radical green' discourse, which identifies the capitalist system as the main structural cause of climate change and promotes indigenous sustainable practices and traditions to frame its alternative environmental principles (Stevenson 2014). As Stevenson notes, Bolivia, as well as other member-states

of the ALBA, 'have taken advantage of the authority and privileges bestowed by the norm of sovereignty to participate directly in multilateral consultations and negotiations. Yet, they have simultaneously attempted to defy the limitations of sovereignty by invoking a constituency that transcends their own national jurisdictions' (2014: 179). Claiming to represent a 'culture of life' rather than the Euro-modernist 'culture of death', Morales' stance in the global climate change debate has been based not only on an ethical vision but also on climate justice.

During the 2009 United Nations Climate Change Conference, Morales, blaming the capitalist global model for climate change, argued that rich countries should pay climate change reparations to poorer countries who were suffering from the effects of climate change. He even proposed the creation of an international climate court of justice through which countries could be prosecuted for crimes against the environment (Vidal 2009). Following his provocative speech, Morales successfully campaigned to have the United Nations declare the 22 April as International Mother Earth Day and to make access to water a universal human right, which was recognised by the United Nations General Assembly Resolution 64/292 in July in 2010. That same year, Bolivia hosted the World People's Conference on Climate Change and the Rights of Mother Earth in Cochabamba, which resulted in the signing of People's Agreement and the incorporation of *buen vivir* into international discourse. In October 2015, ahead of the Paris climate change talks (COP 21), Bolivia submitted its national climate action plan to the United Nations and offered 'ten structural solutions to the climate crisis'. These include: the protection of the Rights of Mother Earth; eradicating the commodification of nature and carbon markets; decolonising natural resources and environmental colonial-biased views; and adopting alternative models to capitalism.

In September 2017, Morales used the General Assembly's annual general debate at the United Nations to call for political will and solidarity to confront the vast challenges facing the planet. Top of the agenda was climate change and water. Emphasising that water is the life blood of Mother Earth and a universal common asset, Morales argued that water must be respected, shared and kept for future generations regardless of any distinction of political borders or nationalities. Drawing attention to Bolivia's constitution, Morales promoted the recognition of water as a human right and noted that Bolivia prohibited the exploitation of water for profit or trade (United Nations 2017). The Bolivian president used the VIII Business Summit of the Americas in Peru in April 2018 as an opportunity to petition for a change in the region's position within the productive chain from a mere supplier of raw materials. Morales argued that America, because of its geographical diversity, has great potential to develop 'a healthy and clean production of food for the whole world; enough potential and raw materials to produce goods with high added value and capacity to produce without polluting' (Resumenlatinoamericano 2018). However, Morales' bold rhetoric on the international stage has fallen short on the national level despite the incorporation of the notion of

living in harmony with nature into the constitution and granting nature inalienable rights, and the government's position has gradually shifted back to a developmental rhetoric.

Tensions between Bolivia's decolonial project and the current extractive model of development have become increasingly evident and have brought to the forefront critical concerns over the environment and indigenous rights as economic growth has been prioritised over alternative environmentalism and sustainability. Following Bolivia's rejection of REDD+ in 2010, which Morales argued further commodified nature and allowed the North to evade their climatic and environmental debt by transferring responsibility to poor countries, Bolivia announced its own alternative to REDD+ at COP17. Bolivia's proposal, 'The Joint Mitigation and Adaptation Mechanism for Holistic and Sustainable Forest Management' (*Mecanismo Conjunto de Mitigación y Adaptacion para el Manejo Integral y Sostenible de los Bosques de la Madre Tierra; MCMA),* was built on the 2010 World People's Conference on Climate Change and Rights of Mother Earth. Yet, despite Morales' speech that forests were not for sale, the pursuit and intensification of extractivism in Bolivia has left little doubt over his commitment to economic growth. In a decisive policy shift, the government passed a law on hydrocarbons (Supreme Decree 2366) in June 2015, which led to the opening up of 22 protected ecological reserves to hydrocarbon exploration.

At the centre of this controversial hydrocarbon law is Morales' project to build a 300-kilometre highway through the Isiboro-Sécure Indigenous Territory and National Park (*Territorio Indígena y Parque Nacional Isiboro Secure*, TIPNIS). Part of the Initiative for the Integration of Regional Infrastructure in South America (IIRSA), an initiative by South American governments to construct a new infrastructure network – roads, waterways, ports, energy and communications interconnections – for the continent, the highway will link the cities of Cochabamba and Trinidad and also integrate the country's Amazonian and Andean regions. Opponents have argued that the road will contribute to deforestation and ecological destruction, open up the park to extractivism and threaten local indigenous communities. The TIPNIS case 'aptly exemplifies the contradictions between the transformative ideas of *vivir bien* and the newly arisen state enthusiasm on resource extraction' (Ranta 2016: 434). Part of IIRSA project and Morales' plan to convert Bolivia into South America's leading energy powerhouse, the MAS government is pushing ahead with the controversial bi-national Chepete/Bala hydroelectric dam projects along the Beni River, which flows through one of the most biodiverse regions of the world and includes the Pilón Largas and Madidi National Parks. Having been declared a national priority, the Chepete/Bala project has become the centrepiece of an ambitious hydroelectric programme aimed at diversifying Bolivia's economy.

The lifting of the ban on unconventional gas exploration, known colloquially as fracking, in Bolivia has further cemented Morales' fidelity to natural resource exploitation. In a meeting held in April 2018 on '*Inversiones Gas y Petróleo Tarija'* at the Los Parrales Hotel in the city of Tarija, Morales and his Minister of Hydrocarbons, Luis Alberto Sánchez, presided over the signing of an agreement between Cantabria Energy Company and Yacimientos Petrolíferos Fiscales Bolivianos (YPFB). The agreement gave the green light to explore unconventional gas in the regions of Chaco, Santa Cruz, Chuquisaca and Tarija where the company Cancambria Energy calculates that there are resources for more than 100 trillion cubic feet. Bolivia's state oil and gas company YPFB, which first announced in early 2013 that it would begin studies to identify shale gas deposits, detailed that between 2018 and 2022 $3.500 million would be allocated for hydrocarbon activities by the oil companies. Laying bare unconventional gas exploration and exploitation plans for in the country, the meeting revealed that Shell had allocated $1.87 billion to the drilling of the Jaguar X-6 well located in the Huacareta block while Repsol would be investing $490 million, bringing the total investments for the department of Tarija to $2.477 million in the coming years. Furthermore, drilling is scheduled to begin in May in 2019 and production in 2022. The announcement has reignited concerns over the environmental impact of the government's plans to expand its energy sector and the contradictions between the Law for the Rights of Mother Earth and Bolivia's current development agenda. Morales himself sought to answer this question during the meeting by arguing that 'of course, it is our obligation to take care of the environment, to Mother Earth and now with technology there are so many ways of taking care of the environment' (Mamani 2018).

Conclusion

An analysis of the limitations of the post-developmentalist discourse in Bolivia has demonstrated that new frameworks are necessary to rearticulate sovereignty for the future of global governance. By looking at the divergence between the international discourse and the intrastate practice during the Morales administration, it has been shown that there is a failure in accounting for other types of sovereignty other than the nation-state principles of territorial boundaries and interstate recognition. Morales' current narrative, which brings together a new promise of development and social justice for the Bolivian nation, reiterates one of the staple principles of the neo-liberal Anthropocene: the reliance on technological advancement. However, 'as human powers increase, each individual puts more pressure on the natural world. Technology, then, brings efficiency, but it brings neither restraint nor purpose' (Purdy 2015: 260). On the other hand, technology also holds a high symbolic capital in modernist paradigms; Allenby and Sarewitz (2011) describe the current socio-ecological scenario as a system in which the level of complexity caused by the consequences of human technology is too high to be analysed and predicted with any accuracy. Since renewable energy continues to raise issues of land use and land rights, a reliance on technology is not enough. For Mignolo, 'the current modern/colonial and mononational state [cannot] offer a solution for a pluri-national state' as long as

'Indigenous and peasant leaders and communities [are not allowed] to intervene in de-colonising the current mono-cultural state' (Mignolo 2009).

The Latin American critiques of hegemonic modernity, starting from the notions of hybridity and heterogeneity and resulting more recently in the ideas of plurality and relationality, can be instrumental in this urgent reappraisal of the modern political subject. According to Hardt, it is necessary to construct 'a subject already plural, and a subject defined not by property, not even by immaterial properties. [...] [T]he many can not only cohere, but also act together – [...] you don't need to speak from a single voice, don't need to take dictation from some central authority, in order to act coherently politically' (Fitch 2018). A pluralistic idea of the nation seems to be implied in these observations; indeed, falling back onto the model of national sovereignty in Bolivia has proved to continue to be instrumental to a kind of global governance that benefits the national elites on which international capital relies. As it has been argued, '[d]evelopment projects have tended to de-structure and damage indigenous organisations' (Dinerstein 2015: 152). The current neoliberal framework of global governance, however, potentially facilitates transnational alliances between grassroots and indigenous groups and organisations. Executive Director of the Indigenous Environmental Network, Tom Goldtooth, delineates the interconnectedness that international offset programmes create among indigenous communities across the global South and the global North: '[programmes such as REDD] [permit] the refineries to [...] put a cap, and [...] all the offsets that are being done are being done down in the Amazon' (Democracy Now 2017). Transnational alliances among groups and networks across the global South and the global North, such as the Climate Justice Alliance, are emerging to represent the rights of intrastate communities whose claims to plural sovereignty are absorbed into national sovereignty. An analysis of the current failures of Latin American decolonial politics has shown that claims to sovereignty are not only articulated in legal and territorial terms but also relational and epistemic terms.

Competing Interests

The authors have no competing interests to declare.

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