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Author post-print (accepted) deposited by Coventry University's Repository

Original citation & hyperlink:

Tilzey, M 2019, 'Authoritarian populism and neo-extractivism in Bolivia and Ecuador: the unresolved agrarian question and the prospects for food sovereignty as counter-hegemony', *Journal of Peasant Studies*, vol. 46, no. 3, pp. 626-652.

<https://dx.doi.org/10.1080/03066150.2019.1584191>

DOI 10.1080/03066150.2019.1584191

ISSN 0306-6150

ESSN 1743-9361

Publisher: Taylor and Francis

This is an Accepted Manuscript of an article published by Taylor & Francis in Journal of Peasant Studies on 25/03/2019, available

online: <http://www.tandfonline.com/10.1080/03066150.2019.1584191>

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Authoritarian Populism and the Rural World Forum

Minor Revisions to **Authoritarian Populism and Neo-Extractivism in Bolivia and Ecuador: The Unresolved Agrarian Question and the Prospects for Food Sovereignty as Counter-Hegemony**¹

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Abstract

The new economic flows ushered in across the South by the rise of China in particular have permitted some to circumvent the imperial debt trap, notably the 'pink tide' states of Latin America. These states, exploiting this window of opportunity, have sought to revisit developmentalism by means of 'neo-extractivism'. The populist, but now increasingly authoritarian, regimes in Bolivia and Ecuador are exemplars of this trend and have swept to power on the back of anti-neoliberal sentiment. These populist regimes in Bolivia and Ecuador articulate a sub-hegemonic discourse of national developmentalism, whilst forging alliances with counter-hegemonic groups, united by a rhetoric of anti-imperialism, indigenous revival, and livelihood principles such as *buen vivir*. But this rhetorical 'master frame' hides the class divisions and real motivations underlying populism: that of favouring neo-extractivism, principally via sub-imperial capital, to fund the 'compensatory state', supporting small scale commercial farmers through reformism whilst largely neglecting the counter-hegemonic aims, and reproductive crisis, of the middle/lower peasantry, and lowland indigenous groups, and their calls for food sovereignty as *radical* social relational change. These tensions are reflected in the marked shift from populism to authoritarian populism, as neo-extractivism accelerates to fund 'neo-developmentalism' whilst simultaneously eroding the livelihoods of subaltern groups, generating intensified political unrest. This paper analyses this transition to authoritarian populism particularly from the perspective of the unresolved agrarian question and the demand by subaltern groups for a radical, or counter-hegemonic, approach to food sovereignty. It speculates whether neo-extractivism's intensifying political and ecological contradictions can foment a resurgence of counter-hegemonic mobilization towards this end.

¹ Acknowledgements: This paper is based in part on research undertaken by the author in June, July and August 2015 in Bolivia and Ecuador on the basis of semi-structured interviews conducted with a spectrum of stakeholders connected with agrarian dynamics and food sovereignty in the two states. Interviews were conducted with government departments and agencies, politicians/political parties, peasant/indigenous/farmer/landowner organizations, civil society organizations, and NGOs, whose help and support is gratefully acknowledged. It is also based on a wide-ranging and critical review of the literature related to the above and to the agrarian question, capitalism and state theory more generally, and on the author's prior analytical work in agrarian politics in the global South and North. The research was made possible by CAWR's (Coventry University) Innovation Fund and this support is gratefully acknowledged. An earlier version of this paper was presented as Conference Paper No. 34 at the Emancipatory Rural Politics Initiative 2018 Conference, ISS, The Hague, Netherlands. The paper has benefitted greatly from the helpful comments of two anonymous referees.

Introduction: Neo-Extractivism, Authoritarian Populism, and the unresolved agrarian question – BRICS and the Latin American ‘Pink Tide’

China’s, and to a lesser degree Brazil’s, emergence as key sites of capital accumulation has opened up a space for other states in the global South to re-assert more nationally-based capitalist development or, at least, for national (what we here term ‘sub-hegemonic’) fractions of capital to selectively displace global Northern dominance, embodied in hegemonic transnational neoliberalism. This has coincided with widespread disenchantment with neoliberalism in the global South, and in Latin America particularly. The boom in primary commodity prices stimulated particularly by China’s growth has enabled sub-hegemonic fractions of national capital to ally with non-capitalist (what we here term ‘counter-hegemonic’) class forces to install a wave of centre-left, and characteristically populist, regimes in Latin America particularly (known as the ‘pink tide’) (Spronk and Webber 2015). Although this ‘tide’ is now on the ebb elsewhere in Latin America², Bolivia and Ecuador have been, and remain, exemplars of such populist regimes, both states pursuing neo-developmental policies on the basis of neo-extractivism stimulated and enabled largely by Chinese capital accumulation. Both states have also exhibited, however, a marked shift over the last few years from populism to authoritarian populism. This being so, one of the principal concerns of this paper is to ask how a populist project transmutes into one of authoritarian populism.

While the rise of the BRICS sub-imperium affords the wider enabling global context for this populist conjuncture, its direct political basis lies in the widespread resistance in Latin America, particularly from the 1990s, to the socially polarizing consequences of neoliberalism and to the progressive loss of national sovereignty (including sovereignty over food) that accompanied the deepening of ‘extroverted’ dependent development (Veltmeyer and Petras 2000). Bolivia and Ecuador are representative of states where popular forces, comprising peasants, semi-proletarians, proletarians and landless, indigenous groups, and more endogenously oriented class fractions of the bourgeoisies, have succeeded, with varying degrees of success, in resisting and displacing the dominance of the ‘disarticulated alliance’ of the national landed oligarchy and trans-nationalized capital (Spronk and Webber 2015). What both states have in common is a new commitment to greater state guidance and interventionism in the economy, a greater formal or substantive commitment to national food sovereignty, and the introduction of social programmes to alleviate the severe income disparities characteristic of the neoliberal era. Funds for the latter, however, are predicated on the proceeds of the ‘new’ extractivism, not only of mineral and fossil-fuel resources, but also of agri-fuels, offered by the emergence of sub-imperial states, notably China in the case of Ecuador, and Brazil in the case of Bolivia (Veltmeyer and Petras 2014)

² The recent presidential election in Mexico suggests an exception to this trend.

(with China increasingly influential in Brazilian agri-food dynamics, however, particularly in respect of soya production, although still a minor player by comparison to investments from the global Northern imperium [Oliveira 2018]).

The 'post-neoliberal' era in Bolivia began in 2005 with the election, as the country's new president, of Evo Morales, the leader of the coca growers' union. His party, MAS (*Movimiento al Socialismo*), was closely linked to, indeed was an outgrowth of, the emergent indigenous, anti-colonial, and populist social movements that had coalesced in opposition to the neoliberal reforms of the 1990s, and had culminated in the anti-neoliberal uprising of October 2003 leading to the flight from the country of President Sánchez de Lozada (Hylton and Thomson 2007). This broad coalition of peasant, indigenous, and worker organizations formed the *Pacto de Unidad* (Unity Pact) which was essential in Morales' rise to power and became integrated, to varying degrees, within the new regime (Fabricant 2012; Webber 2015; McKay et al. 2014). Unlike the AP (*Alianza País*) in Ecuador, therefore, MAS was not created as a vehicle simply to move a president into power. Rather, MAS defined itself as a political instrument of its constituent social movements, relying heavily on mobilizational politics (Riofrancos 2017). Presciently, however, neither Morales nor his Vice-President Garcia Linera saw their assumption of power as entailing a fundamental alteration of capitalist social-property relations. Rather, 'it was expected to modify the rules of neoliberal capitalism in favour of a state that would work to improve the welfare of *all* its citizens, especially the poor rural and urban indigenous majority, through redistributive policies and social programmes' (Hylton and Thomson 2007, 133). This, then, was to be a regime that pursued a sub-hegemonic, national-popular – or populist – programme of reformism (see below), placating its counter-hegemonic constituency through welfarism and anti-imperial rhetoric, and soothing the landed oligarchy through accelerated agri-food extractivism and effective exemption from the terms of the agrarian reform.

In the case of Ecuador, the period leading up to Rafael Correa's 2006 election as the country's president saw its social movements presenting a powerful challenge to the prevailing neoliberal paradigm. Correa's anti-neoliberal, and anti-imperialist campaign, much like that of Morales in Bolivia, drew centrally on this social unrest, and its eventual success depended on the support of the country's social movements (Becker 2008). Prior to 2006, the *Mesa Agraria* (a coalition of four peasant/indigenous organizations) had signed an agreement with Correa in which he gave a commitment, upon election, to initiate an 'agrarian revolution' based on the demand of the peasant movement for food sovereignty, a demand centred on the democratization of land and water access, and upon state resources for the revival and stimulation of the 'peasant' economy (Giunta 2014; Henderson 2017). The most important force behind the 2005 coup against the then incumbent neoliberal regime, however, was a group known as the *forajidos*, middle-class sectors of Quito (Clark 2017), and these subsequently became an important political force behind Correa's 2006 presidential bid. Unlike Morales, therefore, Correa (replaced as president by Lenín Moreno

in 2017) lacked deep roots in civil society and social movements, and sought actively to demobilize peasant and indigenous activism once in power (de la Torre 2013). Accordingly, Ecuador's AP represents a much more technocratic, Keynesian project than is the case with Bolivia's MAS (Le Quang 2016). Presciently, however, like Morales it was never Correa's intention to challenge capitalist social-property relations. Again, this was to be a national-popular reformist regime. Its populism pivoted on the nationally-focused bourgeoisies' and petty bourgeois class fractions' easy co-optation of the 'progressive' (mainly upper peasant) tendency within the food sovereignty movement through support for small farm productivity enhancements, the neutralization of the more 'radical' tendency through social welfare payments funded through extractivism, and the placation of the landed oligarchy through its exemption from the 'agrarian revolution' (Herrera Revelo 2017).

Thus, while there are indeed differences of detail between Bolivia and Ecuador, the structural similarities between these two national-popular regimes are compelling. Since the assumption of power by, respectively, MAS and AP, both Bolivia and Ecuador have been pursuing neo-developmental policies predicated on neo-extractivism (Veltmeyer and Petras 2014). This neo-developmentalism, as neo-extractivism, is contradictory both 'politically' and 'ecologically', however. Politically, it comprises a populist *reformism* that attempts to address selected symptoms of capitalist contradiction, notably poverty and inequality, through redistributive policies, whilst failing to address their structural causes, based as these are on highly unequal access to the means of production. Populist reformism may be understood by means of the Gramscian concept of *passive revolution*, entailing reform from above, led by nationally-oriented fractions of capital, but, crucially, in alliance with proletarians, peasants and indigenous people (Robinson 2017; Webber 2017b). Ecologically, these regimes are contradictory since they pursue unsustainable policies of both energy and mineral extraction, and of productivist, export agriculture, not only for purposes of capital accumulation, but also, crucially, in order to fund redistributive social programmes and infrastructure development (McKay 2017; Tilzey 2018a). In both Bolivia and Ecuador, largely due to continuing opposition from an entrenched landed oligarchy and their governments' increasing collusion with transnational capital in the search for export earnings, relatively little progress, consequently, has been made with respect to addressing the structural bases of poverty and inequality – that is, the agrarian question of land redistribution in favour of the semi-proletariat and landless, and the confirmation of land rights with respect to indigenous groups (Giunta 2014; Spronk and Webber 2015). In this way, a percentage of revenues from primary resource extraction, via ground rent, has been diverted to social programmes to placate the semi-proletariat and urban proletariat, leading to an uneasy compromise, embodied in these populist regimes as 'compensatory states' (Gudynas 2012), between (counter-hegemonic) subaltern classes, the nationally-focused (sub-hegemonic) bourgeoisie, and the continuing (hegemonic) power of the landed oligarchy, often in alliance with transnational capital. The key to the coherence of these populist regimes lies, materially, in the distribution of wealth (via state welfarism) beyond

their core political constituencies (the upper peasantry, small farmers, nationally oriented bourgeoisie) to the semi-proletariat and proletariat, even as the means of production of these latter continues to attenuate before the pressures of capital accumulation (Carrión and Herrera 2012). It lies, discursively, on the basis of the deployment of legitimating measures such as the construction of a ‘national consensus or alliance for progress’ and an attendant demonization of all those resisting or opposing such ‘progress’, often vilified as ‘imperialist stooges’ (Webber 2017b).

Over the last decade, the coherence of such populism has come under increasing strain as these neo-extractivist regimes have failed to meet the key objectives of their erstwhile constituencies of support amongst indigenous groups and semi-proletarian/landless peasantry, particularly (Veltmeyer 2014; Webber 2015). Tensions focus around access and rights to the means of production, and the neo-developmental preoccupation with economic growth and welfarism as a means of *bypassing* the need to address the *structural* causes of land poverty and insecurity of land tenure. Food/land sovereignty is thus a highly contested discourse, deriving initially from re-assertions of national sovereignty as a counter-narrative to neoliberalism, but now often appropriated by neo-developmentalism to mean national food provisioning by productivist means. This discursive tension is expressed in the constitutionalization of food sovereignty in Bolivia and Ecuador (Tilzey 2018a). The appropriation of food sovereignty discourse by these neo-extractivist regimes is increasingly contested by peasant/indigenous movements seeking a ‘post/alternative developmental’ (Vergara-Camus 2014) model of cooperative social relations founded on the principle of *buen vivir*³ (Giunta 2014; Tilzey 2016). The irony here is that the populist governments of Bolivia and Ecuador have invoked *buen vivir* to legitimate further capital accumulation by means of a national-popular programme of ‘embedding’ extractivism through the ‘compensatory state’. As the dependency of welfare on extractivism becomes ever more entrenched, however, and the latter ever more corrosive of the original alternative developmental aims of counter-hegemonic movements, so have the populist regimes of Bolivia and Ecuador become more authoritarian, deploying a variety of ‘legal’ and extra-legal mechanisms to close down opposition to mineral and agri-food extractivism (Carrión 2016; Svampa 2015, 2017).

This paper proposes to further explore and to explain these dynamics, encapsulated in the question: How is it that a populist project becomes an authoritarian populist one? Despite the considerable significance of this issue, particularly when related, as we suggest here, to the contradictory dynamics of the state-capital nexus, it has been an infrequently acknowledged one in recent debates about populism. Given this significance but relative neglect, this paper attempts to undertake four principal tasks:

³ *Buen vivir* and *vivir bien* are used as synonyms, although the former is used preferentially in Ecuador and the latter in Bolivia.

- To articulate a coherent theoretical framework to explain populism and the shift to authoritarian populism;
- To analyze the transition, in both states, from populism to authoritarian populism;
- In so doing, to throw light on the contradictions of the peripheral state-capital nexus which, we argue, underlie and propel this transition, paying particular attention to the agrarian question;
- To ask whether alternative and sustainable ‘modes of production’ are available, how these might arise from the contradictions of authoritarian populism and neo-extractivism, and which social forces might bring them about.

In order to fulfil these aims, the paper proposes, in the following section, to delineate what we might mean by populism and authoritarian populism, and to articulate a set of theoretical tools to enable us to do this. This section will suggest that populism and authoritarian populism have their causal bases in the contradictions of capital accumulation and class struggle in the state-capital nexus, and, specifically, in the peripheral state-capital nexus. The paper will then apply these theoretical propositions to the case studies of Bolivia and Ecuador. The section following will distil out the dynamics of authoritarian populism and neo-extractivism on the basis of the case studies, arguing that their contradictory character pivots around the unresolved agrarian question. This agrarian question asks whether a transition to industrial capitalism ‘with equity’ is possible ‘politically’ and ‘ecologically’, or whether the peripheral state-capital nexus is necessarily incapable of securing ‘growth with jobs’. If the latter, then the agrarian question cannot be resolved in favour of capitalism, and the swelling ranks of the semi-proletariat are likely to demand an alternative, and non-capitalist, form of ‘development’. Finally, the paper explores which classes and political strategies might foment social-relational change towards a non-capitalist alternative, paying particular attention to the experience of the MST in Bolivia.

Developing a conceptual framework: Gramsci, Poulantzas, *transformismo*, and reformism

In order to explain the dynamics of populism and the shift to authoritarian populism, this paper develops new theorization which integrates Political Marxism (Brenner 1985, Wood 1995), neo-Gramscian International Political Economy (Cox 1993, Bieler and Morton 2004), Regulation Theory (Boyer and Saillard 2002, Jessop and Sum 2013), and Poulantzian state theory (Poulantzas 1978)⁴. The paper also has affinities with the important work on

⁴ This approach stands in contrast to ‘populism’ in agrarian political theory, represented by McMichael (2013) and van der Ploeg (2008), with its elision of class amongst the ‘peasantry’, its radical under-theorization of the state, and its assumptions regarding the full trans-nationalization and unity of capital. It does concur with agrarian ‘populism’, however, in its concern for the ecological dimension and its advocacy of agroecology and food sovereignty, the latter on its ‘radical’ definition (Tilzey 2018a). It stands also in contrast to ‘orthodox’ Marxism, represented for example by Bernstein (2010), with its class reductionism, its instrumentalist view of the state, its reification of developmentalism, and its failure to comprehend the profound importance of the ecological dimension.

imperialism and sub-imperialism of Ruy Mauro Marini (see Marini 1972, 1973)⁵. In this paper, then, 'class struggle', capital, and the state remain central and dialectically related analytical categories. These 'political' dynamics of 'structured agency' (Potter and Tilzey 2005) are conjoined to the 'ecological' dynamics of biophysical resource 'sources' and 'sinks' (and related and discounted 'costs' and loss of livelihood which are located increasingly in the global South) through political ecology (Tilzey 2018a). These analytical tools also enable the key parameters of the agrarian question, the peasantry, and food security/food sovereignty within capitalism to be defined as approximately state-level trends within the global centre-periphery structure. Here the state, despite differential power and capacity between core and periphery and the global disciplining force of capitalism/imperialism, is seen to remain the key medium for the regulation and institutionalization of social-property relations and, hence, for the understanding of social relational change (Tilzey 2018a, 2018b).

Poulantzas (1978) is particularly useful, since for him the state is itself a social relation, comprising the condensation of the balance of class forces in society. Here, the state provides the institutional space for various fractions of the capitalist class, in addition possibly to other classes, to come together and form longer-term strategies and alliances, while simultaneously, the state disorganizes non-capitalist classes through various means of co-optation and division. This theoretical approach enables us to capture the key dynamic of populism as the means, particularly, of re-establishing legitimacy of the state-capital nexus, following its de-legitimation during the neoliberal period, by means of reformism as neo-developmentalism. As populism encounters the contradictions of its neo-extractivist foundations in the periphery – growing opposition from marginalized constituencies, and increased difficulty of funding welfare policies with the commodity price slump – so does populism become increasingly authoritarian.

De la Torre (2013) describes 'populism' as an approach to politics which depicts it as a struggle between the 'people' and some malign elite or set of elites. Here, the 'people' is imagined as a homogeneous body sharing interests and an identity which are embodied in a leader whose mission is to save the nation. Populism includes previously excluded groups, while fostering majoritarian understandings of democracy which do not always respect the rights of the opposition or the institutional fabric of democracy. For de la Torre, it is the progressive erosion of the latter that leads to an authoritarian regime. While all this is true, we suggest that the loss or abuse of 'liberal rights' (de la Torre's focus), although important, is but a reflection of the deepening of the contradictions between capital accumulation, the

⁵ In his treatment of imperialism, Marini saw peripheral super-exploitation of labour, and export-oriented capitalism as necessary to sustain industrial capitalism and high consumption in the centre. In his treatment of sub-imperialism, he saw dependent economies like Brazil seek to compensate for the drain of wealth to the imperium by developing their own exploitative (sub-imperial) relationships with even more peripheral neighbouring economies, such as Bolivia.

legitimation of capitalism through 'welfarism', and the continuing process of primitive accumulation through the expropriation of lowland indigenous peoples and the progressive proletarianization of the lower peasantry. The contradictions of the latter are exacerbated by capital accumulation as extractivism, since this fails to afford any 'compensation' for loss of land in the form of employment (see McKay 2017). The only alternative for many under the resulting conditions of precarity is reliance upon 'welfare', which, as a political 'safety valve', serves only to deepen the populist regimes' commitment to further extractivism, welfare's source of funds.

Populism may be said to represent a distinctive structural episode in capitalism's dynamic spiral (typically conditional upon the introduction of a significant level of representative democracy) that is marked by a deterioration in the conditions of accumulation and, *particularly*, of legitimation for a liberal/neoliberal/trans-nationalizing regime of accumulation⁶. Thus, populism and its close counterpart, nationalism, emerged in response to the crises of globalizing liberalism in the late 19th century (culminating in the First World War) and in the late 1920s and 1930s (culminating in the Second World War), and now in response to the contradictions of neoliberalism (Brass 2000, 2014; Tilzey 2018a). Since populism elides the causal basis of capitalist contradiction (both 'political' and 'ecological'), the transition to authoritarianism is immanent in its configuration from the outset, particularly in peripheral states, where contradictions cannot, in contrast to the core states, be easily externalized by means of 'spatio-temporal fixes' (Tilzey 2016).

Populism represents the attempt by certain classes/class fractions to exploit a crisis of accumulation, and particularly of legitimacy, to expand its own interests politically, and hence economically, by means of enlarged accumulation opportunities for its core constituency. It does this by forming an historic bloc (Gramsci 1971) or alliance of interests beyond its core constituency in order to 'capture' the state in the first instance, and subsequently to stabilize it by re-establishing its legitimacy, through reformist measures, amongst the classes adversely affected by the prior crisis that gave rise to populism. Typically, populism invokes nationalism in opposition to 'internationalism' and externally oriented capital (that is, neoliberal and trans-nationalized fractions of capital), and elevates national/ethnic/racial identity above that of class (Brass 2000, 2014). For populism, then, it is not capitalism per se that is the problem, but rather 'foreign', 'big', 'corporate', or transnational capital. It is not difficult to see, then, how populism overlaps with national, 'progressive', or indeed 'populist' understandings of food sovereignty, wherein the emphasis is above all upon the 'small', the 'local', and an essentialized 'peasant way' that

⁶ Offe and Lenhardt (1976) articulated the twin structural problems of capitalism as: a) the driving imperative to uphold the process of accumulation, and b) the demands of social actors which need, to a certain degree, to be fulfilled in order to maintain legitimacy. This insight was later translated into Regulation Theory's dual concepts of 'regime of accumulation' and 'mode of regulation'.

elides class differentiation in its opposition to the 'corporate' food regime (McMichael 2013).

Because it is neoliberal and trans-nationalized fractions of capital, hegemonic within the peripheral capitalist state, which have forfeited legitimacy through their failure to spread the 'benefits' of capital accumulation beyond a tiny minority, and actually to exacerbate the poverty and precarity of the majority, it is the more nationally-oriented and petty bourgeois (sub-hegemonic) fractions (for example, the upper peasantry) which see the opportunity, in alliance with subaltern (potentially counter-hegemonic) groups, to displace the ruling oligarchy in order to secure political power and accumulation opportunities for themselves in the name of 'national development'. Initially, this bloc may be at loggerheads with the oligarchy, but soon realizes that a line of least resistance may be to make use of revenue generating opportunities afforded by externally-oriented capital via the expansion of ground rent appropriated by the state and redistributed as welfare/benefit schemes to its counter-hegemonic constituency. This 'left' populism may thus become progressively more centrist as dependency upon extractive capital increases, while the oligarchy, in turn, softens its own stance as it sees the benefits of the taming of radicalism, continued accumulation opportunities, and de facto exemption from land reform measures. This process is best described by Gramsci's (1971) concept of *trasformismo*.

As the promised 'agrarian revolution' fails to materialize in a form beneficial to subaltern classes, however, and extractivism simultaneously erodes or destroys the livelihoods of these same groups and provides few compensating jobs (and the populist 'glue' of welfarism remains precariously dependent on high primary commodity prices), so does counter-hegemonic unrest grow, and the populist compact begins to fray. This tension is expressed in the progressive shift to authoritarian populism.

It is the legitimation dimension of reformism that is inextricably associated with populism, entailing a significant expansion in the numbers of those benefitting from capital accumulation either through welfarism or through Keynesian-style infrastructure projects. Here *trasformismo* (Gramsci 1971) is a key concept and dynamic (see Webber 2017a, b). *Trasformismo* is a process that works to co-opt potential leaders of subaltern social groups. By extension, *trasformismo* can serve as a strategy to assimilate and domesticate potentially dangerous ideas by adjusting them to the policies of the dominant coalition and can, thereby, obstruct the formation of class-based organized opposition to established political power (Cox 1993). In this way, 'early phase' subaltern mobilization capabilities, that is the mobilizations against neoliberalism during the 1990s and the first decade of the new millennium in the cases of Bolivia and Ecuador, are progressively repressed, circumscribed, or co-opted, while the political capacity of certain dominant class fractions is gradually restored, as has occurred in the last decade. Passive revolutions, as *trasformismo*, entail the implantation of a mode of domination predicated on conservative reformism (sustaining

capitalism) disguised in the language of earlier (counter-hegemonic) subaltern mobilizations, thereby securing a passive consensus of the dominated classes. Rather than a restoration of the *status quo ante*, passive revolution entails a 'molecular' transformation (Gramsci 1971) in the balance of class forces, progressively eviscerating, by co-optation, the capacities of counter-hegemonic forces for self-organization, fomenting passivity and demobilization through reformism, and controlling such subaltern mobilization as still occurs (Webber 2017b). Passive revolutions, in the case of Bolivia and Ecuador, thus involve neither total restoration of the old order as desired by the hegemonic landed oligarchy (in this case, peripheral neoliberalism or 'disarticulated' accumulation), nor radical revolution as proposed by counter-hegemonic forces. Rather, they involve a dialectic of revolution/restoration, transformation/preservation, in which a sub-hegemonic, populist bloc placates the oligarchy, on the one hand, while co-opting the popular masses on the other. In Bolivia and Ecuador this has been secured by the Correa/Morales regimes restoring the *legitimacy* of capitalism by a reformist/'left' populist process of distributing some of the proceeds of extractive accumulation to those otherwise most disadvantaged by that very same process of accumulation.

Thus, reform may be defined as a state intervention, as passive revolution, that is stimulated by a developmental crisis, in this case peripheral neoliberalism, and is: first, evidently short of revolution (in which case the dominant mode of production, capitalism, would be overthrown, as would also the capitalist state); and, second, is not dependent on sheer repression. Reformism, attempts, therefore, in parlance of Regulation Theory, to construct a 'flanking' mode of regulation to 'embed' a somewhat modified regime of accumulation but, crucially, without subverting capitalist social-property relations themselves. In this, then, reformism has much in common with Keynesian (in essence populist) 'solutions' to capitalist crises (see Tilzey 2017 for discussion).

There are two types of reforms that are of fundamental relevance to securing and reproducing capitalism in the face of its contradictions with respect to the peripheral state-capital nexus.

- Reforms associated with crises of accumulation. In the periphery, this is not a problem in itself for trans-nationalized capital since the under-consumption crisis is located primarily in the core countries (Tilzey 2018a). Similarly, under-production crisis in the conditions of production does not appear imminent. Rather, the problem lies with the exclusion of other fractions of capital, notably national bourgeoisie and small commercial farmers, from the accumulation nexus of the 'disarticulated alliance';
- Reforms associated with crises of legitimacy. Here the elements that create legitimacy are: first, the existence of a petty bourgeoisie, this providing the material basis for the ideology of liberal capitalism, and of the meritocratic, enterprising, and 'sovereign' individual; the ability of certain fractions of the working class to enter

into social democratic arrangements for the improvement of wages and working conditions under the ideology of state planning and the welfare state (or the 'compensatory state' in its latest iteration). Legitimacy reforms, in response principally to the poverty generating policies of neoliberalism, are arguably the most important motivation behind reformism in the Bolivian and Ecuadorian cases, and take the form of 'embedding' capitalism and the creation of a petty bourgeoisie (the upper peasantry, for example) and the co-optation of some parts of the working class and semi-proletariat through populism.

In embarking on reform programmes, the state operates under two principal constraints, both relevant to dynamics of reformism in our case studies:

- A constraint determined by the degree of legitimacy of the state. To implement its reformist policies, the state needs to secure, via populism, the support of different social classes and fractions of classes that comprise its constituency;
- A constraint imposed by the fiscal capacity of the state. The reformist capacity of the state is limited by its capacity to generate a public budget on the basis of tax revenues or the ability to take on debt. As we shall see in the case of Bolivia and Ecuador, the legitimacy of the current regimes has been founded on redistributive policies involving social security, health, and welfare payments to those sectors of society most marginalized by neoliberalism. The monies employed to this end depend upon revenues originating in the sphere of production, most especially through extractivism, via ground rent. It is thus clear that political protests against resource extraction potentially have an impact of the state's fiscal capacity and upon those groups benefitting from it. As such protests grow, so is the state's response likely to become increasingly authoritarian.

Reformism in the current conjuncture also has referents in previous rounds of reform, in Bolivia from the 1950s until the neoliberal era (1952-1985), and in Ecuador during much shorter episodes of developmentalism, especially during the 1970s. In both countries, agrarian reformism was, firstly, an attempt to generate a more 'articulated' model of development (de Janvry 1981), and secondly, with legitimacy concerns uppermost, a means of containing peasant political pressures both through direct control of peasant organizations, and through the legislation of mild land reform projects intended to eradicate semi-feudal estates from the agrarian structure and to redistribute some land, inadequately, to the peasantry (Conaghan 1988, Webber 2017a). This effectively induced the transformation of semi-feudal estates into capitalist enterprises of the oligarchy, while limited redistribution of land created an incipient sector of capitalized family farms, thus bridging, through the establishment of a politically stable petty bourgeoisie, the historical gap between *minifundio* and *latifundio*. The remaining peasantry became, in the main, semi-proletarians, selling their labour on the new capitalist estates or on the urban market. The agrarian question thus remained unresolved from the perspective of the peasantry, and it

was this unresolved question that underpinned the renewed agrarian protest that erupted from the 1990s in response to neoliberalism (Veltmeyer and Petras 2000).

Below we present case studies of agrarian class dynamics, the state-capital nexus, and the transition from populism to 'authoritarian populism' in Bolivia and Ecuador.

Bolivia

An important source of anti-neoliberal protest derived from the parlous condition of the largely indigenous peasantry in Bolivia, particularly the middle and lower peasantry. Thus, rural class structure in Bolivia is characterized by very considerable concentration of land in the hands of an agrarian oligarchy, located particularly on the most productive land in the eastern lowlands. This oligarchy is juxtaposed to large numbers of landless and land-poor peasants. Some 400 individuals own seventy per cent of productive land, whilst there are two and a half million landless peasants in country of nine million people (Enzina 2007; Webber 2015). Between these two groups is located a class of rich or upper peasants (small commercial farmers), comprising a key political constituency for Morales and one which has benefitted from, and grown during, the period of MAS rule (Webber 2017b).

A key aim of the *Pacto de Unidad* (see above) was the implementation of a programme of agrarian reform to address the plight of the land-poor, landless, and largely indigenous peasantry, principally by means of land expropriation and redistribution to these groups (McKay et al. 2014). This formed a central pillar of a radical constitution, formally embodying plurinationalism and indigenous autonomy within the state to a degree that did not have a real counterpart in the Ecuadorian case. Again, unlike Ecuador, unprecedented numbers of women, indigenous people, and members of the working-class were appointed to high positions in government, reflecting the status of MAS as a direct outgrowth of its indigenous/peasant/proletarian base (Farthing 2017). Thus, the first policy aim of the 2006 'Agrarian Revolution' was to entail the distribution of state-owned land and redistribution by expropriation of land not serving a 'socio-economic function' in respect of indigenous peoples and peasant communities (Fabricant 2012).

This programme of land redistribution, unfortunately, has largely failed to happen, so that the main beneficiaries of this reform have been the small commercial farms of the upper peasantry, the crucial petty bourgeois constituency for the MAS populist reformists (Colque et al. 2016). Moreover, the agrarian oligarchy of the eastern lowlands has been left essentially intact (Fabricant 2012; Webber 2015). Thus, superficially, the agrarian reform appeared to be successful, with more than 31 million hectares being titled and over 100,000 of those titles being distributed to 174,249 beneficiaries (McKay et al. 2014; INRA 2010; Redo et al. 2011). However, crucially, 90 per cent of titled land has 'been endowed by the

state and is composed entirely of forest reserves' (Redo et al. 2011, 237). Thus, less than ten per cent of land in the reform sector has actually been redistributed to those who need it most. So, while the 'Agrarian Revolution' was 'intended' to challenge the prevailing and highly unequal agrarian structure, it has failed to do so.

This reluctance to implement the first policy aim of the 'Agrarian Revolution' has been reinforced since 2010, with a concern by the MAS government to focus on land registration and titling at the expense of expropriation and redistribution (Colque et al. 2016; Webber 2017b)⁷. The power of the landed oligarchy remains unchallenged, therefore, while the process of peasant differentiation into a growing class of small commercial farms, on the one hand, and increased semi-proletarianization and landlessness, on the other, has accelerated (Webber 2015; Colque et al. 2016). The greatest achievement of the 'Agrarian Revolution' has been the introduction of TCOs (*Tierras Comunitarios de Origen*) and the legal recognition of indigenous territories in the highlands and lowlands, a phenomenon which, nonetheless, is shot through with contradictions (see Webber 2017b). Land registration, entailing the conferral on individuals of absolute property rights, has facilitated the legal consolidation of a stratum of small-scale capitalized peasants (upper peasantry). This applies particularly to the 'intercultural' sector, that is, migrant Quechua and Aymara peasants from the *altiplano* to the *Oriente*, small-scale, but capitalist, producers of commercial export crops such as coca, soy, and quinoa (Colque et al. 2016, 218). With consolidation of its legal and economic position, this commercial upper peasantry makes use of the deteriorating status of the middle/lower peasantry by purchasing its labour power. As noted, it is this stratum of commercial peasantry which represents the core political constituency of the MAS and the pivot point of its populist discourse.

The result of land registration has been the emergence of a tripartite structure of agrarian social-property relations, where before there was more of a dualism between the agrarian oligarchy and the peasant semi-proletariat, with the third, and novel, element comprising the consolidating class fraction of small commercial farmers. Thus, the hegemonic class remains the agrarian oligarchy, controlling the bulk of land, surplus value production, and land rent. The sub-hegemonic class comprises the small commercial farm sector, which, however, is not so much independent but rather deeply integrated into larger value chains of agro-industrial development (Colque et al. 2016; Webber 2017b). Moreover, claims made for this sector's key role in expanding the national production of food staples ring hollow, since this period has seen a significant rise in the import of wage foods, further undermining national food security and the economic viability of the middle/lower peasantries (Colque et al. 2015; Ormachea Saavedra 2015). The counter-hegemonic class of the semi-proletariat and landless within this tripartite structure is either 'functional' with respect to the first two in terms of supplying wage labour or a reserve army of potential labour (exerting downward

⁷ Detailed data concerning land registration and title according to types of property (agrarian classes) are presented in Colque et al. 2016.

pressure on wages and the costs of production), or it comprises a 'surplus' rural population excluded from the requirements of agrarian capital accumulation (Colque et al. 2016; McKay 2017).

Politically, the agrarian oligarchy was entrenched in the state between 1996 and 2006. This neoliberal 'disarticulated alliance' fragmented during the openly antagonistic episode of Morales' first administration (2006-2009). Following the failed civic coup attempt by the Santa Cruz agrarian oligarchy, this hegemonic group forged a renewed alliance with the post-2010 Morales regime, together with the sub-hegemonic fraction of small-scale capitalist farmers. This populist alliance now comprises the central pillar of support for Morales (Colque et al. 2016). The sub-hegemonic fraction, as noted, comprises the upper peasantry, now highly influential within CSUTCB (*Confederación Sindical Única de Trabajadores Campesinos de Bolivia*), an organization which has been deeply integrated into the state under Morales (Colque et al. 2016). The sub-hegemonic fraction is now influential in a wide spectrum of public institutions such as INRA (*Instituto Nacional de Reforma Agraria*), CAN (*Comunidad Andina de Naciones*), and MDRyT (*Ministerio de Desarrollo Rural y Tierra*) (Webber 2017b). Rather than the transformation of rural social-property relations and the capitalist state, this infiltration of upper peasant fractions into the state apparatus has engendered, as suggested by Gramscian *trasformismo*, the decapitation of subaltern organizations and the circumscription of their mobilization capacity⁸. Thus, an agrarian reform which might have benefitted the landless and the land-poor majority remains in abeyance and in direct contradiction with the class interests of the Morales government's principal allies (Almaraz 2015).

The agrarian question of the peasant majority thus remains unresolved and raises the vexed question of how long the populist compact can endure while the promise of redistributive land reform remains unfulfilled. The material base of this compact, beyond the core class alliance of its hegemonic and sub-hegemonic fractions, has been secured thus far by means of welfarism through the 'compensatory state', premised on the proceeds of extractivism⁹. The Morales regime thus pursues a tortuous path between the generation of increased social precarity through its policies of extractivism, whilst mitigating such precarity by means of revenue from that same extractivism. As this fragile equilibrium is disrupted by

⁸ One of the clearest political patterns to have emerged over the 'progressive' cycle is the bureaucratization of social movement actors through their entry into the bourgeois state apparatuses. Rather than transforming state institutions, the institutions have systematically transformed the movements. The problem of bureaucracy is not merely one of inherited structures of the '*ancien regime*' or of the recalcitrance of 'old order' civil servants. Rather, it is a question of subaltern movement representatives themselves being transformed into impediments to change once received into the institutionality of the capitalist state. This bureaucratic layer of subaltern movement representatives begins to live off the state they are ostensibly intending to transform, such that their own material reproduction comes to depend on the preservation of the status quo (Thwaites Rey and Ouviaña 2012; Zibechi 2016a; Webber 2017b).

⁹ Thus, for example, poverty in Bolivia between 2001 and 2012 decreased from 58.6% of the population to 44.9% (Colque et al. 2015).

the combined effects of increased social precarity and decreased ability to fund welfarism (through decrease in commodity prices since 2014, particularly), so will Morales' populism become increasingly authoritarian in complexion. Indeed, Morales' authoritarian leadership increasingly has the character of *caudillismo* (Thwaites Rey and Ouviaña 2012; Zibechi 2016a and b; Webber 2017b), where a personality cult elevates the president as indispensable history-maker through his 'extraordinary' abilities, while the protagonism of the subaltern classes upon which his power rests is commensurately demoted¹⁰. Here also policy-making is technocratized and de-politicized, and policies enforced against opposition through recourse to the police and army.

Indeed, the extractivist policies of Morales have given rise to a destabilizing process of class struggle characterized by a veritable wave of protest and social resistance (Webber 2015). In the last few years, a large number of movements and struggles have been calling into question the extractivist-export model and its attendant violence and environmental devastation wrought primarily by transnational (imperial and sub-imperial) capital in conjunction with the Bolivian agrarian oligarchy and small commercial farm sector. This has resulted in the fragmentation of the Unity Pact, with CIDOB (Confederation of Indigenous Peoples of Bolivia) and CONAMAQ (National Council of *Allyus* and *Markas* of *Qullasuyu*), for example, splitting in 2011 (Viaña 2012; Webber 2017b). In response, the MAS has striven to disable and delegitimize the capacity of these organizations independently to represent indigenous groups.

By means of the compensatory state, the Morales government has constructed a structure of legitimacy, or in other words 'flanking' measures, to support renewed capital accumulation through extractivism (Orellana 2011). This represents an attempt to embed capitalism through income and infrastructure measures for low-income groups founded on a narrative of communalism and cooperation as *vivir bien*. In this way, the MAS government had, until recently, temporarily stabilized the contradiction between the accumulation and legitimation functions of the capitalist state¹¹. Morales restored legitimacy by placating counter-hegemonic groups during the period 2006-2009. He then proceeded (2010-date) to re-focus on capital accumulation to the benefit of the agri-food oligarchy, the upper peasantry, and transnational extractive capital to the neglect of the semi-proletarian and indigenous majority (Webber 2017b). With progressive loss of support from these counter-

¹⁰ Zibechi (2016b) indicates that the problem with *caudillismo* is that it is a culture of the right, functional to those who want to substitute the protagonism of those from below with those from above. It is a political and cultural operation of legitimation, at the cost of emptying out the content of collective actors. It is a conservative, elitist politics which reproduces oppression instead of superseding it.

¹¹ In building consensual hegemony in this way, the Morales regime could, according to Akram-Lodhi (2018) (after Hall [1985]), actually be described as 'authoritarian populist' in its first phase. The subsequent loss of consensual hegemony and slide into increased authoritarianism/violence could then be described in some ways as, in his terms, 'right-wing populist nationalism'. This does not really explain, however, why populism in its first phase should be termed 'authoritarian' – hence we prefer to use the terms as defined by Scoones et al. (2018).

hegemonic fractions, another legitimation crisis now beckons. With the de-legitimation of extractivism, the proletariat, lower and middle peasants, and indigenous groups are increasingly unruly, advocating a model of the cooperative society beyond capitalism. The Morales reformist regime is thus encountering the constraint defined by a legitimacy deficit and this is manifest in the turn to increasingly authoritarian and repressive policies in respect of counter-hegemonic class fractions. Meanwhile, the fiscal capacity of the state is predicated on a Faustian bargain with extractivism, a mode of accumulation that, while providing a short-term revenue windfall for populism, actively, and perhaps fatally, compromises the ecological basis for constructing longer-term livelihood sovereignty for Bolivians as 'real citizens'¹².

Ecuador

Historically, land ownership and distribution has been highly concentrated and unequal in Ecuador, with the majority of the peasantry having insufficient access to land to meet family subsistence needs throughout the year (Brassel et al. 2008). Indeed, this remains the case today despite over ten years of rule by the left-leaning regimes of Rafael Correa and Lenín Moreno and it constitutes one of the principal contradictions for the continued reproduction of the populism on which they are founded (Carrión and Herrera 2012; Martínez 2014, 2016). Such lack of access to land on the part of the peasantry, and a pattern of 'disarticulated' capitalist development, fed widespread anti-neoliberal agrarian protest during the 1990s, protest which had, moreover, a strong indigenous inflection (Becker 2008). This, in turn, created electoral space for the rise of Correa's populism in the first decade of the new millennium, enabled, fiscally, by the new Chinese search for fossil fuels, minerals, and agro-exports, and that state's willingness to **both** shoulder the burden of Ecuador's external debt **and extend credit** (Bonilla 2015). As noted, the most important force behind the 2005 coup against the then incumbent neoliberal regime were the *forajidos* (Clark 2017), and these subsequently became an important political force behind Correa's 2006 presidential bid. Presciently, such nationally-focused bourgeoisies and petty bourgeois class fractions could relatively easily co-opt the 'progressive' (mainly upper peasant) tendency within the food sovereignty movement through support for small farm productivity enhancements, whilst neutralizing the more 'radical' tendency through social welfare payments as subsistence supplement disbursed by what was to emerge as the 'compensatory state' (Henderson 2017)¹³.

¹² See for example McKay (2017) on the devastating ecological and health impacts of agro-extractivism in the *Oriente*.

¹³ This has been complemented by increased employment, often on large public infrastructure projects, with unemployment falling from over 10% in 2006 to under 5% in 2016, while poverty has decreased by 38% over the same period (Davalos and Albuja 2014; Henderson 2017; Peña 2017).

Correa did, however, fulfil one of his central campaign promises to subaltern classes in April 2007 with the convocation of a national constituent assembly. Correa's political dependence on the food sovereignty movement in the form of the *Mesa Agraria*, enabled the latter to secure the institutionalization of many of its central demands, specifically, state support for the distribution of land to the peasant sector, and its complement by affordable credit and state-funded training (Clark 2017). For reasons of legitimacy, the Correa regime was obliged to recognize these broad demands of food sovereignty and to integrate them, rhetorically, into its project. It has subsequently become evident, however, that Correa has been happy to implement some of the reformist ('progressive') demands of food sovereignty from the sub-hegemonic fraction, whilst failing to deliver on the 'radical', or counter-hegemonic, agenda of land redistribution (Henderson 2017; Tilzey 2018a). This possibility was feasible, however, precisely because of the discursive breadth of, and lack of clarity in, food sovereignty discourse, enabling Correa differentially to fulfil commitments that accorded with national food sovereignty, and the stimulation of productivity for expanded accumulation amongst the class fractions of the upper peasantry.

As in the case of Bolivia, small-scale capitalists and petty commodity producers are thus seen to co-exist quite happily alongside the large agro-exporters, on whom the government relies in no small part for foreign exchange earnings (Carrión and Herrera 2012; Martínez 2016). Other than the goal of securing greater national food security in key wage foods (the key definition of food sovereignty for the Correa and Moreno regimes, and one which has been met in significant degree through productivity improvements among smaller producers), the Correa/Moreno conception of food sovereignty does not accord with the key peasant movement demands of land redistribution, sustainability, and the promotion of agroecological production. As Henderson (2017) indicates, there is increasing anxiety amongst peasant leaders concerning the government's success in consolidating, through populism, power and legitimacy amongst broad swathes of the population¹⁴, including agrarian populations, despite a signal failure to address the highly unequal distribution of land. This success is due, of course, to Correa's, and latterly Moreno's, emphasis on those elements of food sovereignty discourse – improvements to the wellbeing, productivity, and competitiveness of the upper/middle peasantry – that conform to their neo-developmental model (Clark 2017; Henderson 2017). Meanwhile, the lower peasantry, through their wage dependency, benefit from enhanced welfare payments through the 'compensatory state', income flowing from the proceeds of neo-extractivism (Davalos and Albuja 2014). In this, as

¹⁴ De la Torre (2013) notes that the state is co-opting social movements and taming civil society whereby citizens are being turned into passive and grateful recipients of the leader's benevolent and technocratically engineered policies. This is part of a clear trend towards *caudillismo* and authoritarianism. In contrast to Bolivia, however, it is not so much the case of social movement leadership being co-opted into the state apparatus but rather of the membership being politically beguiled by strategically targeted policies and welfare disbursements. The result has been to progressively divorce social movement leaders from their mass base in the case of organizations such as FENOCIN (see below), CONAIE (*Confederación de Nacionalidades Indígenas del Ecuador*), and Ecuarrunari (Confederation of the Peoples of the *Kichwa* Nationality of Ecuador).

in the Bolivian case, the Correa and now Moreno regimes have encouraged not only agri-food extractivism but, perhaps even more importantly, mineral and fossil-fuel extractivism, located primarily in the *Oriente*, and undertaken increasingly by Chinese capital (Carrión 2016). Indeed, Chinese loans have underwritten the Correa/Moreno 'compensatory state', and their repayment requires the current administration to maximize extractivism to obviate default (Bonilla 2015). Meanwhile, such extractivist activities are wreaking ecological and social havoc in the *Oriente* particularly (Arsel 2016; Carrión 2016)), raising profound questions concerning the desirability, and certainly sustainability, of the neo-extractivist strategy. But the beneficiaries of neo-extractivist revenue, revenue directed to small farmers as credit and to semi-proletarians as welfare, are, in the main, spatially distanced from its direct ecological and social impacts. The Correa/Moreno regimes have, through due attention to their legitimacy roles through the 'compensatory state', thus cleverly muted opposition from these quarters. At the same time, opponents of extractivism are derided and denigrated as 'terrorists' and enemies of the 'citizens' revolution' symptomatic of an increasingly authoritarian turn in populist discourse and practice (de la Torre 2013). Indicative of this trend, was the arrest, in 2017, of hundreds of indigenous/*campesino* demonstrators for protesting peacefully against the oil and mining policies of the regime. These protests were a response to the declaration by the government of a state of emergency in Morona Santiago province in the *Oriente*, where the regime has deployed military and police forces to displace and dispossess, forcefully, Shuar indigenous people whose territory occupies land earmarked for mining projects (Riofrancos 2017).

Extractivism complements productivism, and food security can, according to Correa and Moreno, be secured through improved productivity on existing holdings, without the need to expropriate and divide large properties (Carrión and Herrera 2012; Henderson 2017). The production and reproduction strategies of middle and upper peasantry, such as those characteristic of coastal province smallholders, for example, are significantly more dependent on commodity markets than the semi-proletarian peasants who predominate in the Andes. The latter, typically, seek more land and institutional support for agroecology to bolster subsistence production, this acting primarily as a wage subsidy for their highly semi-proletarianized livelihood strategies (Martinez 2016). The Correa/Moreno strategy of improving the productivity and 'efficiency' of small farmers on the basis of expanded petty commodity production, and of re-centring the state ('re-statization') as the driver of development (Herrera 2017; Tilzey 2018a), represents a response to the historically neglected demands of the middle/upper peasantry, a fraction particularly well represented in the coastal provinces (Henderson 2017). Unsurprisingly, Correa/Moreno policies receive widespread support amongst this constituency. By contrast to their Andean, semi-proletarian counterparts, therefore, who seek more land as a wage subsidy and subsistence guarantee against adversity in the labour market, a labour market on which their reproductive strategies overwhelmingly depend, the small commercial farm sector is not

concerned with land redistribution (Tilzey 2018a). Through the implementation of rural policy that improves their productivity and market competitiveness, Correa and Moreno have gathered considerable support from the sub-hegemonic small farm commercial sector. As we have seen, this has helped to legitimize their regimes and their national market-focused policies. By the same token, these policies have served to weaken those leaders of counter-hegemonic organizations, located principally in the Andes, who continue to demand structural land reform and the rejection of market-based 'solutions', whether nationally-focused or neoliberal in character (Carrión and Herrera 2012).

Since their apogee in 2006, when they helped propel the state in an anti-neoliberal direction, peasant organizations have been obliged increasingly to adopt reactive responses to a government that has, in part, institutionalized their demands, *selectively* co-opted their leadership, and progressively appropriated their discourses and mass bases of organizational support (Becker 2012; Henderson 2017). With demands historically based on anti-government and anti-neoliberal foundations, the rise of Correa and the neo-developmental state, with 're-statism' a key feature of its governance and anti-neoliberalism key to its discourse and (in part) policy, has rendered these claims increasingly redundant. With much of their discourse, and key elements of their policy, at least with respect to the middle/upper peasantry, now appropriated by the Correa/Moreno administrations, many peasant/indigenous organizations have become disempowered (Herrera 2017).

These policies and payments have progressively neutralized the counter-hegemonic tendencies in organizations such as FENOCIN (*Federación Nacional de Organizaciones Campesinas, Indígenas y Negras*)¹⁵. Thus, from 2013 onwards, as Henderson (2017) documents, FENOCIN's discourses and political strategies have changed significantly as it has become once more a vocal supporter of Correa and his 'Citizens' Revolution'. Rather than calling for the radical transformation of Ecuador's agrarian structure through mass expropriation and redistribution as the foundation of a 'food sovereign' nation (on its 'counter-hegemonic' definition), the organization's current leadership uses food sovereignty, according to its reformist definition, as a political tool to negotiate projects and resources for its membership from within Correa's 'anti-neoliberal', but national capitalist, project, including measures to 'revitalize' the productivity of 'peasant' agriculture – that is, making the petty bourgeois peasantry more competitive. By re-centring the state as the driver of economic and social development, Correa's project has responded to a number of

¹⁵ FENOCIN was founded as FENOC in the 1960s. Its roots lie in the Catholic Church's attempts to draw support away from the Communist affiliated FEI (*Federación Ecuatoriana de Indios*). In the 1970s, FENOC broke with the church and assumed a more radical, socialist position. In the 1990s, after one name change, it assumed its current name to reflect the incorporation of indigenous and Afro-Ecuadorian communities into its membership. FENOCIN, a member of La Vía Campesina, emphasizes an interculturality that embraces Ecuador's diversity and strives to unify all poor people into a struggle to improve their quality of life, democratize the country, and build a sustainable and equitable system of development (Becker 2012).

key national-popular demands of the peasant organization's memberships for protective mechanisms against more globalized competition in the agri-food sector (together with ancillary welfare measures for semi-proletarianized peasants), and, in so doing, has weakened the food sovereignty movement's more counter-hegemonic demands for an alternative, anti-capitalist model as articulated by key peasant leaders (Herrera 2017). Again, the concept of *transformismo* does much to explain these trends.

It is moot, however, whether, or for how long, this populist compact can endure. The fiscal capacity of the reformist state is dependent upon the inherently unsustainable, and time-limited, revenue windfall that derives from neo-extractivism. Whether through progressive exhaustion of the resource base ('second', ecological, contradiction) or through a collapse in the commodity boom as a result of accumulation crisis in China ('first', political, contradiction) (Tilzey 2018a), or a combination of both, Ecuador's model of neo-developmentalism, like Bolivia's, is built on shifting sands. If and when revenues from extractivism begin to dry up, the short-term consumer boom, the welfare payments, and the class alliances that go with them, are likely to unravel. At this point, the populist/reformist regime will encounter the limits of its legitimacy, and, indeed, we have already entered a period of increased violence and authoritarianism in response to enhanced protests against extractivism in the *Oriente*, particularly¹⁶. Also, we may speculate whether, at this point, the counter-hegemonic movements will regain the membership unity, and the force, that lay behind their original vision of radical food sovereignty.

Beyond the Impasse of Authoritarian Populism: Food Sovereignty as Counter-Hegemony

As we have seen from the case studies presented, populism, as a national-popular programme of development, pursues a form of redistributive capitalism, focusing on the accumulation needs of its core sub-hegemonic constituency, while using the proceeds of neo-extractivism (generated largely by the oligarchy and transnational capital) to placate counter-hegemonic classes through welfarism. This enables the structural bases of inequality and poverty to be temporarily by-passed or mitigated, but only at the cost of deepening the political and ecological contradictions of extractive capitalism. As these contradictions deepen, exacerbated by 'jobless' growth and high dependency on external markets, so does social unrest grow commensurately. The response of the ruling bloc is a turn to increasing authoritarianism to push through its programme of accelerated commodification and destruction of the biophysical foundations for sustainable living (*buen vivir*) in the name of short-lived growth and consumerism.

¹⁶ Indeed, a 'regrouping' of counter-hegemonic social movements was already apparent in 2012 with the Plurinational March for Life, Water, and Dignity from the southern province of Zamora Chinchipe to the capital Quito in protest against the opening of the Mirador copper mine, operated by the Chinese-owned company Ecuacorriente (Becker 2012).

Under these conditions, a de-legitimation of 'left' populism threatens, and a resurgent right, 'flying the flag of nationalism' (Malamud 2017) is poised to take over the baton of authoritarian populism (Herrera 2017). As 'left' populism moves to the right and the right itself invokes national populism, it becomes increasingly difficult to distinguish the two variants of authoritarian populism, both premised on a programme of neo-extractivism. If, in neglecting the structural foundations of inequality and poverty, 'national-popular' populism leads inevitably to authoritarianism and not to *buen vivir*, what might the latter comprise and which political strategy(ies) might best realize its imaginary?

In addressing the first question, we have already noted that *buen vivir* has perhaps been most associated with 'populist agrarianism', post-developmental/alternative developmental, or a 'progressive' approach to food sovereignty (see Escobar 1995; Esteva and Prakash 1999; Mies and Bennholdt-Thomsen 2000). This tends to be espoused by the 'sub-hegemonic' class fractions of the commercial upper peasantry and is characterized by the elevation of scale, ecology, and indigeneity at the expense of class and state. The 'radical' or 'counter-hegemonic' position on food sovereignty does indeed accept (in contrast to 'orthodox' Marxism) key elements of the 'alternative development' approach such as a certain degree of autonomy, a focus of 'fundamental needs' realized endogenously, self-reliance through solidarity and reciprocity, 'human-scale' development (household, community, popular social movements), addressing gender and other forms of discrimination (but as related to class rather than divorced from it), and ecological sustainability (Vergara-Camus 2014; Tilzey 2018a). It also recognizes, however, certain limitations of the 'alternative development' approach:

- It lacks a historical perspective able to identify the long-term effects of the insertion of local processes into those at regional, national, and global level;
- By using the undifferentiated categories of 'poor' and 'peasantry', there is no appreciation of the specificity of peasant communities and smallholder production within different national capitalist formations;
- It avoids the issue of power relations between and within classes, ethnic groups, and genders, and resorts to moral criticism rather than recognizing that all forms of oppression rest on power relations, material and ideological, which can only be tackled through conflict and struggle;
- Its criticism of the 'state-led' model of development, and its lack of a theory of the state, has led to an avoidance of the need to address the state in any broader project of social transformation;
- It tends to over-emphasize processes of social change at the local level, failing to address how local processes of social change are related to regional, national, and global processes and struggles.

Thus, while recognizing the strengths of certain aspects of 'alternative development', the 'radical' or 'counter-hegemonic' approach to food sovereignty emphasizes the need for *transformation in the social relations of production and domination* (Tilzey 2017). This is to draw not on 'orthodox' Marxism, but rather on Marxian-derived schools such as neo-Gramscian IPE, Poulantzian state and class theory, Political Marxism, and Political Ecology.

This 'radical' counter-hegemonic model of food sovereignty enables us to suggest some answers to the second question of political strategy. Here Poulantzas (1978) is again very useful. Poulantzas vitiate the Leninist 'dual powers' approach which seeks to construct workers' councils wholly outside the state, considered (incorrectly) to be entirely a bourgeois instrument. The workers' councils, having achieved critical mass, then 'smash' the state and replace it with a 'dictatorship of the proletariat'. This then becomes Stalinist statism. Poulantzas sees social democracy as also embodying this statism, comprising a profound mistrust of mass initiatives and suspicion of democratic demands. The latter manifests itself in the Bolivian and Ecuadorian cases as reformist passive revolution.

Poulantzas also notes another position akin to post-developmentalism and agrarian populism. According to this conception, the only way to avoid statism is to place oneself outside the state, leaving it as it is and disregarding the problem of its transformation. This aims simply to block the path of the state from outside through the construction of self-management 'counter-powers' at the base – in short, to quarantine the state within its own domain. Poulantzas notes that this appears in the language of the 'new libertarians' (antecedents of post-structuralism and post-developmentalism), for whom statism can be avoided only by breaking up power and scattering it among an infinity of micro-powers. In this case, however, 'the Leviathan-State is left in place, and no attention is given to those transformations of the State without which the movement of direct democracy is bound to fail. The movement is prevented from intervening in actual transformations of the State and the two processes are simply kept running along parallel lines' (Poulantzas 1978, 262). He goes on to suggest that the task, then, is not really to 'synthesize' or stick together the statist and self-management traditions, 'but rather to open up a global perspective of the withering away of the State. This comprises two articulated processes: transformation of the State and the unfurling of direct, rank-and-file democracy.' (Poulantzas 1978, 263). This points strongly towards a *dual strategy* for 'radical' food sovereignty, one that seeks to exploit opportunities for democratic socialism at the local level, whilst simultaneously engaging the state in order to transform capitalist social-property relations at national level.

If this social relational and institutional transformation of the state-capital nexus is the essential prerequisite for livelihood sovereignty, which social forces might bring this about? We suggest that it is the middle and lower peasantries, and indigenous peoples, possibly in alliance with the proletarian precariat, which comprise the main counter-hegemonic agent for emancipatory politics as livelihood sovereignty. This is so because they view access to

non-commodified land, the escape from market dependence, and the equitable and ecologically sustainable production of use values to meet fundamental need satisfaction, as the key objectives of social relational transformation (Vergara-Camus 2014). So, although the middle and lower peasantries have indeed become progressively more (semi)-proletarianized under neoliberalism, and subsequently neo-extractivism (Carrión and Herrera 2012; Webber 2015), they have, contra Bernstein (2014), resisted the adoption of a proletarian class positionality. This is so because, for them, poverty equates to a gradual loss of peasant status, which they consequently seek to reverse. The desire for such a reversal has indeed become ever more insistent as the contradictions of neoliberalism, and now neo-extractivism, have mounted and the proletariat has increasingly acquired the status of a precariat. Access to land, however limited, often provides, under these conditions, the only real element of livelihood security. Thus, struggles in the countryside and in the city often have an essentially peasant character due to the incapacity of disarticulated development or neo-extractivism to provide salaried employment as a viable alternative to secure the means of livelihood. Both peasants and workers seek refuge in the peasant situation, therefore, that is, in the auto-production of use values, to the greatest degree possible, to meet fundamental needs (Vergara-Camus 2014). The rise of indigenous and ecological consciousness since the 1990s, and the simultaneous delegitimation of capitalist modernism¹⁷, have served only to reinforce the hunger for land and aversion to full proletarianization.

Thus, the resolution of the unresolved agrarian question of the peasantry in Latin America, particularly in the current ecologically constrained and increasingly volatile conjuncture, seems, contra Bernstein, more than ever to be, of necessity, agrarian and peasant in nature. In this, the potential for mass mobilization on the part of the middle/lower peasantries, the precariat, and indigenous groups, for an agrarian solution to the contradictions, 'political' and 'ecological', of capitalism (expressed in ongoing primitive accumulation) should not be regarded as unrealistic, as our case studies have suggested. It is evident, however, that the (authoritarian) populist regimes in Bolivia and Ecuador, and *transformismo* more widely, have the capacity to delay or subvert such mobilizations by co-opting elements of the precariat through welfarism, by fomenting a petty bourgeois consciousness amongst the upper peasantry, and by conserving the power of the oligarchy. It will be important, consequently, for counter-hegemonic forces, in their wish to secure autonomy from market dependence through secure access to the means of production, to confront both 'capitalism from below' and 'capitalism from above' – in short, a dual strategy for livelihood sovereignty.

The MST and emancipatory rural politics as counter-hegemony in Bolivia

¹⁷ This echoes Gudynas' (2018) call to go beyond modernism (capitalism) for both 'political' and 'ecological' reasons.

The importance of differentiating between reformism (sub-hegemony) and anti-capitalism (counter-hegemony) is well illustrated by the dynamics of the *Movimiento de los Trabajadores Rurales sin Tierra* (MST) in Bolivia (a sister organization of the better-known Brazilian MST). These dynamics help us to identify a strategy of emancipatory rural politics whereby counter-hegemony, as food and livelihood sovereignty, may be implanted at 'local' level as a form of autonomy (confronting 'capitalism from below'), whilst, simultaneously, recognizing the need to engage the state ('capitalism from above') to secure a more generalized autonomy from capitalism. The MST seems to embody a 'dual strategy' approach, exploiting current opportunities for autonomy where possible, whilst amplifying the struggle for deeper and wider transformation through appropriation and subversion of the modern state itself. It also seems to represent the kind of 'radical' food sovereignty which we have identified in this paper as counter-hegemony. Here, we draw on Fabricant's (2012) ethnography of the MST in the Bolivian *Oriente*, a study that demonstrates the movement's embrace of radical, participatory democracy, and its advocacy of collective ownership of land, drawing on, while 'reinventing', communal traditions inspired by the pre-Columbian *ayllu*.

The formation of the MST in Bolivia was inspired by its sister organization in Brazil. Like the latter, the Bolivian MST has exploited the constitutional requirement for agricultural land to be in productive use. Accordingly, the organization has targeted idle land, owned by members of the agrarian oligarchy, but held largely for purposes of speculation. The state constitution permits the occupation of such land for the purpose of turning it to productive use, through the submission of a petition for legal title. The MST is painfully aware, however, that such autonomy as exists in these small number of successful cases is founded on a fragile legal loophole within a more generalized system of absolute property rights which the capitalist state, including the reformist state of Evo Morales, is committed to uphold. It recognizes, therefore, that a far greater, and more thoroughgoing, transformation of social-property relations is required if its model of *ayllu*-inspired autonomy for the landless and land-poor peasantry is to be more widely implanted.

In these few cases of successful, legalized, land occupations, the MST has built an organizational structure that is democratic and participatory, capable of creating order and holding leaders and rank-and-file to account through collective governance. This is a form of grassroots citizenship, inspired by, but also reconfiguring, Andean principles of autonomy, self-governance, and participatory democracy. This stands in contrast to liberal citizenship as individualism, 'given' to members as a right by the state. The Andean ideal of the *ayllu*, imagined as community-held land and collective forms of governance and control, has become the principal framework for governing MST settlements. These modern *ayllus* are characterized by nucleated settlements, communal landholdings, rotational political and administrative offices, land redistribution, and rural tax collection.

The MST has adapted the *ayllu* model to structure their political organization at the community, regional, and national levels. The state has fractionalized land and territory through a model of citizenship that has assigned absolute property rights to individuals. The MST asserts, by contrast, that complete dominion over land by an individual or group is itself illegitimate. Rather, land is a collective right and should entail stewardship rather than absolute dominion. The occupation of land signifies reclaiming and re-territorializing indigenous/peasant control and autonomy over land and other critical resources. The dynamic relationship between territorial autonomy and the ability to provide a political infrastructure that sustains humanity is designated by indigenous conceptualizations such as *sumak kawsay* (in Kichwa) or *buen vivir*. This 'return to the past' logic provides a sense of territorial and communal security through a form of 'collective' control.

The MST's idea of food sovereignty and agroecology is deeply embedded in collaborative and collective forms of production. The MST has revived and politicized essentialized notions of Andean rural culture by establishing *ayni* (reciprocity) and *minka* (exchange) as forms of resistance to the capitalist, large-scale, agro-industrial production of the oligarchy. In their re-appropriation of this cultural model as antithetical to capitalism, the MST affirms the social, collective, and reciprocal forms of production, in which all members of the community benefit from family farming.

Nonetheless, there exist tensions within the MST between those, the majority, who wish to pursue a collectivist ideal, and those, a minority, who wish to acquire title to land on an individual basis, the latter an individualistic and capitalist-driven response to the problem of land inequality. Land petitions, in the latter case, are filed as individual rather than communal requests. This has the potential to undermine the ability of the MST collectively to negotiate for communal land ownership by placing such power in the hands of a few individuals who want simply to buy and sell property. This tension is unsurprising. Peasant and indigenous movements cannot simply 'transition' to a pure collective model given the huge constraints of actually existing capitalism and marginalization with which they have to contend on a daily basis. While the better-off peasantry may wish to pursue the capitalist 'farmer road' ('accumulation from below'), it remains the case that many members tend to adopt, as best they can, 'pieces' of the alternative collective model whilst attempting to optimize survival strategies within actually existing capitalism (Fabricant 2012, 129). The result is a hybridization between pragmatic survival strategies and the striving towards something better, the latter articulated by MST as the *ayllu*. This serves perhaps to highlight the limitations of autonomism as a doctrine that assumes that real change can occur 'without taking power' or, in other words, without addressing the causal basis of poverty, marginalization and ecological despoliation generated by 'capitalism from above', orchestrated by the state. This is recognized by the MST. While seizing all the opportunities available at the local level to secure access to land and institute collective ways of life as food sovereignty, the MST recognizes that the limits to this strategy are defined precisely by

the forces of unsustainability that need to be confronted. This confrontation can occur only if the struggle is taken to the state by means of a dual strategy. This is why the MST has taken part in successive Marches for Land and Territory to the state capitals, demanding fundamental change in social-property relations throughout the country, and concomitant change in the nature of the state itself.

Conclusion

The populist regimes of Bolivia and Ecuador have, for the last decade or so, been able to support social welfare programmes only through resource extraction fed principally by the Chinese commodity boom. Welfarism mitigates and dulls pressure from counter-hegemonic movements to implement policies to redistribute land and affirm the right to land as the basis for 'radical' food sovereignty. Consequently, the regimes of Morales and Correa/Moreno have been reluctant to institute sustainable food production and livelihood systems based on land redistribution and security of land rights, precisely because the growth model is premised on the perpetuation of neo-extractivism, and the stimulation of productivist agriculture by the small farm commercial sector. So, while the regimes of Correa/Moreno and Morales relied heavily upon peasant and indigenous support to secure their initial electoral success, and have included constitutional provisions for food sovereignty, substantive implementation of these provisions has fallen far short of expectation (Henderson 2017; Webber 2017a, b), particularly in the case of Ecuador. Consequently, these peasant and indigenous constituencies are becoming increasingly alienated from the governments of Morales and Moreno. Moreover, the current decline in primary commodity prices portends a reduction in government budgets for welfare programmes and, consequently, a threat to the populist compact between sub-hegemonic and counter-hegemonic constituencies. Indeed, as Scoones et al. (2018) suggest, this has coincided with a clear trend towards 'authoritarian populism' in Latin America, as in our case studies both Morales and Moreno concentrate power in their executives, assume the role of 'indispensable' and charismatic leaders of the nation (*caudillismo*), and deploy increasingly draconian measures to quell anti-extractivist protests.

This paper has argued that the only route out of this impasse that is both socially equitable and ecologically sustainable is that of 'radical' food sovereignty, or livelihood sovereignty (Tilzey 2018a). This represents a resolution of the agrarian question in favour of counter-hegemonic forces, comprising the great majority of the citizenry. Choosing this path requires the thoroughgoing transformation and abrogation of capitalist social-property relations towards democratic and devolved common ownership – or better, stewardship – of the means of livelihood (Carrión and Herrera 2012). Given our previous discussion, a class-relational and political ecological understanding of capitalism appears necessary as a

basis for this transformation (see Tilzey 2017, 2018a, b for discussion). Since the alienation of land and labour constitute the quintessence of capitalism, it is the re-appropriation of land by the dispossessed or partially dispossessed, and the retention of land by those fortunate enough to sustain customary access to it, for the co-operative production of use values for society as a whole, that mark the key elements in capital's transcendence and as the basis for future sustainability. Here the transformation of class-relational power through political action within and around the state (that is, seizing opportunities for autonomy at the local level whilst addressing wider social-property relations by confronting the state) – a 'dual strategy' – will be key in expunging exploitative relations and laying the jurisdictional and material foundations for social equity, cooperative organization, and ecological sustainability.

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