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**Extractive Processes,  
Global Production Networks and Inequalities**

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# Extractive Processes, Global Production Networks and Inequalities

Isabella M. Radhuber

## Abstract

In the context of an increasing economic integration and the rising importance of the Global South regarding global trade and companies, scholarly debates that try to grasp the shape of this increasingly integrated global economy addressed global production networks. They have mostly focused on manufacturing and agricultural activities and to a lesser extent on services, whereas analysis on traditional extractive activities has been incorporated only recently. In this paper, I focus on the relevance of extractive processes for global production networks in a broader sense. I argue that these matter not only in terms of traditional extractive activities such as mining and hydrocarbons. Extractive processes matter for all production networks, because they all depend upon the extractive capture of nature. This focus points to struggles around nature appropriation, the co-constitution of social relations and the “natural” environment and processes of valuation. I then specifically sketch how inequalities in extractive production networks can be traced in terms of unequal labor division and power relations (specifically the hegemonic stability of production networks). Combining global production network analysis, regulation theory and extractivism analysis can furthermore reveal how these inequalities unfold in specific political economic contexts and across scales.

**Keywords:** global production networks | extractive processes | inequalities

## Biographical Notes

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## 1. Introduction<sup>1</sup>

The global economy has become increasingly integrated in the past 40 years. Kaplinsky (2013: 4, 21-22) has stated that global trade as part of the global GDP has more than doubled from 11.4% (1970) to 26.1% (2009). This rising quantitative importance of global trade goes along with a shift of global production networks from the Global North to the South. This is not unprecedented in history. Up to the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, China and India had constituted more than half of the global GDP. By 1969, their contribution had decreased to 7% and then it again rose to 20% (2006) and is expected to rise to an estimated 30% (for 2030). Parallel, companies from the South – such as Lenovo and Haier from China, Tata from India, Vale from Brazil and MTN from South Africa – are likely to have a greater share of the world market, since the work force is more exploited and social and environmental rules are less considered in these countries (Kaplinsky 2013: 4; 17; Maddison 2007).

In this context, academic debates that try to grasp the shape of this increasingly integrated global economy have increasingly focused on “commodity chains”, “global commodity chains”, or “global value chains” (the specific terminology varies according to the different approaches). From the beginning, these approaches have had a strong focus on inequalities, unequal development and unequal division of labor. Global production network analysis has most recently shifted the focus from chains to networks as a response to current changes in the global economy, which is increasingly organized through highly fragmented and geographically disperse production networks, with transnational companies breaking up the production process in different parts and situating it in diverse countries. Furthermore, it has introduced a broader focus on non-firm actors and the political economic context (Dicken 2003: 9, cited in Plank and Staritz 2009: 4). Coe et al. have defined global production networks (GPN) as “the globally organized nexus of interconnected functions and operations by firms and non-firm institutions through which goods and services are produced and distributed” (Coe et al. 2004: 471).

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Analyses on global production networks have so far mostly focused on agricultural and manufacturing activities,<sup>2</sup> and to a lesser extent, on services, whereby analysis on traditional extractive activities such as oil and mining has been introduced only recently (Smith 2005; Coe 2011: 394; Bridge 2008: 389). In this paper, I want to highlight the importance of extractive processes in a broader sense for global production networks. I argue that these matter not only in terms of traditional extractive activities such as mining and hydrocarbons. Extractive processes matter for all production networks, because they all depend upon the extractive capture of nature. I argue that considering extractive processes in global extraction networks points to struggles around nature appropriation and shows how social relations are mediated through the "natural" environment (and vice versa). Thereby, processes of valuation, shaped amongst other factors by the materiality of resources, play an important role (Dietz 2014; Bridge 2008).

In the second section, I review the shift from global commodity chains to production networks. Next, I discuss the relevance of extractive processes and the materiality of natural resources for global production network analysis. In the fourth section, I focus on one central feature of extractive global production networks, that is, their constitution through inequalities and I furthermore introduce the dimension of power relations that is helpful to grasp inequalities. Moreover, I suggest a combination of global production network analysis, regulation theory and extractivism analysis in order to understand these inequalities and power relations unfolding in political economic contexts and across scales. I give empirical examples for my arguments in all sections, many of them stemming from my research and insights gained in Bolivia over approximately ten years. Finally, I summarize my central findings in the conclusions.

This discussion of inequalities in extractive production networks shall contribute to specifying socio-ecological inequalities within the *desiguALdades.net* research network (see Dietz 2014: 2). Braig, Costa and Göbel highlight three dimensions of socio-ecological inequalities that have been discussed in the context of Latin American extractivism debates and the emerging transregional (inter)dependencies: conflicts, the distribution of costs and risks as well as knowledge and practices (Braig et al. 2013: 5-6). Lillemets (2013) dedicates her analysis to the dimension transnationalization in

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2 Global production network analysis has focused on a series of different approaches including: cultural political economy, hegemony and knowledge; labor and labor agency; issues of ownership and the Marxian law of value from a macro perspective; upgrading, financialization and geopolitics; international standards and ethical campaigns; the role of infrastructure, logistics, transport and communication as well as waste and consumption (Coe 2011: 392f; 395-396; Ciccantell and Smith 2009: 372). Furthermore, Coe refers to Kelly's (2009) study, which introduces the notion of global reproduction networks and therefore reminds that these production systems are not only based on firms and states, but also on spaces of social reproduction "that (re)produce the labour force, notably the household and the community" (Coe 2011: 395).

the configuration of inequalities, whereas Guimarães (2012) explores the environment-inequality nexus and proposes a research agenda for considering the underlying consumption and production pattern, regulation, and climate change, amongst others. I hope to make a contribution to specifying these socio-ecological inequalities within the *desiguALdades.net* research network from the perspective of global production networks related to extractive processes.

## 2. From Global Commodity Chains to Production Networks

Global production network analysis builds upon three approaches: the analysis of commodity chains, global commodity chains and global value chains (Plank and Staritz 2009: 8; see also Fischer 2009). The term “commodity chain” was taken up by world system approaches that defined it as “a network of labor and production processes whose end result is a finished commodity” (Hopkins and Wallerstein 1986: 159). Taking a long historical perspective starting in the “long 16<sup>th</sup> century”,<sup>3</sup> the aim is to analyze how broad capitalist processes produce inequalities such as unequal development and unequal distribution of surplus.

The analyses of “global commodity chains” and “global value chains” – influenced by discussions in economic sociology, comparative development studies and transaction economy and business studies respectively – highlight the role of companies in the governance of commodity or value chains. Within the global commodity chain schemata of producer-driven chains in capital-intensive sectors (such as the Fordist vertically integrated company) versus buyer-driven chains in work-intensive sectors (such as the highly internationalized new network companies), and within the global value chain identification of five types of governance (hierarchical, captive, relational, modular and market structures)<sup>4</sup> respectively, they focus on the role of lead firms and first-tier suppliers and the possibilities of industrial upgrading for companies and

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3 The “long 16<sup>th</sup> century” (Hopkins and Wallerstein 1986: 159) refers to the time period from 1450 to 1640 during which the capitalist economy arose out of the crises of feudalism. This led to a highly unequal development with Europe gaining power.

4 The first type is characterized through market structures, business partner can be changed frequently. The modular value chain makes products to a customer’s specifications, the chain is more complex. In the relational value chain, there is strong mutual dependency, founded on reputation, social and spatial proximity as well as familiar and ethnical ties. In captive value chains, small suppliers depend on big buyers and there is a high degree of intervention and control by the lead firm. The hierarchical type is characterized by direct operational control and intellectual property. For more detail see Kaplinsky 2013: 8 and Bair 2008: 16-17.



countries to capture more surplus<sup>5</sup> (for a summary see Plank and Staritz 2009: 10).<sup>6</sup> Both approaches, however, fall short in considering other-than-firm-arrangements and actors.

Global production network analysis, as developed within economic geography (see Coe 2011: 390), shifted the focus from chains to networks as a response to a global economy increasingly organized through highly fragmented and geographically disperse production networks and transnational companies breaking up the production process in different parts and countries (Henderson et al. 2002: 444; Dicken 2003: 9 in Plank and Staritz 2009: 4; Jessop et al. 2008: 390-391, 398-399). Such “very fast and highly responsive” (Tokatli 2008: 23) network structures have been evidenced in the global clothing industry, however, it remains to be seen if this is also the case for extractive networks.

This perspective highlights that networks “constitute and are re-constituted by the economic, social and political arrangements of the places they inhabit” (Henderson et al. 2002: 446). My previous research documented the political arrangements influencing global production networks very clearly, as the 2006 nationalization of the hydrocarbons sector in Bolivia has led to the integration of state firms into these networks, to an increased state participation, renegotiation of prices and of all contracts with transnational companies (Radhuber 2010).

Furthermore, it considers a broad spectrum of actors, such as supranational organizations, government agencies, business associations, NGOs, trade unions, or consumer groups (Henderson et al. 2002; Coe et al. 2008: 279-289; Coe 2011: 390; Plank and Staritz 2009: 10; Smith 2015: 297) – to which I would also add social organizations and indigenous communities. Such diverse actors influencing global production networks became evident in the above mentioned Bolivian nationalization example, as it was trade unions, social organizations and indigenous-peasant communities that first brought forth the demand for nationalization. But also on the global level, the NGO Global Witness first exposing the problem of blood diamonds in

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5 According to Bair, upgrading can occur through producing goods with more quality and at higher prices, through using better technology and production systems, through changing to a higher-value sector and through integrating suppliers beyond basic production (Bair 2005: 164-165).

6 Revised literature on these two approaches includes: Gibbon et al. 2008: 320; 328-329; Gereffi and Korzeniewicz 1994; Plank and Staritz 2009: 8; Gereffi et al. 2005: 83-89, 96-97; Kaplinsky 2013: 8; Bair 2005: 16-17, 157.



1998 has led to the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme,<sup>7</sup> a voluntary agreement that states can decide to join, resulting in further controls on exports and imports, in a reduction of markets for illicit diamonds and in starving funds for rebel armies, weapons and ammunition (Global Witness 2006).<sup>8</sup>

Finally, global production network analysis highlights different forms of embeddedness. According to Liu and Dicken, the term “active embeddedness” refers to “localized assets [...] as a matter of choice” (Liu and Dicken 2006: 1232; see also Coe 2011: 391). This means that local advantages in terms of resource availability, state provided infrastructure, water supply or the probability of achieving consensus of the local population can encourage companies to initiate activities and create networks in certain areas. But there is also obligated embeddedness in “contexts where the firm has to comply with state criteria in order to access such assets” (Coe 2011: 391) as occurred after nationalization in Bolivia.

### **3. How Extractive Processes and the Materiality of Natural Resources Matter**

Next, I want to examine the role extractive processes have for and in global production networks. So called extractive networks are often treated as networks related to traditional extractive activities such as mining and hydrocarbons. However, I argue that the extractive capture of nature, referred to as broader extractive processes, is the basis of any production network.

Bridge (2008: 402) has pointed to extractive production networks, understood as those related to traditional extractive activities such as mining and exploitation of hydrocarbons. In his words, the beginnings and ends of these production networks' processes interface with the natural environment, and this distinguishes them from

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7 The “Kimberley Process (KP) [...] [is] a joint governments, industry and civil society initiative to stem the flow of conflict diamonds – rough diamonds used by rebel movements to finance wars against legitimate governments” (Global Witness 2015; Kimberley Process 2015; Feldt 2014). Global Witness resigned as an official observer to the Process in 2011, mainly because of the narrow definition of conflict minerals.

8 Another example is the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI), a “global Standard to promote open and accountable management of natural resources” proposed by a coalition of non-firm actors, that is: academics, journalists and civil society organizations (EITI 2015a). Seeking “to strengthen government and company systems, inform public debate and enhance trust” (EITI 2015b) it has the potential to significantly influence global production networks (Küblböck 2014: 89-97). However, companies probably still exert the most influence on global production networks, as shows the EU Raw Materials Initiative (RMI) from 2000 and updated in 2011 that first of all aims at securing access to non-energy minerals on the world market and improving the supply of raw materials from sources within the EU, representing the interests of lobbying industries and specifically the German metal industry (Küblböck 2014: 89-97).

non-extractive networks. He illustrates this through an illuminating analysis of the oil sector, stating that:

there are two significant differences about the oil GPN [global production networks] that distinguish it from other, non-extractive networks [...]. These differences relate to the two end points where economic processes interface with the natural environment via processes of commodification and enclosure (Bridge 2008: 396-397).

He specifies that at

the start of the chain hydrocarbons are 'captured' from the environment, commodified and shunted into the economy via the extraction and production of crude oil and natural gas. Hydrocarbons are then processed, refined and geographically proliferated throughout the global economy as a profusion of commodities and mobilities that have come to define modern life in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. At the end of the chain hydrocarbons are de-commodified: through their consumption, dissociation and disposal they accumulate in the natural environment as, for example, urban air pollution, pesticide residues, plastics in landfills or rising atmospheric stocks of carbon dioxide (Bridge 2008: 396-397).

I however consider that extractive processes need to be considered for any, extractive and non-extractive, networks because the extractive capture of nature is the base for any production process and network. Ciccantell and Smith (2009: 361) have stated before that commodities can only emerge from locally based extractive and productive systems. These authors argue that research has mainly focused on manufactured goods and ignored the starting point of the production process. I build upon their basic point that it is necessary to consider the beginning and the end of the production processes, with the difference that I would not locate extractive processes exclusively at the beginning and the end but generally along the production process, because the processing of natural resources may also require the extractive capture of nature, such as lands, water, technical equipment etc. But this does not change their basic argument that no matter whether the focus is on light manufacturing, infrastructure, buildings/housing, heavy equipment or others such as the clothing industry, they all require raw materials that have to be extracted from the natural environment.

Considering extractive processes in global production network analysis is particularly relevant because it allows taking into account local, national and international struggles around nature appropriation in a setting where, as Ciccantell and Smith recall, such

production networks are often very integrated at a global scale but locally disarticulated. These struggles often occur between actors that are part of production networks and those who are against activities proposed by these networks. In order to follow such a perspective in analysis, it is helpful to build upon three contributions that provide us useful conceptual tools: (1) global production network analysis focusing on extractive activities; (2) debates on extractivism giving insights into extractive processes; and (3) literature specifying postcolonial societal conditions in the Global South, where most of these extractive processes take place.

Global production network analysis has taken into account extractive processes only partially, whereas the specific phenomenon of extractivism has been widely neglected. Some pioneer work on global production networks related to traditional extractive activities such as mining and hydrocarbon exploitation has been done by Bridge (2008: 402). He characterizes production networks in the oil sector through two basic tensions: first, the tension between resource-holding states and resource-seeking firms; and second, between producers and consumers regarding the distribution of value.

Also Dicken, who is partly building upon Bridges' work, sketches the basic extractive industry production circuit (exploration, development, extraction, processing, distribution and consumption) and specifies on the oil and copper sector. Both authors provide crucial insights into the dynamics between states and companies, which I will use as a starting point to discuss in the last part of section 4 the broader political economic context that shapes global production networks (Dicken 2011: Chapter 8; and see Ciccantell and Smith 2009 as discussed below).

Bridge's analysis of the oil industry reveals the heuristic potentials of the inclusion of the extractive sector for a more differentiated understanding of global production networks. He names three specificities of the landed nature of networks related to the oil sector: first, the nature-based character of extractives; second, the influence of materiality of resources on the organization of production; and third, the territoriality of resource-embeddedness (Bridge 2008: 412; also Bridge and Wood 2005).<sup>9</sup>

Building on Bridges pioneer work and specifically the first two characteristics that he mentions, I want to make two points. On one hand, considering extractive processes in the analysis of global production networks reveals struggles around the appropriation of nature, or, more conceptually spoken and paraphrasing Dietz (2014), how social relations are mediated through the "natural" environment (and vice versa). This, again,

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9 In the following, I will treat the first two characteristics, the third is beyond the scope of this paper.

has to do with processes of commodification and valuation.<sup>10</sup> As highlighted by Bridge (2008: 395, 397), all extractive industries have to do with processes of commodification that change social relations. They “rest on the process that Marx termed primitive accumulation: the moment through which mineral bearing lands are acquired and former land uses and social relations re-tooled for [e.g.] mining” (Bridge 2008: 404).

On the other hand, the resources’ materiality plays an important role in processes of valuation in global production networks, referring apart from the location of resources to their specific qualities. As Dicken has written, resources are “*locationally specific*. They are where they are” (Dicken 2011: 244, original emphasis), which limits the spatial flexibility of the social network. But alongside the resources’ location, their materiality is equally importance for processes of valuation. Bridge shows that in the oil sector the location of oil reserves matters just as much as material (physical and chemical) qualities of oil, including the reserve size and the relative ease for extraction (Bridge 2008: 403, 412, 493-494). These material qualities of oil can include: the depth from surface, flow characteristics, the size of the pool reserve, its location in relation to markets and infrastructure as well as variations in the quality of crude (Bridge 2008: 403-404).<sup>11</sup> Alongside other factors such as ownership, access and control over resources and rents, they influence the way value is created and rents are captured.<sup>12</sup>

The next bulk of literature that can be helpful for an analysis of global production networks that takes into account extractive processes is the literature on extractivism. Whereas resource extraction in general is a necessary component of any production process, extractivism more narrowly refers to an accumulation pattern that is based on the overexploitation of successively rarer and often nonrenewable natural resources and on the expansion of the frontier of resource exploitation towards territories previously considered unproductive. It is oriented towards primary commodity export rather than internal processing and consumption. Furthermore, it refers not only to traditional activities, such as mining and hydrocarbons, but also to forestry, agrobusiness, (e.g. soybean or palm oil monoculture), compensation areas (e.g. carbon sinks) etc. and I

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10 For an understanding of valuation of nature, see Boyer 2015.

11 These can include: the density, the lack of sulfur compounds (which would require additional cleaning procedures), the pouring point (related to the wax or bitumen content) and the presence of salt or metal.

12 Some material qualities of nature can also be technologically manipulated as can be observed in agriculture or in a more complex manner in biotechnological processes, which might even create independence from resources’ location (Boyer 2015). Social organization such as political and military strategies aim at improving the spatial flexibility in terms of accessibility of resources (Ciccantell and Smith 2009: 378). For example, the EU Raw Materials Initiative (RMI) or repression of indigenous protests against resources and related infrastructure projects (such as the protests against the construction of a road through the National Park and Indigenous Territory Isiboro Securé TIPNIS in Bolivia, see Achtenberg 2013) both aim at improving access to resources.

add massive extraction of water resources for hydropower, since a natural resource, water, is extracted for over-accumulation, in order to export electricity (Massuh 2011; Göbel 2015; Radhuber 2011).

Global production networks are based upon extractive processes, including resource extraction shaped by at least some of the just mentioned extractivist patterns. Hence, they are also shaped by several of the consequences of extractivism. Göbel has stated (2015) that extractivism always has environmental, economic and social impacts. The degree of these impacts depends on a series of factors, including the type of product, the extraction technique, institutional and legal frameworks. Such environmental impacts can include contamination through mining or hydrocarbon extraction. Economically, extractivist projects has been related to increased, so called, “external determination”, i.e. from world markets, and to low industrialization, since surplus is mainly generated after the exportation of primary goods, when resources are being processed. Socially, they have triggered conflicts in many ways, e.g. when contamination is contested. But conflicts furthermore arise in the context of extractivism’s political consequences. Specifically, extractive processes have not only increased struggles for more participation in extractive processes. They have also given rise to contestations around the appropriation of nature. This mainly refers to disputes about the use of territories and resources, for example local population wanting to use them as their livelihoods, for subsistence or agricultural activities and state or private entities wanting to use them for resource extraction. In this context, indigenous populations tend to be particularly affected, because they live on territories where extraction processes are being developed, depending on more or less extensive territories as their livelihoods. In this context, resource extraction is usually imposed despite resistance, and therefore many authors argue that politically, extractivism has led to a de-democratization of political structures and agency (Tapia 2009: 17-18; Becker 2008: 12, 16; Acosta 2009: 135-141; Gudynas 2011: 9, 2013).

Finally – turning to the last set of literature – extractive processes often take place in the Global South, and therefore postcolonial society formations have to be taken into account as preconditions for global production networks. Based on the contribution of the Bolivian intellectual Rene Zavaleta, Latin American intellectuals have described postcolonial societies as overlapping societies, in which modern and pre-modern forms of production and political authority co-exist, articulated with each other only partially. In the productive realm, these include modern capitalist as well as communitarian, subsistence and patrimonial forms. In the political area, they comprise modern forms of statehood as well as pre-modern political structures such as community assemblies (Chávez et al. 2008: 128; Tapia 2002: 239-247, 305-325; Pimmer 2015 [forthcoming]).

I argue that in this context of overlapping productive forms, what Moore and Boyer label the “cheap appropriation” of nature becomes especially relevant (Moore 2014: 288; Boyer 2015: 9). Moore has pointed out that nature and so called “life-making capacities” are in some cases appropriated without being fully commodified (Moore 2014: 288). They are appropriated non-commodified or partly commodified and function as a subsidy to the production process. He also calls this a cheap appropriation of nature, whereby cheap refers not to cheap prices of commodities, but to this type of subsidy to production, where water, soils, infrastructure or reproduction work is provided but not paid for. Also cheap or forced labor, as well as criminal economies and ecosystem services can support production in this way.

Such cheap appropriation of nature in the Global South, where different productive forms overlap, can form the basis for global production networks. To give an example, indigenous or peasant groups often have own forms of political organization and own forms of productive organization. They gather, hunt, fish, or practice agriculture, at least partially for their own subsistence. This also includes the use and administration of respective lands, water, etc. When resource extraction starts in these territories, not only does part of these groups have the desire to participate and develop concrete proposals on how to do this. Also, cheap nature/resources and labor is appropriated for the production process, such as cheap appropriation of lands, cheap use of regional water supply and state infrastructure and the integration of cheap local personnel (which, as the example of Bolivia’s mining cooperatives shows, are often additionally supported by their original communities in terms of food and reproductive work, see Radhuber and Andreucci 2015). This cheap appropriation directly supports global production networks.

#### **4. Understanding Inequalities in Extractive Production Networks**

I now turn to a dimension in analysis that has been central since the first approach on commodity chains, which is the production of inequalities. Furthermore I will apply this to extractive global production networks. Not only are extractive global production networks, including inequalities that constitute them, underexplored as laid out in the previous section. Also, as Dietz has pointed out, besides some relational approaches, “nature and the non-human world are largely absent from current endeavors of understanding and explaining (persistent) social inequalities” (Dietz 2014: 2).

When it comes to global production networks related to extractive processes, inequalities have been captured by the term “uneven development”. Coe describes global production networks as



a heuristic framework for understanding the interconnectedness and uneven development of the global economy [...] all centrally concerned with the globally coordinated interorganizational relationships that underpin the production of goods and services (Coe 2011: 389).

This uneven development includes, according to Bridge (2008: 403), world-economic spatial inequalities in terms of differential access to markets and resources.

These spatial inequalities find expression in an uneven international division of labor.<sup>13</sup> Overcoming spatial barriers and accelerating production processes in a setting of increasingly harmonized production and consumption patterns continuously supports this unequal division of labor. In food networks, Vinz and Behr show how processes of “deterritorialization” (*Enträumlichung*) and acceleration of transport dissolve the spatial/territorial nexus between places of food production and consumption (Vinz 2007: 43; Behr 2013: 64). In the clothing industry, the chain Zara, which is part of a group called *Industria de Diseño Textil* (Inditex), has constituted an exception up to date, as it owns several facilities in Spain. Most recently, however, it has also started to overcome spatial barriers and consolidating an unequal division of labor by extending production globally, from Morocco to Vietnam. This is supported by accelerated velocity in their networks: “The time between receiving an order at the distribution center and the delivery of the goods to the store was, on average, 24 hours for European shops and a maximum of 48 hours for American and Asian stores” (Tokatli 2008: 31).

Also regarding traditional extractive activities, as has been mentioned before, spatial barriers are overcome when natural resources are extracted and exported as primary goods, and velocity is accelerated through improved infrastructure. The processes of extraction and manufacturing/consumption are dissociated, consolidating an unequal division of labor. This is reflected by the fact that Latin American economies have historically been characterized by primarization, a tendency increasing during the past years. In 2008, primary products as part of total exports range from 55.4% in Brazil to

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13 This unequal division of labor does not only occur between the Global North and South, but also within these, because it also goes along with a harmonization of production and consumption patterns across the world. Brand and Wissen name the “imperial mode of living” as one that is based on patterns of production and consumption that depend on fossil energy carriers and the access to resources, space, work capacity and sinks (Brand and Wissen 2011a: 83). They further write that the beneficiaries of this mode of living are not only societies of the Global North, but further consumer groups of certain countries of the Global South. In total, these beneficiaries include almost 2 billion people, thereby 850 million are located in the Global North and 1.1 billion as new consumers in the Global South – above all from Eastern European countries such as Russia, Poland and the Ukraine; and in China including as many people as in the USA) (Brand 2008: 139; Behr 2013: 63).



92.8% in Venezuela; in Bolivia it was 92.8%, in Ecuador 91.7%, in Chile 88%, in Peru 86.6% and in Colombia 68.5% (Gudynas 2011: 2, elaborated from CEPAL data).<sup>14</sup>

For concretely analyzing these inequalities, it is necessary to understand their constitution through specific power relations at various spatial scales. Levy gives such a view on global production networks, which, as I will show, is particularly useful for analyzing extractive production networks (Levy 2008: 4). Levy elaborates on the term hegemonic stability for global production networks. Hegemony, in his words, refers

to a condition of relative stability in this system, in which a dominant alliance, or 'historical bloc', would emerge. This historical bloc sustains its position through the coercive authority of the state, dominance in the economic realm, and the consensual processes that accommodate subordinate groups to some degree, through a measure of political and material compromise and by the dissemination of ideologies that convey a mutuality of interests (Levy 2008: 20).

Hence, the notion of hegemonic stability is especially useful for understanding why weaker groups might consent to participate in a global production network, in which they cannot decide upon the rules or a fair share of the benefits. Also, it provides insights on potentials and limitations of forces' strategies to challenge or change networks (Levy 2008: 5, 20, 22).

This means that inequalities, on one hand, can be challenged by strategic actors (Levy 2008: 6). My previous research on Bolivia shows this, as environmental justice movements in Huanuni, Bolivia – namely the Network for the Defense of the Desaguadero River Basin and the Lakes Uru-Uru and Poopó (CORIDUP) – demanded action in highly contaminated surroundings of mining activities in and around Huanuni. Social pressure and mobilizations grew so strong that in October 2009 Supreme Decree 0335 was enforced declaring the Cuenca Poopó zone as an environmental emergency zone. However, years later it can be stated that the decree's agenda having included, for example, the building of dikes has not been addressed, and the contamination

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14 As Behr puts it using the vocabulary of global commodity chain analysis: upgrading at some places and times always goes along with downgrading at others, including geographical displacement of overexploitation and environmental impacts and – I would also add – a temporary displacement of these impacts to future generations (Behr 2013). In mining networks, overexploitation through low wages, high health risks and environmental impacts are geographically displaced mainly to the Global South (Radhuber and Andreucci 2015). Plans to develop nuclear energy projects, on the other hand – such as currently developed by the Bolivian state – entail a temporary displacement of possible risks and impacts (e.g. through nuclear waste) to future generations (Banchón 2014; Radhuber 2015). Enhanced – so called – South-South relations in this context, such as increased Chinese investments in the Latin American mining sector (see e.g. Hogenboom and Fernández Jilberto 2010), change geostrategic actor setting but not necessarily these geographical and temporary displacements of risks and impacts.

of soil and water continues at this end of the production network (CEPA 2009, 2013; Radhuber and Andreucci 2015).

On the other hand, it shows how weaker groups give their (relative) consent to global production networks that are unfavorable for them. Again, in my past research, I have shown that in spite of the intense social mobilizations since 2000 that were led by indigenous and peasant organizations and made the election of President Evo Morales and the MAS party in 2006 possible, the MAS government was unable to implement part of their agenda. This originates in the developments since the end of the constitutional process,<sup>15</sup> when the oppositional, mainly entrepreneurial forces again gained influence, and simultaneously, indigenous demands and rights were marginalized. The initially strong indigenous-peasant bloc was divided, and peasant interests privileged over indigenous ones.<sup>16</sup> This division mainly has to do with extractive projects, because they put in danger indigenous territories through expropriation and contamination, whereas peasant groups are less dependent from specific extensive territories and more often benefitted by “favors” offered in the context of extractive activities (e.g. infrastructure projects). Through new social policies and these “favors”, however, part of the indigenous-peasant bloc could be won for extractivist politics related to global production networks (Radhuber 2015).<sup>17</sup>

These power relations and inequalities in extractive production networks furthermore unfold in specific political economic contexts that have to be followed up. Regulation theory offers a framework for considering broader political economic issues, that is, a perspective for understanding social embeddedness in global capitalist economy and the forms of social regulation that seek to regulate its tensions and contradictions in historic cycles of capitalist development (which, as mentioned in section 3, can still depend on the appropriation of non or partly capitalist forms; see Jessop 2001; Becker 2013; Brand and Wissen 2011a).<sup>18</sup> It specifically provides concepts for the analysis of the

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15 In Bolivia, from 2006 to 2009, a new Constitution was elaborated in a highly participatory process.

16 These mainly differ in the sense that indigenous organizations demand more self-determination, self-government and autonomy, whereas peasant organizations are more often sated with an increase of social and welfare politics.

17 This analysis could still be extended by stronger incorporating supranational actors in the analysis of hegemonic stability, as signaled in previous work.

18 Here it is important to note that regulation theory analyzes global capitalist economy. Trade networks have existed since long before the development of capitalist structures, as show the Sumerian's trade networks that existed already 3 millennia B. C. as well as the Silk Road from China to Europe from approx. 100 B.C. on. The world capitalist system developed, according to world system theory (Hopkins and Wallerstein 1986), throughout the long 16<sup>th</sup> century. Players such as the East India Company and Hudson Bay Company contributed to a new quality of production networks supporting trade and exchange though at that point not yet embodying production processes at a global scale (Plank and Staritz 2009: 4; Gereffi 2005 in Plank and Staritz 2009).

coherence between production, distribution and consumption patterns through its two key terms: “accumulation regime” and “(mode of) social regulation”. An accumulation regime is defined as societal organization of production, circulation, consumption and distribution (including non-capitalist relations). Social regulation refers to the manner in which accumulation regimes, despite their conflictive and contradictory character, are reproduced (Lipietz 1988: 11; Boyer 1990).<sup>19</sup>

Smith (2015) has developed a specific operationalization of regulation theory for global production network analysis,<sup>20</sup> but he has overlooked the ecological dimension that can grasp extractive processes, i.e. the socio-ecological conditions that form the starting point for (capitalist) production processes (Altvater 2005; Brand and Wissen 2011b). This ecological dimension has been addressed by regulation theory in two ways. First, the ecological limitation has been integrated into the framework more recently, referring to the regulation of the access to and use of nature/resources, extraction and sinks for productive and reproductive activities. This has raised new questions, referring to the access to natural resources, the extent and forms of commodification as well as the distribution of benefits and costs over time and space (Becker 2002: 277, 2013; Brand and Wissen 2015). Second, geographical research focusing on subnational levels and non-state actors (e.g. private firms and social movements) since the early 2000s has shown that the introduction of regulatory changes intends to avoid conflicts related to extractive projects (Gibbs and Jonas 2000; Bridge 2000; Bridge and Jonas 2002; Bridge and McManus 2000; Himley 2012; Radhuber and Andreucci 2015).

Both contributions from regulation theory show that not only specific power balances, but also ways of relating to nature influence accumulation and regulation in global production networks (also see Brand 2011: 87; Behr 2013: 40, 46). In a recent contribution co-authored with Diego Andreucci (2015), we have shown this by identifying an extractivist accumulation regime in Bolivia that is primarily based on the appropriation of nature and an extension of the resource frontier; hence it is primarily extensive and

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19 More specifically, there are six basic structural forms of regulation: the wage relation (about surplus production and absorption and the reproduction of labor), the competence relation (about strategies of surplus use and competition between different capitals and workers), the money relation (referring to the process when capitalist commodity is changed into money, the reproduction of wage workers that depends on monetary remuneration, and the money limitation of the state), the state form, the form of national integration in world market structures and the ecological limitation as proposed by Becker, Brand and Wissen. Moreover, the commodity and state form are basic institutional forms that influence all structural forms (Brand and Wissen 2015; Becker 2002: 277).

20 He suggests five social relations as possible foci, including: (1) relations between producers and capturers of economic surplus, (2) the relations between different capital fractions, (3) the coordination, networks, connections and competence between productive entities embedded in industrial systems through division of labor, (4) relations between the productive entities and (5) relations between different state strategies, located at different geographical scales.

extraverted.<sup>21</sup> It is furthermore oriented towards primary commodity export rather than internal processing and consumption (Gudynas 2013). Brand and Dietz (2014) have argued that we are evidencing not only an economic form of accumulation but an extractivist mode of development in several Latin American countries that is furthermore based on characteristic socioeconomic, political and cultural structures.<sup>22</sup>

Regulation theory furthermore brings a renewed focus on the state that is important considering that the above mentioned power relations and ways to relate to nature are mediated by the state. In extractivist accumulation regimes, respectively modes of development, the state intervenes in import-oriented models, for example by holding or assigning property rights. But it also functions as a facilitator in export-oriented models that Jessop and Sum (2006) call “exportism” and “exportist regimes”, through providing infrastructure, transport, communication, export zones and credit facilitations as highlighted by Smith (2015: 290). The Bolivian Mining Law promulgated in May 2014 is such an example, it shows that business and state representatives interested in creating incentives for investment exerted enormous influence on the Law that would sustain an exportist regime. Others such as indigenous groups that proposed that communitarian mining and co-administration as well as reducing socio-ecological consequences of mining were not even included in the process of rewriting the Law (Radhuber and Andreucci 2015).

Following up on Ciccantell and Smith (2009: 361, 377, 393) who have pointed to the space (and time)<sup>23</sup> sensitiveness of analysis, inequalities in (extractive) global production networks do only unfold in specific political economic contexts but also develop along scales. A combination of global production network analysis, regulation theory and analysis on extractivism can be fruitful for an analysis on diverse scales. Specifically, global production network analysis is strong in considering the global transnational level, whereas regulation theory, in addition to global and national accumulation and regulation, sets a focus on statehood. It can help to show how production networks

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21 When we draw on regulation theory for global production network analysis, accumulation can be distinguished in productive/fictive, extensive/intensive and extraverted/introverted (Becker 2002: 269-270).

22 The mode of social regulation comprises the bundle of customs, norms, rules, conventions and interventions that mediate and sustain production, accumulation and consumption (Martin 2007, cit. in Himley 2008: 437); a regulation dispositive refers to a coherent ensemble of a mode of regulation; and a mode of development to a stabilized accumulation regime and a fitting coherent mode of regulation (Becker 2002: 278-279).

23 These parentheses are inserted because the focus on time sensitiveness cannot be included to the same extent as the focus space-sensitiveness due to the scope of the paper.

affect social groups unevenly across time and space (Becker 2002: 280-281).<sup>24</sup> Analysis on extractivism, in turn, has focused on national and local scales.<sup>25</sup> It has shown “that states play a usually strong role in extractive production networks, and that changes in state policies around resource ownership and access can produce large-scale changes in the configuration of the network” (Bridge 2008: 413; also see Bridge 2008: 393, 411-415). Moreover, analysis on extractivism’s focus on local conflicts provides insights into how production networks remain territorially embedded and are reconfigured into new trans-local geographies. This can help to develop global production network analysis’ potential – as identified by Ciccantell and Smith (2009: 363) – to bring the spatiality and local-specific processes that constitute the capitalist world-economy to the center. Especially in extractive global production networks,

the local profoundly shapes the global [...], with factors such as local geology, topography, hydrology, indigenous populations, conflicts over resource access, efforts to capture the benefits of extraction for local populations, and a variety of other location-specific characteristics and processes shaping the strategies of global firms and national states to utilize these resources (Ciccantell and Smith 2009: 362; also see Bunker and Ciccantell 2005, 2007).

## 5. Conclusions

In this paper, I have built on the global production network literature and argued for the relevance of extractive processes and the materiality of natural resources. Not only has the relevance of global production networks increased over the past decades due to a growing global economic integration and a shift of production processes to countries of the Global South, but also academic debates have intensified. Global production network analysis builds upon the world system approaches on “commodity chains” that analyze unequal development in capitalist cycles (Hopkins and Wallerstein 1986: 159); and on the approaches on “global commodity chains” and “global value chains” (Gereffi and Korzeniewicz 1994; Bair 2005) that focus on governance between firms – proposing a distinction in producer-driven chains versus buyer-driven chains, and five forms of governance from market forms to vertically integrated ones – but tend to

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24 Jessop et al. (2008: 397) furthermore point out that crises of accumulation or regulation can occur, or be solved, when developments (he calls them institutional manifestations) at different spatial scales diverge.

25 Literature on extractivism, in turn, has neglected the transnational dimension. This has been criticized with respect to the resource course literature, one of the origins of debates on extractivism. Paraphrasing Swyngedouw (2007, cited in Bridge 2008: 390), a post-political policy discourse around extractive industries resulted, which places emphasis on good governance of natural resources and questions of state competence and efficiency. However, it neglects other topics, such as diverging interests among firms, states and consumers, all of which are transnational issues.



neglect other-than-firm arrangements and actors. Global production network analysis uses the term “networks” for applying multiple relational forms and directions, instead of the linear connotation of “chains”, and emphasizes these different arrangements and actors. In addition, it argues for the consideration of different forms of embeddedness.

I argue that extractive processes matter to global production networks not only in terms of networks related to traditional extractive activities such as mining and hydrocarbons (Ciccantell and Smith 2009; Bridge 2008). They matter for any production network, because – be it related to light manufacturing, infrastructure, buildings/housing, heavy equipment or other such as the clothing industry – they all depend upon the extractive capture of nature. For such an analysis on global production networks that pays attention to extractive processes, I highlight three conceptual contributions that provide tools for such an endeavor: first global production network analysis focused on traditional extractive activities such as oil and mining. Second, literature on extractivism giving insight into extractive processes. And third, literature on the different societal conditions in the Global South, where these extractive processes actually take place.

Building upon Bridge’s (2008) and Ciccantell and Smith’s (2009) work, I highlight that considering extractive processes in global extraction networks points to struggles around nature appropriation and to how social relations are mediated through the “natural” environment (and vice versa) (Dietz 2014; Bridge 2008), shaped by processes of valuation. Furthermore, Bridge (2008) has shown that the materiality of resources influences processes of valuation fundamentally. The location of resources, which limit the spatial flexibility of global production networks, as well as their material (physical and chemical) characteristics, alongside the reserve size and relative ease of extraction decide upon value creation and rent capturing. Other factors that are relevant include ownership, access and control over resources and rents.

Literature on extractivism in turn shows extractivist patterns that influence extractive global production networks at least partially. While extractivism is specifically understood as an accumulation pattern based on the overaccumulation of resources and oriented primarily towards export without further processing, its patterns refer to environmental impacts, social, economic and political consequences. These include contamination, conflicts, external determination, low industrialization and de-democratization as laid out in this article (Svampa in Massuh 2012; Göbel 2015; Gudynas 2011).

Turning to the last set of literature, I argue that different societal conditions in postcolonial countries must be taken into account as preconditions of global production networks. I specifically refer to the pattern of overlapping societies as highlighted by Bolivian

intellectuals referring to Rene Zavaleta's work (Tapia 2002). In such societies, different social, political and economic forms overlap, the latter including for example indigenous and subsistence forms as well as patrimonial relations alongside modern capitalist forms. In this context, what Moore (2014) calls cheap appropriation of nature, becomes especially relevant, as indigenous lands, water supply on these lands, cheap labor etc. are being appropriated for global production without being fully commodified and paid for.

I then turn to analysis of a dimension that has been basic already to world system theory's commodity chain analysis: the inequalities in global production networks. Not only are extractive production networks still underexplored, but also have the interaction of the "natural" world and social inequalities not been sufficiently considered. The *desiguALdades.net* research network has made a worthwhile effort for contributing to this gap (Dietz 2014).

As to (extractive) global production networks, inequalities have been analyzed as uneven development, referring to world-economic spatial inequalities in terms of differential access to resources, constituting an uneven international division of labor (Coe 2011; Bridge 2008). I show how in the different networks spatial barriers are overcome and processes accelerated, both perpetuating an uneven division of labor. For concretely analyzing inequalities, it is furthermore necessary to consider the underlying power relations. Levy (2008) refers to hegemonic stability for production networks in order to explain the relative stability of this system, and why weaker groups might give their consent without benefitting from the network (e.g. because of ideological and material concessions).

Finally, inequalities and asymmetrical power relations in extractive networks are influenced through the political economic context. The latter can be traced with regulation theory, that proposes to analyze accumulation regimes defined as societal organization of production, circulation, consumption and distribution, and social regulation referring to how often contradictory accumulation regimes are being reproduced (Liepitz 1988).

Starting point for applying regulation theory to extractive production networks is that the latter require socio-ecological conditions. The ecological dimension, able to grasp extractive processes, has been incorporated into regulation theory only recently. First, the ecological limitation has been integrated referring to the differential access to nature/ resources. And second, mainly geographical research has focused on explaining how regulatory changes are introduced in order to avoid conflicts related to extractive projects (Brand and Wissen 2015, 2013; Bridge and Jonas 2002).



Both contributions show that not only power relations, but also ways to relate to nature influence accumulation and regulation in production networks. In a recent contribution, we have shown this by identifying an extractivist accumulation regime in Bolivia, that is mainly based on the appropriation of nature and export, hence it is primarily extensive and extraverted (Andreucci and Radhuber 2015). Dietz and Brand (2014) have stated that this extractivist accumulation model is accompanied by certain socio-economic, political and cultural structures, and therefore argue that it is indeed a mode of development. Finally, regulation theory also introduces a focus on the state to global production network analysis, explaining the state's central role in import- and export-oriented regimes (Smith 2015; Jessop and Sum 2006).

Lastly, these inequalities develop not only in specific political economic contexts, but also at and between scales. I lay out how a combination of global production network analysis, regulation theory and debates on extractivism can enable such an analysis across scales. Whereas global production network focusses on the transnational level, regulation theory helps to grasp global and national embeddedness through the concepts of accumulation, regulation and statehood. Debates on extractivism, in turn, have shown that the state usually plays an important role in extractive production networks and has furthermore focused on the local level that is particularly influential in extractive production networks, and on such new trans-local geographies (Bridge 2008; Ciccantell and Smith 2009).

I hope that this framework for analyzing inequalities within extractive production networks, while considering the political economic context and how they unfold across scales, can contribute to further specifying socio-ecological inequalities, particularly within the *desiguALdades.net* research network.

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