

## Claremont Colleges Scholarship @ Claremont

---

Scripps Senior Theses

Scripps Student Scholarship

---

2014

# An Intersectional Approach to Environmental Political Theory: A Case Study on Modern Andean Bolivian Indigenous Forms of Resistance and Communal Democracy in Relation to Water Rights

Julia E. Seward  
*Scripps College*

---

### Recommended Citation

Seward, Julia E., "An Intersectional Approach to Environmental Political Theory: A Case Study on Modern Andean Bolivian Indigenous Forms of Resistance and Communal Democracy in Relation to Water Rights" (2014). *Scripps Senior Theses*. Paper 509. [http://scholarship.claremont.edu/scripps\\_theses/509](http://scholarship.claremont.edu/scripps_theses/509)

This Open Access Senior Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Scripps Student Scholarship at Scholarship @ Claremont. It has been accepted for inclusion in Scripps Senior Theses by an authorized administrator of Scholarship @ Claremont. For more information, please contact [scholarship@cuc.claremont.edu](mailto:scholarship@cuc.claremont.edu).

AN INTERSECTIONAL APPROACH TO ENVIRONMENTAL POLITICAL  
THEORY:  
A CASE STUDY ON MODERN ANDEAN BOLIVIAN INDIGENOUS  
FORMS OF RESISTANCE AND COMMUNAL DEMOCRACY IN RELA-  
TION TO WATER RIGHTS

By

JULIA ELIZABETH SEWARD

SUBMITTED TO SCRIPPS COLLEGE IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE  
DEGREE OF BACHELOR OF THE ARTS

PROFESSOR CINDY FORSTER  
PROFESSOR STEVEN SAMFORD

APRIL 25, 2014

**Introduction**

Clean water is an increasingly scarce human necessity. Nevertheless, in the global North<sup>1</sup>, it is a common assumption that access to water is guaranteed. We take for granted that it will always be provided, regulated and distributed by the government as a basic right. However, in much of the Global South, three for profit companies control the distribution of potable water. These corporations' Good Samaritan rhetoric argues that water is a good that must be managed and distributed in some way and privatization is an effective alternative to inefficient, unstable public and municipal structures (Laurie 2011, interviewing Jack Jeffery 2006). In the case of Bolivia, this type of natural resource privatization was closely related to the New Economic Policy (NEP) reform and debt relief package adopted in the 1980s (Roddick 1988; Spronk 2007). In reality, the "efficiency" of privatization increased prices by up to 200% (McLane 2012) and did not expand infrastructures to guarantee more people access to water.

The socio-economic power dynamic between the global North and South allows privileged populations and large corporations to continue to take more than their share of natural resources and to ignore direct consequences of resource overuse. At the same time, as is seen in the Bolivian water privatization example, peripheral populations are denied access to essential environmental services and a

---

<sup>1</sup> In *Resisting Global Toxics*, David Pellow explains Global North and Global South, "I use the term *global South* mainly as a social - rather than strictly geographic designation meant to encompass politically and economically vulnerable communities" (Pellow 2007). This is chosen in place of the developed/undeveloped binary. The latter is problematic in that it has historical connotations of economic development (i.e. capitalism) as directly related to being civilized.

fair share of resources. Natural resources like water and clean air are both monopolized and depleted by industrial and post industrial nations and corporations, while the resulting waste<sup>2</sup> is dumped in less powerful nations and on less economically powerful nations and populations.

Privatizing natural resources has serious negative implications. As a result of these policies, monetary wealth is an even more directly influential determinant of who has access to those natural resources that should be considered a basic right. Brute political power reinforces social inequalities and limits opportunities of vulnerable peoples, while reinforcing cycles of environmental exploitation. Resource overuse is sustained because those in power can afford to redirect the consequences of their actions to a less fortunate public. For this reason it is essential to consider the issues of environmentalism as well as environmental justice in the context of complex power structures that allow for environmental degradation by industry and habit by means of degrading global South populations. This paper seeks to provide a theoretical framework to effectively address environmental issues by considering a broader net of mutually influential inequalities that form the context where continued human and environmental exploitation is rampant.

To develop a theoretical framework that addresses the politics of environmental crises and resource scarcity, I will consider environmental issues and related inequalities exemplified in a case study of the Bolivian water crisis. In 1997,

---

<sup>2</sup> Waste: toxic dumps and polluting waste that populations in the Global North do not want in their back yard. Air and water pollution from Global North industrial production that cannot be contained by national borders, waste dumping across national borders, ect. (Pellow 2007).

the World Bank pressured the Bolivian government to privatize their water system in the city of Cochabamba by threatening to withhold \$600 million in debt relief (Shultz 2003). However, the privatization was open to just one bidder: Betchel<sup>3</sup>. With no competition, Betchel was able to immediately charge up to 200% more for water (McLane 2012). Protests ensued, and, eventually after protesters were killed, the issue received international attention (*Cambio* 2013). The eventual victory of the Bolivian protestors in the water wars shows the power that organized peoples and alternative conceptions of democracy can have against large, neoliberal companies and models of development. The water wars are a way to criticize the nature of World Bank and IMF international growth models that give entities of the global North control over the global South through neoliberal “free trade” models. The World Bank is able to serve interests of capitalist corporations. The debt itself originates from taking advantage of developing countries’ poverty. A past of colonial relations reveals that the Global North has a history of exploitative practices. These capitalist nations look to less stable nations for cheap labor and natural resources in order to foster national economic growth and wealth<sup>4</sup>. Water privatization in Cochabamba, Bolivia is an example of the environmental, human and economic exploitation of Latin American nations by international capitalist superpowers. Further, it exemplifies the exploitation of economically vulnerable peoples by privileged populations on a domestic scale.

---

<sup>3</sup> Betchel is a California based engineering giant. Within a few weeks after privatization, Betchel raised water rates by more than 50% (Laurie 2011).

<sup>4</sup> Colonial roots of exploitation and dependency creation are discussed in Chapter 3 on class and environmental intersectionality.

These exploitations are rooted in the ethnic, gendered, and classed inequalities that this study will consider in detail

In this study, I will consider select European, North American, and Latin American theoretical approaches to environmental and social crises of degradation and exploitation in what has been categorized as the developing world by empirical political theorists. I will analyze the Bolivian water crisis with a combination of useful aspects of established environmental theoretical approaches. I will briefly outline the inadequacies and strong suits of each approach to environmental political theory in order to show how certain aspects of each are important to consider. Many of the following theories are highly problematic or narrowly focused. Although many make important contributions to the field, each theory on its own cannot sufficiently address the Bolivian example or environmental politics in a non-European or North American context. The theoretical analysis of the Bolivian water crisis will highlight the extent to which different forms of inequality are interconnected and mutually influential. In discussing the intersection of various inequalities that affect serious environmental problems such as water scarcity in Bolivia, I work to establish a theory that can be applied on a broader scale to transnational environmental crises.

U.S. political theoretical scholarship lacks an appropriate theoretical approach to increasingly severe environmental crises. Predominant theories focus on empirical solutions and often fail to address the transnational nature of environmental crises. In the past decades, environmental theory has begun to touch on the role of gender, class, and race as connected to environmental degradation. The

Bolivian case serves to exemplify how these inequalities contribute to environmental issues, and how environmental issues contribute to inequality. An analysis of the water crisis in Bolivia reveals that predominant environmental theories are inadequate as they fail to properly address the mutual influence and reinforcement of various inequalities that ultimately create a global context spanning from the colonial era to the present that allows for human exploitation, resource exploitation and environmental degradation in the name of capitalist development.

Through a lens of intersectionality the crisis has potential to illustrate how issues of sustainability can be conceptualized as part of a broader politics of equality. By applying relevant environmental theories like environmental and Latin American Marxist theory, indigenous ideologies of communal democracy, aspects of the Green state, and theoretical foundations of the Environmental Justice movement, I will adapt existing environmental political theory to be included as an aspect of intersectional politics. Latin American socialist theoretical work, like that of Enrique Dussel<sup>5</sup>, related to Marxism introduces the influence of racism, ethnicity, culture, and global South experiences that exist in the capitalist system to complicate Marx's narrow class focus. Indigenous ideologies of communal

---

<sup>5</sup> In his conferences titles "1492: el encubrimiento del otro hacia el origen del mito de la modernidad", Dussel discusses how the origins of the imperialistic definition of modernity - as associated with the capitalist, industrial state - were defined in opposition to "the other". (Dussel 1991) This socially constructed divide developed elements of racism and cultural inequality to define colonial, and later capitalist, culture as the modern and advanced as opposed to the less advanced colonized, and later global Southern, nations. Justifications for the colonial and capitalist expansion critiqued by Marx are indeed rooted in racism. Latin American marxists do important work to make the field of socialist theory more relevant to modern global politics.

democracy contribute both ideological and concrete elements to the study. It is here where principles of equitable, sustainable democracy theorized by Marx and Dussel, and to some extent green state theorists, take place in the modern world. *Gobernar en la diversidad* discusses indigenous political movements and communal structures that put important ideologies of communal democracy to practice and fight for recognition of the Aymara indigenous political intellect and campesino democratic practices. Political groups like la *Confederation Sindical Única de Trabajadores Campesinos de Bolivia* and movements like *el Movimiento Bolivia Libre* created spaces where indigenous practices and theories of democracy began to be institutionalized (Leyva et al. 2008). These examples are useful sources in developing a non-Eurocentric theory of environmental politics in the intersectional framework.

A study of the Bolivian water crisis that considers how the ethnic, gendered, economic and environmental identities are connected, overlapping, and continuously influencing one another will help to conceptualize a theory of environmental politics that recognizes key factors that shape our relationship with the environment. In the following review of existing literature, I will assess preexisting environmental political theoretical approaches both for their merits and their inadequacies in order to determine key aspects that can contribute to a more effective approach both on a national and a transnational scale.

#### Existing US and Latin American Literature

First, I will briefly discuss current competing theories of environmental politics and sustainability. These contending approaches present some promising



principles that can be used to form an environmental political theory of sustainability. However, alone they are inadequate and include problematic assumptions and narrow foci. The following review of established environmental political theory literature highlights useful aspects but also acknowledges that these theories tend towards an imperial bias. I will begin with eliminating the more problematic established solutions and then move to theories that will influence the environmental politics of intersectionality that I propose throughout the following chapters.

The Genuine Progress Indicator (GPI) has developed in response to the current Gross Domestic Product (GDP) as the latter does not include progress not measured in monetary gain, importantly progress towards sustainability and productive labor outside of the free market. Environmental aspects in GPI indicators include resource depletion, pollution, environmental damage, and, related to environmental justice, net poverty rates. GPI assesses externalities of capitalist production that are not given weight in the traditional GDP equation (Kubiszewski et al. 2013). Many proponents of GPI recognize the limited effectiveness of the approach, however they hold to the basic assumption that these methods of measurement are the most effective move towards a sustainable economic system. Proponents of progress calculators would argue that by developing additional, more detailed indexes of well being and sustainability, it is possible to adequately address issues like resource overuse and income disparity (Kubiszewski et al. 2013). However accurate it is that a shift from GDP to GPI reflects a positive change in

values, it is ultimately an incomplete, modern imperial, narrow sighted solution to the larger environmental and social crisis.

Economics-based solutions like GPI do not fully acknowledge the extent to which power dynamics influence issues of economic equality. Although they account for many relevant losses and gains outside of simple free market transactions, they do not come to address power dynamics and social inequalities that cause increasing income disparity, pollution, and unequal access to essential natural resources. These power dynamics result from gender, economic, international and racial inequalities. Capitalist economic analyses of environmental degradation and unequal access to natural resources do not consider the social and political landscapes that affect environmental crises and inequalities. Disparate access to natural resources is caused by economic and political power structures. These power dynamics allow certain privileged groups, corporations, and even nations to exploit natural resources while shifting immediate consequences to the global South. Such ongoing exploitation and inequality is not fully explained by even the GPI modification of the free market analysis, let alone more traditional calculation

Further, GPI proves inadequate on a global scale due to its glaring Western bias. Predominant GPI solutions do not consider how economic solutions might be applied in non-capitalist, non-industrial economies. GPI does not have the same implications for economies without a history of large-scale capitalist pro-

duction and material accumulation dependent on exploitation of resources<sup>6</sup>. GPI provides solutions that are somewhat applicable to, but still not a complete solution for, nations that have passed their consumption threshold<sup>7</sup>, however these solutions are not tailored to the needs of nations with different consumption patterns. GPI does not meet the need for a diverse political model apt to address the transnational nature of environmental degradation.

Lastly, GPI solutions assume that capitalism is a viable structure for the progress they discuss to take place. Principles of sustainability, equality and even degrowth do not realistically fit into a capitalist system. Moving past growth and consumption models towards subsistence models suggests a move away from capitalism, however GPI theorists typically avoid conversations surrounding the possibility of an economic paradigm shift. GPI theorists discuss the need for current economic practices to evolve to address resource scarcity, however the centrality of growth, consumption and production to the capitalist economic system make it unsuitable to these changes.

For these reasons, GPI is a narrowly focused and incomplete solution to modern environmental crises. It is valuable in that it introduces the idea of measuring progress by standards that are related to environmental concerns and injustices. For capitalist nations, it legitimizes a more helpful definition of progress without requiring a drastic paradigm shift. By incentivizing sustainability and in-

---

<sup>6</sup> As countries of the global North have (European and North American capitalist superpower nations)

<sup>7</sup> The threshold value that determines how much a given nation must expend to sustain its population.

come equality, the GPI framework works to influence more moral decision-making. Although a lesser evil when compared to traditional GDP capitalist economic measurements of progress, GPI provides an incomplete, western biased solution. GPI does not provide adequate framework to solve ecological crises of the global North, and it certainly does not make sense for countries in the global South. What is gained from this model is the idea of a shift in priorities from profit to sustainability and the importance of changing the U.S. definition of progress.

A second predominant theoretical approach to the environmental political issues is the notion of the green state, or “green democracy.” Founding green state theorists like Robyn Eckersley and Peter Cristoff write from an Australian perspective. This theory provides an ecological interpretation of democratic practice. Theorists focus on the idea of expanding the democratic moral community; the theory presents a democratic framework that considers the interests of non-human species and surrounding environments as equally legitimate in relation to human interests. Two key points of interest are how to go about restructuring current democratic institutions and how to foster a more informed and passionate citizenry. Green state theorists recognize the complex nature of defining a citizenry in the increasingly globalized socio-political landscape, especially in the case of environmental concerns that cannot be defined in terms of national borders. Eckersley argues that an effective citizenry of a green democracy would consist of a flexible electorate that changes depending on the issue at hand. Further, a green democratic state would necessitate international mobilization in order to integrate interests and foster cooperation in addressing prevalent environmental issues at

hand. In this flexible, international community, decision-making would take into account the importance of biological diversity, the needs of future generations, and the need for their decisions to be precautionary and reflexive (Eckersley 2004). Potentially, the principles of the Green state could work against capitalist production, however green democratic theorists generally do not take a strong, unified stance on economic aspects.

Structurally, the Green state theory focuses on green democratic processes and does not establish strict green end goals. Green state analysis argues that the very concept of democracy contradicts the idea of ends based action. The specific goals of environmentalists cannot take precedence over principles like due process (Christoff et al. 2013). In order to create a green democracy, green theory works to redefine the human relationship to the rest of the world as one of sustainability, reciprocity and respect. Key structural changes cannot guarantee green *outcomes* but can ensure the greening of democratic *processes*. Mike Mills explains, “anything which works to diversify the political community, to expand its moral constituency, to open up the number of political opportunity structures for the constituency’s interests and which encourages tolerance and compassion in decision making will, to a greater or lesser extent, promote some aspect of green democracy.” (Mills 1996). To adhere to these green principles, the U.S/European value hierarchy should be altered to remain true to on broad principles of green ecology rather than narrow interests of the materialistic individual. The green state would argue that this necessitates a compromise of individualistic interests.

Green democracy offers some promising interpretations and innovations for the democratic process, however its conception of democracy and democratic evolution is biased by its focus on what U.S. based theory categorizes as ‘western’ democracy. It does not address differentiations and inequalities among humans or the issue of unequal representation and value of the interests of people within this human population. Further, it offers a template for development that assumes an already democratically inclined political structure. The approach argues that democracy is the form of government most apt to address ecological concerns, however it does not discuss how this transition might look for non-democratic nations where the historical context is not one of U.S. democratic values. Although it provides some promising concepts, and does require U.S. and European theorists to conceptualize a complete political paradigm shift, the green democratic state is flawed in its narrow focus on the environmental political concerns of North American and some European governments. Further, its reliance on “green means” rather than concrete “green” requirements relies too heavily on individualistic motive. I question whether the individualist democratic framework will motivate citizens to educate themselves and act upon environmental degradation in a timely and effective manner. Further, the green democratic approach fails to present a convincing complementary economic model, since western democracy is typically paired with capitalism; the neglect to address the economic issues of environmental politics effectively ignores the environmental issues of resource over use associated with capitalist practices.

The green state presents key progressive concepts by considering the relevance of a broader array of needs and interests. However, it is an insufficient way to approach both the Bolivian example and broader environmental crises at hand. The green state could be strengthened and made more applicable environmental politics of the global South that introduce communal democratic ideologies present in the Bolivian Andean indigenous societies of this study, in contrast to the more individualistic interpretations of democracy in traditional green theory. Relevant to the focal case studies in the subsequent chapters, green democracy would be strengthened if it took seriously principles of sustainability, communalism, and respect for the earth. These principles have already been successfully established as part of many Bolivian Andean indigenous groups' cultural practice and as influential components of grass roots democratic practices (Congreso Nacional 2008; Bonilla 2003; Ticona et al. 1995). Not only would this make the theory more internationally relevant, it would acknowledge that there have been examples of this type progress being made for quite some time<sup>8</sup>. This acknowledgement would necessitate a very important step forward on the part of U.S. theory - to acknowledge that alternative conceptions of democracy are in fact the more advanced in many important way

Lastly, I will address the socialist critique of the capitalist structure with an emphasis on its relevance to environmental political theory. The Marxist socialist critique on capitalism argues that the capitalist economic cycle depends on the

---

<sup>8</sup> Indigenous principles of the importance of sustainability as part of socio-political practices date back far before the colonial era. (Silverblatt 1987)

exploitation of working class people and natural resources for market gains. Critiques include the idea that production-consumption based economics are inherently unsuited to social equality and sustainability. Overproduction profiting the capitalist cycle of production results in an increasing gap between the working class and the elite, as well as resource overuse. This gap means that capitalist industrial and postindustrial powers do not face immediate consequences for environmental exploits<sup>9</sup>. Instead, they redistribute these burdens to poorer regions and individuals. The Marxist socialist critique provides a powerful critique of capitalist processes and values that can be used to highlight the connection between environmental degradation, social inequality and exploitation. Although the traditional Marxist framework would argue that race, gender and environmental identities are all secondary to class, neomarxists of the Latin American school do important work to modify Marxism in a way that acknowledges the centrality of these identities in the politics of inequality in countries like Bolivia. The neomarxist race conscious interpretation of Marxist is relevant to my analysis, however it requires additional theory to develop the traditional critique in a way that focuses

---

<sup>9</sup> In *Resisting Global Toxics*, David Pellow explains the relationship between capitalist profit making and environmental exploitation in the global South: “capitalism is a system that is ideologically wedded to infinite economic growth...With regard to the ecosystem, capitalist market economies require increasing extraction of materials and energy” (Pellow 2007). In *World Risk Society*, Ulrich Beck explains the unequal distribution of profit and of risk, while wealth accumulates at the top in capitalist production, environmental instability follows the opposite pattern “the possibilities and abilities to deal with risk, avoid them or compensate for them are probably unequally divided” (Beck 1987). These risk and wealth stratifications as wealth accumulation is a direct result of environmental risk taking and resource appropriation by the capitalist class.



more directly on concerns of environmentalism and environmental justice in the global South. The socialist critique is criticized by U.S. environmental political theoretical schools for lack of existing long lasting, environmentally friendly socialist political structures to serve as concrete examples of this abstract critique. However, grassroots examples and ecosocialist<sup>10</sup> schools show that there indeed are examples of just this type of socialist democratic practice in Latin American indigenous communities (Wall 2011; Leyva et al. 2008; Wall 2010). The socialist critique questions basic assumptions about the capitalist market, and is a good basis to understand the connection between the exploitation of workers and of nature. Leyva, Burguete and Speed provide detailed studies of rural indigenous influence in governance and politics in Bolivia to argue that the changes necessary in the process of decapitalization of the state to meet the actual interests of the peoples can use preexisting indigenous models of micro governance, “la existencia de procesos moleculares de autogobierno indígena en diferentes comunidades y regiones de Bolivia como una de las posibles bases para el cambio” (Leyva et al. 2008)

I will address the issue of the resource privatization, and the broader issue of politics in the context of resource scarcity, environmental injustices and environmental inequalities with a case study on the Bolivian water crisis of 2000 in

---

<sup>10</sup>Derek Wall discusses ecosocialism in a 2011 interview with a british leftist newspaper, he explains that ecosocialism is concerned with rejecting capitalism on a systemic level as it “tends towards destruction of the conditions necessary to sustain life” and focuses on a marxist analysis of socialism that prioritizes a democratic communist ownership of means of production by the people. Examples of this model are found in Latin American grassroots democratic structures (Wall 2010)

Cochabamba, Bolivia. This case study is valuable on a concrete level, but also contributes on a theoretical level. To address and to theorize the crisis of 2000, I will principally employ tenets of the socialist approach concretized by relevant current Environmental Justice movements, indigenous conceptions of sustainability and democracy, and key contributions from the green state approach. The environmental socialist critique can be expanded through a consideration of modern Environmental Justice movements that adapt abstract base-superstructure and working class versus capitalist class critiques of capitalist exploitation to address contemporary environmental problems. These include the inordinate dumping of waste in poor communities, unequal access to adequate, clean environments, and the social and economic inequalities that reinforce and increase environmental inequalities. The Marxist socialist theoretical framework can be expanded with intersectionality theory to further explain how inequalities and exploitative practices are deeply connected to gender, race and economic class identities and equalities. These sources of identity formation, and often of inequality, are intertwined with environmental inequalities<sup>11</sup> and degradation of natural resources<sup>12</sup>.

The theoretical aspect of this paper gains the most influence from environmental socialism, environmental justice, and intersectionality. There are additional important principles that are rooted in other predominant environmental politi-

---

<sup>11</sup> The concept of environmental identity has roots in movements of deep ecology, Tim Hayward gives this definition: “a sense of identity that transcends the individual and encompasses one’s position as part of a living ecosystem”

<sup>12</sup> Traditional marxist critique would consider class as central in relevance, with all other sources of inequality and identity formation being subordinate to class relations (Marx 1867).

cal theoretical schools that I will consider in my approach. Principles from the GPI example are important inasmuch as they shift priorities to focus non-economic indicators of progress. It is important to consider poverty rates, sustainable practices and resource consumption as we define progress. These three ways of determining real progress, if applied to the private water companies in Cochabamba, Bolivia, do important work that deconstructs the myth that these companies are doing a service to the people of Bolivia or aiding in the global water crisis.

Secondly, the critique of the green state approach exemplifies a very important flaw in U.S. mainstream political rhetoric. The ethnocentric and democratic nature of the majority of solutions to any modern issue at hand, including environmental issues, ignores the fact that these solutions are only somewhat viable in a select parts of the world. Further, the green state focuses on state level “western” democratic solutions and put insufficient focus on *transnational* solutions to cross-cultural, multinational problems. Further, the analysis is weakened by its failure to consider examples of ecological, “green democratic practices in the global South that would likely strengthen and concretize the theoretical approach. The focus on democratic practices and histories of capitalist nations sacrifices valuable examples that would lend a more complete consideration of the potentiality of green democracy. Nevertheless, it introduces the idea of considering a

broader set of interests<sup>13</sup> as politically relevant. Further, it introduces the idea that environmental concerns cannot be completely solved within state boundaries, as they are often not contained by these socially constructed divides. The most obvious examples of this are water and air quality. The green state's limitations and problematic euro centrism provide important negative examples for the environmental political theory presented in the following chapters while other aspects of the approach make positive contributions to the analysis. The green state is strengthened if considered in conjunction with alternative approaches to democracy<sup>14</sup> that are often overlooked in United States rhetoric.

I will use an intersectional theoretical framework to address issues of environmental degradation and equality in access to adequate natural resources. As far as I know the intersectional framework has yet to address issues of environmental inequality. Including environmental issues as a relevant axis of identity emphasizes the extent to which environmental inequalities are connected to other forms of inequality and identity formation like ethnicity, gender and class. In another respect, it aids the environmental movement by connecting concerns to a broader,

---

<sup>13</sup> The traditional green state approach put forward by theorists like Robyn Eckersley reference an expansion of the moral community to legitimize non human interests. By green state, Eckersley means “ a democratic state whose regulatory ideals and democratic procedures are informed by ecological democracy rather than liberal democracy” (2004). I would modify this argument to say that the green “ecological” democracy depends not only on considering a non human moral community, it is important on a more basic level to expand this global moral community to consider the interests of all *humans* as equally morally significant.

<sup>14</sup> In this paper, indigenous Andean Bolivian and modern indigenous urban democratic organization and principles through a case study of the Cochabamban water wars and their historical context.

more powerful movement towards justice. Intersectionality strives to instigate grassroots political action and policy development. It recognizes categories of difference that are “mutually constituted and thus inseparable analytically and experientially” (Townsend-Bell 2011). Environmental interests, as determined by environmental identity, are a relevant axis of difference that cannot be properly addressed without recognizing their inseparability from other forms of inequality and difference.

Intersectional theory argues that the connectedness of various inequalities and injustices are of central importance. It recognizes the importance of considering how interests and identity intersect and influence one another in terms of forming political movements and making progress towards equality. However, the politics of intersectionality and environmental sustainability and justice movements have yet to be related to one another. By including environmental considerations as an axis of difference, intersectionality can be further explored through an additional central axis of identity formation. Additionally, environmental justice can be furthered through a connection to the intersectional praxis. By connecting environmental to a wider web of inequality, it is possible to more effectively illustrate the urgency of environmental exploitation. By considering the theoretical value of cases where environmental concerns have been successfully incorporated into democratic processes and societal structures, environmental issues that have already been taken seriously by the Bolivian peoples considered in my case study could potentially become more central in individual, coalition, and governmental decision-making on an international level.

### Cochabamban Water Wars

I will analyze the discourse surrounding the broader issue of environmental resource distribution between the global North and South. This relationship is connected to continued unsustainable practices. Specific to my study is the discourse surrounding the Bolivian water privatization. A study of the Cochabamban and the surrounding Bolivian Andean region alone and presents numerous concrete examples of resource distribution and environmental exploitation. I will interpret these issues of environmental degradation, discrepancies in resource access amongst populations, and unequal distribution of environmental burdens with an intersectional framework. I will expand the intersectional frame to include identities formed by environmental opportunities<sup>15</sup>. I will adapt intersectionality to include environmental identity by incorporating current environmental theoretical approaches that have begun to consider the interconnected state of inequalities but either have not gone into sufficient depth, or have simply considered the interconnectedness of interests as a side note rather than central to the issue. Although approaches such as environmental Marxism and Environmental justice reference the connectedness of various forms of exploitation, they do not go as far as the intersectional framework in emphasizing the centrality of these cross cutting sources of identity formation. That is to say, these identities are not only related, they are defined by one another, in the context of one another, in a relationship of inseparable reciprocity. Intersectional analysis centers on the fluidity of identity as in-

---

<sup>15</sup> Intersectionality was first established in relation to intersections of ethnicity, class and gender (Townsend-Bell 2011).

fluenced by multiple combinations of aspects such as race, economic class, gender, and, as I argue, environmental opportunity (Townsend-Bell 2011). The fluidity and mutually influential nature of these categories of identity should highlight the importance of understanding how each of these issues of inequality can only be accurately addressed in the broader context of all key intersectional praxes.

Theorizing the intersectional politics of race, gender and class inequality in relation to environmental identity will help us to consider both to what extent these various issues are related, and whether, or to what extent, they should be solved in conjunction with one another. The Bolivian case study is especially relevant as it considers not only relations shaped by environmental politics within the country, but also global power relations between industrialized and developing countries. It involves the issue of natural resource allocation and use, and the privatization of these resources to reinforce corporations' ability to continue in the cycle of inefficiency without immediate consequence. The application of intersectionality serves to connect interests from multiple movements towards equality and justice. Environmental aspects expand intersectional politics to consider a more complete set of identity forming factors. Conversely, intersectionality functions to benefit environmental concerns by highlighting their direct relevance to a wide variety of key political issues. This connects environmental exploitations and the identities formed as a result of these discrepancies in resource allocation and access to healthy living environments to a broader framework of inequality. The Bolivian example has individual relevance but can also be theorized to address a broader set of relevant transnational and global issues relating to power dynamics and un-

sustainable practices. The Bolivian case is an especially compelling example because it concerns an essential natural resource, water. From a North American perspective, this access is something often thought to be a basic human right. Further, the direct, undeniable role of the World Bank in influencing privatization makes it a clear example of the effect of the neoliberal model and its tendency to establish avenues for exploitation whether it be people or material goods. Lastly, as I will illustrate in subsequent chapters, water access during the peak of the crisis became highly correlated with factors including race, gender, and, most obviously, socio-economic class.

The remainder of this paper will address how each theoretical approach I consider to be integral has contributed a new way of addressing local and global environmental crises. The chapters will be broken down to discuss specific intersections. In the following three chapters, I will address how ethnic and environmental identity, gender and environmental identity, and class and environmental identity were major influences in Cochabamba and the surrounding rural Andean region during the water wars of 2000. To argue that Bolivian Andean indigenous ideologies and acts of resistance should be considered in this new politics of intersectional environmentalism, I reference examples of indigenous methods of resistance to hegemonic ideologies of the global North both during the water wars and throughout history. Further, I will consider how alternative conceptions of democracy and the role of principles of sustainability both play into resistance against capitalist influence and provide a viable alternative to insufficient western political environmental theories. In my concluding chapter I will consider how



these four identities interact in a complex politics of intersectionality that more fully explains the power dynamics and exploitations in the Cochabamban and rural Andean Bolivian examples. Through an analysis of environmental concerns in the context of intersectional politics in this region of Bolivia, I will work to articulate a theoretical framework that has potential to foster sustainable and equitable solutions to environmental crises at hand. This theoretical framework can be used to conjunction with concrete social movements to create a movement that can be applied both in a context specific manner and to a globally connected movement of equality and sustainability. By considering indigenous Andean Bolivian principles of democracy and environmental concern on equal grounds with environmental theories more widely accepted by the U.S. audience, this theory of intersectionality will work to broaden “western” ideas of viable political solutions to environmental problems. In this way, theorizing the Cochabamban water wars and the related history of the Andean region does important philosophical work on a local Bolivian scale as well as a global scale.

## Chapter 2

### **Intersections Between Bolivian Ethnicity and Environmental Identity**

The politics of Bolivian environmental issues and access to natural resources must be considered in relation to ethnic diversity and inequality. Race and ethnicity are elements woven into the constant struggles for equal rights and opportunities of different Bolivian peoples. Many key intersecting struggles of inequality faced by many non-white, indigenous Bolivians are related to the ability to access natural resources for survival. It is important to consider environmental identity<sup>16</sup> in conjunction with ethnic identity in order to more fully understand the possible origins of modern environmental exploitations in Bolivia, the reasons they persist, and more just alternatives. It is essential to consider this intersection because by connecting exploitation of indigenous peoples to the degradation of the natural environment, the intersectional study associates indigenous Andean struggles with the interests of environmentalist groups. The study of the intersec-

---

<sup>16</sup> One's position in the living ecosystem (Hayward 1998) and identity formed as a result of, one, our role as human in the ecosystem and, two, the position of specific peoples in relation to the natural and the lived environment. Environmental positionality is an influential source of identity that is significance on its own, and not just as a subset of gender, ethnicity, or class (although I argue that these identities are intersecting, one is not a subset of another).

tional nature of environmental and ethnic identities unifies diverse interests and introduces an approach to environmental crises of the modern day that is both more powerful and accurate in that it recognizes the extent of the connection between injustices.

In this chapter I will delve into the intersection between indigenous environmental identity and ethnicity. Aspects relating to many indigenous relations with the earth<sup>17</sup>, such as traditional social structures and spiritual perceptions of the earth function to suggest a new human relationship with the natural world, and in this way can potentially make a valuable contribution to the field of modern environmental political theory. My analysis will take into account Marxist critiques on capitalism in a context of indigenous identities; it rejects current dominant free market models and asks how we can conceptualize environmental issues in a way that acknowledges their connection to other inequalities. I will also consider how these inequalities can be better rectified through considering their intersection as opposed to addressing each in isolation from the other. I will complicate and modify the traditional Marxist critique by introducing a theory of intersectionality that more fully considers the extent that ethnicity influences the politics of equality and opportunity in the specific Cochabamban example and on a global scale. I will consider examples of indigenous social practices that reflect

---

<sup>17</sup> Given Bolivia's diverse indigenous population it is difficult to characterize all ethnic conceptions of the earth accurately. This is beyond the scope of this paper, which is meant to focus on a theoretical analysis of the politics of environment in Bolivia; it is not a detailed study of the intricacies of Bolivian indigeneity. However, suffice it to say that the three major indigenous groups, Aymara, Quechua and Marutani, all regard the sanctity of the earth as central to their traditional cultural practice.

the influence of spirituality in environmental identity and argue that this should be a more seriously considered as a legitimate approach to improving the state of environmental politics. Case studies and theory presented by Latin American authors will put a greater emphasis on non-western environmental identities and help to adapt theoretical analyses to new global contexts.

I will begin with a brief overview of the water wars of 2000 with a focus on the role of ethnic identity and inter-indigenous unity. To better contextualize the water wars of 2000, I will then continue onto a quick history of 20<sup>th</sup> century Bolivian social and political movements with a focus on ethnic identity and protest. I will then move into a case study of Incan – Andean indigenous environmental identity as tied to politics. I will interlace relevant Marxist analysis in the two first sections and conclude with an intersectional explanation of the connection between racial and environmental inequality to argue that the intersectional approach is both a more accurate theoretical analysis and will lead to a more effective concrete movement towards justice and equality.

This will add to the academic field of environmental political theory by moving focus from Eurocentric governmental and theoretical models. The analysis of the environmental policies of Bolivia in relation namely to indigenous approaches is a move away from the U.S. tendency to assume capitalist-democratic post industrial sock economic landscapes as the jumping off point for theorizing more sustainable environmental political models.

Cochabamba Water Wars: A Powerful Inter-Indigenous Act of Resistance

The Bolivian water wars of 2000 spanned less than a year, yet are one of the most successful examples of resistance against the forces of neoliberal capitalist development policies. The water wars display a resistance to international development strategies, the strength of indigenous forms of resistance and the value of alternative structures of political participation and practices of environmental sustainability.

In the decades preceding water privatization in Bolivia, policies encouraging multilateral loans in developing nations that mandated lower state spending as a prerequisite for loan qualification (Laurie 2011). Unable to invest in high cost water infrastructures, the Bolivian state did not establish a reliable or extensive system of water storage and distribution, even in urban Cochabamba only 57% of the urban population was covered under municipal water systems prior to privatization (Laurie 2011). In 2000, an international forum promoting water privatization took place in The Hague, Netherlands that concretized and rationalized support for water privatization (United General Assembly 2000). Not so coincidentally, private European and North American water companies were seeking to invest in new markets at the same time (Jeffery 2006).

In early 2000 the municipal water system of Cochabamba, Bolivia, SEMAPA, was sold to Betchel, in exchange for debt relief and World Bank loans (Achtenberg, Currents 2013). Protests quickly ensued among rural peasants, landowners, the urban poor and even the middle class (Shultz 2003). Within less than a year, the privatized water systems had been bought back by the state and the water was back in municipal control. These months consisted of peaceful protests at

first but escalated to police confrontation, street barricades, tear gas, protestor death and injury, and more.

It is important to consider how such a diverse group of displaced indigenous Bolivian peoples with different cultural and geographical backgrounds were able to react quickly to privatization policies and coordinate under a common interest. There are 36 officially recognized Bolivian indigenous groups, so it is impossible to come up with an overarching, universal conclusion on the role of indigenous ethnicity in the water wars. Such an evaluation would resort to problematically normative valuations. For this reason, I limit the scope of my paper to the role of indignity in urban Cochabamba and the surrounding rural Andean region. Despite the diverse origins of Cochabamban water war protestors, there is a notable Bolivian national identity that creates a cohesive group identity. This cohesive identity can be partially explained by movements of national resistance during the revolution of 1952.

Collective memories and storytelling traditions of many Bolivian indigenous groups have maintained a memory of the pre-revolutionary hardships – this collective memory places colonialism and the roots neoliberalism as negative anti-freedoms on a broader level than the individual ethnic group (McLane 2012). Given the visible parallels between colonialism and modern neoliberal economic structures in addition to ongoing indigenous displacement, the large scale, rather immediate negative reaction to water privatization comes as little surprise.

Many of the people involved in the wars were of rural origin and had been displaced after the job losses during the debt crises including continued mine clo-

sure, the outlawing of the cocoa-cocaine industry in the context of the international drug wars of the late 20<sup>th</sup> century up to the present (Roddick 1988). It is not a large leap to see how a diverse grouping might have had in common an increasing discontentment with the impoverishing results of global free market policies and a historical distrust in colonial policies.

Traditions of collective “fiestas” were shared by the urban indigenous. These traditions fostered unity amongst the displaced urban poor (McLane 2012). The beginnings of the Cochabamba water wars were characterized by protests sharing many qualities with indigenous fiestas. Many indigenous belief systems share a common belief in the sacredness of water and earth, as is exemplified by the constitution ratified under indigenous president Evo Morales that lists enumerated rights for the earth itself.<sup>18</sup> (Congreso Nacional 2008). The common belief in the sacredness of earth’s resources and a common growing discontent with the results of neoliberal policies provide a rational basis for why the water wars were such a successful display of resistance against global pressures.

Although it is important not to generalize the indigenous experience, especially in a country as diverse as Bolivia, I hope that this explanation of inter-indigenous unity will function to justify a somewhat normative claim regarding the motivations and environmental identity of Bolivian indigenous, for a theory of

---

<sup>18</sup> *Pachamama*, or mother earth, is worshipped across many indigenous groups. In fact, she is enumerated rights in the “Ley Marco de la Madre Terra y Desarrollo para Vivir Bien” in the Bolivian constitution. This is an example of the shared beliefs among many distinct groups coming as displayed through political avenues. (Congreso Nacional 2008)

environmental politics to be a theory, to an extent it must be rooted in normative evaluations of lived experiences.

A brief history of Bolivian politics over the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century help to contextualize and evaluate the 2000 Cochabamba water wars. This review will give some explanation as to how a group of indigenous peoples with such diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds were unified under a common distrust in colonials and postcolonial neoliberal economics. In the next section I will discuss key movements in recent Bolivian history that help to explain the social climate during the 2000 water privatization crisis in Cochabamba.

#### Bolivia: 20<sup>th</sup> Century Politics of Race and Ethnicity

Bolivia has a majority indigenous population, in the 2002 census, soon after the water wars, 55% of Bolivians identified with one of the 36 indigenous Bolivian groups (Mallén 2013). An additional 30% identified as mestizo. A brief 20<sup>th</sup> century historical overview of the role of race and ethnicity in Bolivia will give historical context to the tensions and the alliances brought to the forefront during the water wars. This history sheds light on the evolution of ethnic identities and relations that have come to have a large influence in the current political atmosphere. Further, this brief history exemplifies how politics of ethnicity are historically related to Bolivian environmental exploits and inequalities. I will focus on indigeneity and consider the white Bolivian experience to be outside of the scope of the study because of the large percentage of diverse indigenous groups, the



small number of European white Bolivians<sup>19</sup>, and the generally privileged status of the white population that separates them from the direct negative effects of water privatization.

In 1952 indigenous campesino movements culminated in a Movimiento Nacionalista Revolucionario (MNR) that reflected demands for rural education, land reform and universal suffrage against a military government. Although the MNR had won the presidential election in 1951, the military junta refused to acknowledge the democratic victory. The 1952 revolution began in protest to this fraudulent election recognize these results. The tensions of this revolution, also known as the Chapas War, explain some origins behind of the divergence of state and indigenous interests in the political realm. The reason that I use indigenous, rather than campesino, is purposeful in that it emphasizes the influence of ethnic and cultural identity rather than economic or class identity<sup>20</sup>.

The political importance of indigenous identity was exhibited again in 1970 when the *Katarista* indigenous flag was used as a symbol of rebellion in a movement related to the *Confederación Nacional de Trabajadores Campesinos de Bolivia* (CNTCB), one of the largest unions of peasant workers in modern Bolivi-

---

<sup>19</sup> less than 15% (Mallén 2013).

<sup>20</sup> Campesino is defined as a “peasant farm worker” while indigenous is defined in relation to geographic origin “a native to the land” (Merriam Webster Dictionary). The grouping of these two terms and tendency to prefer the former reflects a problematic effort to merge economic and ethnic interests that are in fact connected but separate issues. I would like to point out the established argument that the campesino identity seeks to define indigenous interests and inequalities as purely economic and fits much more neatly into the international neoliberal framework.

an history (Antezana 1969). These protests included demands for the official recognition of indigenous languages, cultural practice and educational reform.

Simultaneously, profits from the coca grown for cocaine export in the eastern lowlands gained momentum. This divide between indigenous wellbeing and state policy signified an increasing divide between the indigenous farmer and the interests of the state. Those whose livelihood depended on the cocaine industry faced the conflict between being labeled as part of the “drug war” and survival by means of the lucrative coca-cocaine crop (Arredondo 1997).

After a series of military coups in the late 1970s and early 1980s, democratically elected leadership opened Bolivia up to international neoliberal trade. Although this a change from oppressive military regimes in the past decades, the onset of neoliberalism introduced a new type of oppression that stripped indigenous of their rights in a new way. Neoliberal policies were accepted by some without appropriate skepticism because they signified a much-needed change from the previous military unstable series of military regimes. However, the indigenous rural populations suffered greatly under policies of debt reduction - indigenous peasants were not blind to the fact that neoliberal investment in real infrastructure and concrete systems to benefit those outside of the small circle of elites benefiting from privatization actually went down as a result of foreign investment (Roddick 1988).

The 1990s marked a trend of indigenous recognition including the first official recognition of indigenous territories. In 1994, educational reform was passed mandating bilingual education in schools. In 1996, agrarian reform gave official

recognition to indigenous territories (Antezana 1969). Despite increasing legal recognition of indigenous rights to land, certain industries, like the mining and forestry industries, continued to favor neoliberal approaches towards resource allocation and land use. These policies often ignore many indigenous rights and beliefs in the sacredness of the land<sup>21 22</sup>.

The changing Bolivian political landscape of the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century reflects a struggle between international, state, and indigenous interests. The need for concrete infrastructural investment and the indigenous struggle for political recognition and basic rights to land, water, and sufficient education created tensions that were displayed in 2000 Cochabamba water wars. Water privatization serves as an excellent example of the convergence of environmental interests, international politics and human rights. Further, water privatization and water wars in the Bolivian context exemplify the extent to which we should consider the intersection of ethnic identity in the context of these global crises both to under-

---

<sup>21</sup> “Indigenous beliefs” is a generalizing, normative term. However, what I mean to put across by using this term so generally is that there is a significant violation of many indigenous traditions connected to respect for the land and deities of the earth. These traditions are not held in equal esteem to economic profit in the free market. Although, for example, indigenous miners may be in favor of neoliberal land use policies since they gain their livelihood from the industry, I would argue that this may well be a result of economic exploitation – they would not necessarily support the policies if their lives had not come to depend on mining due to a history of colonial oppression.

<sup>22</sup> These differences amongst industries also indicate an intersection of class that is considered in more detail in the fourth chapter. Indigenous mining and logging classes have interests shaped by their economic positionality in these professions. Centuries of colonial and neocolonial involvement have resulted in some indigenous and working class dependence on the capitalist class structure that complicate the Andean indigenous connection to the land discussed in this chapter.

stand how these inequalities define each other and to consider how indigenous Bolivian political and environmental solutions are legitimate and more just alternatives in many contexts<sup>23</sup>.

### Marxism Applied to Late 20<sup>th</sup> Century Bolivian

Bolivian indigenous movements of resistance adopted principles of Marxism during the Chapas War of 1952. Political leanings stemming from the revolution and subsequent indigenous revolutionary movements like the MNR have emphasized equal rights to the land and to essential natural resources. Although the equal right to water is first and foremost an issue of class identity, principles of egalitarianism and decentralization common to local water distribution systems are influenced more directly by cultural and ethnic identities and world-views. Further, these cultural principles can both be understood in the context Marxist environmental-political analysis and enrich this approach by introducing relevant, non western environmentally conscious critiques on capitalism that expand the relevance of the critique to the global South. Because Marxist critiques acknowledge that capitalist economic “progress” depends on the exploitation of land and vulnerable people. Further, this critique on capitalism deconstructs the

---

<sup>23</sup> Alternatives include: policies of water allocation developed through systems of *usos y costumbres*, a rural system of water governance regulated by rural Andean indigenous Aymara that stems from traditional, pre colonial structures of governance and principles of sustainability, relationships with the earth and earth deities that promoted a relationship of reciprocity between humans and the non human world. This is one of the examples that I argue would strengthen the green state analysis of ecological democracy — that is to say, a recognition that these forms of democracy already exist and can be potentially taken as examples by other parts of the world (Avendaño 2009; Perreault 2008)

neoliberal valuation of aural resources and argues for the value of natural resources and environment for its inherent value, rather than its exchange value as a tool of profit (Marx 1867).

Specifically related to water rights, indigenous movements have often emphasized decentralization and egalitarian principles in place of neoliberal policies of private investment and centralization of the water system. Bolivia faces a dilemma between the fight for equal rights to free water and, on the other side, a basic lack of resources to build a reliable and far-reaching infrastructure. This is a problem faced by many countries of the global South that seek to develop a stable infrastructure in a world that has already been made environmentally unstable by the practices of industrialized nations. Countries like the U.S. already have systems in place that distribute necessities to remain affordable and relatively universal. In a resource scarce world, the consequences of overuse in the global North are shifted to the global South. In this way, the exploitative cycle of capitalist production perpetuates itself by exploiting the instability of countries like Bolivia.

A Marxist analysis lends some clarity to the state of Bolivia, in terms of what has caused the water crisis and what potential solutions exist. Industrialized nations like the US have continued to profit off of the free market by expanding geographically into non-industrial nations. By including labor and resources from unindustrialized countries like Bolivia, the industrial and post industrial world has managed to fund its own growth, it has maintained a stable economy and infrastructure that guarantees privileged citizens basic resources with policies that cre-

ate instability and resource scarcity in the global South<sup>24</sup>. As a result, Bolivia was left with little concrete infrastructure in addition to a less stable natural and lived environment that had been robbed of essential resources as a result of colonial and capitalist exploits that profited only colonial and neocolonial economies (Marx 1867; Pellow et al. 2005).

Instability and dependence in the global South was the advantage of the global capitalist class in the 20th century: these countries had little choice but to accept the terms of international neoliberal investment. This dependence was both founded in exploitation and was the reason for continued exploitation. There was a damaging lack of any real alternative in the international World Bank IMF economic model. Resource rich capitalist organizations have the economic resources and market power to make developing countries agree to the terms of the “free” market<sup>25</sup>. Although the Eurocentric development narrative emphasizes capitalism as the ultimate end goal, the economic model of the ‘more developed’ capitalist nation state is not environmentally sustainable. Nations developing during a time of climate crisis should not strive towards to capitalist end goal. Further, capitalist

---

<sup>24</sup> The critique of the global capitalist market’s effect on the developing world stems from Dependency Theory. Dependency theory discusses the effects of capitalist industrialization and post industrialization on the non-western world. This addresses both how “industrializing” the developing world benefits only the few and, on a broad level, argues that the traditional “development” model of the western world is impossible for the rest of the world (Frank 1998).

<sup>25</sup> International organizations like the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund have a power over the global free market that allows them to dictate the economic future of developing nations. See dependency theorist Andre Gondar Frank for an explanation on the historical process by which capitalist nations and free market players have facilitated dependency on free market resources over the course of the past century.

nation states should consider profound systemic changes from current economic models of value production and material accumulation. These alternatives should take note from systems of communal democracy and sustainability established by cultures that the U.S. narrative tends to frame as “less advanced”. For these reasons, it is valuable for all parties involved to take alternative conceptions of the earth more seriously as political systems are modified to address pressing concerns. These ideologies of development and democracy would be based less on market profit and more on sustainable politics that promote the interests of the natural environment and environmental justice interests concerning making available basic resources.

The Marxist analytical framework is a valid jumping off point for Bolivia. It criticizes policies of free markets that have contributed to trends of exploitation and poverty in Latin America. However, it is essential to consider indigenous influences based in ethnic identity to adequately modify the euro centrism of the Marxist critique to address the Bolivian context, and, more broadly, the global South. The important role of the earth in many of the diverse indigenous cultures represented in Cochabamba and Andean Bolivia should influence important theoretical work and sustainable democratic political processes and principles on a global scale. These alternative conceptions of democracy are valuable theoretically and concretely; they call into question the Eurocentric theoretical lens by introducing alternative ideologies that concern the value of the earth in our lives, just allocation of essential resources amongst humans, and the place of nature in political decision making processes. More concretely, they provide solutions to secur-

ing affordable access to water, and broadly a policy that protects essential resources from neoliberal exploits. Ultimately, a system that combines Marxist structural criticisms of capitalism and takes into account traditional Bolivian conceptions of the earth should take precedent over current U.S. political means for addressing environmental crises<sup>26</sup>.

Earth Deities and Water Politics: Indigenous Andean Relations with the Earth, Colonialism and Modern Politics of Inequality

Spirituality plays a large role in the Bolivian conception of earth and community. It is essential to consider indigenous spirituality if we are to conceptualize a viable environmental political theory for a highly indigenous country. Further, principles based in indigenous spirituality can be applied more globally. These Andean Bolivian indigenous worldviews shaped by spirituality and cultural practice provide important alternative perceptions of the connection between nature and culture. Spirituality and conceptions of community and the earth are essential aspects of non-western environmental political theory. By expanding the critique to encompass non-western theories of environmentalism and egalitarian princi-

---

<sup>26</sup> Again, 'indigenous valuation' is wildly normative. However the generalized term serves a purpose: indeed there are 36 recognized indigenous groups, and due to the extreme variation in natural environment, their relations with the earth vary dramatically. However, in most cases, pre-colonial traditions of paying respect to the earth reflect a common tendency to conceptualize the earth as a value in itself. Second, in general, accounts of traditional indigenous conceptions reflect values of interdependency with the earth rather than the earth as a resource for human profit. Lastly, these values are reflected in the modern age through continued ceremonial practice and an overall rejection of neoliberal values as exemplified by the water wars.



ples, the Marxist critique on capitalism is made more culturally relevant to non-European civilizations.

Reverence for nature across many Latin American indigenous cultures is reflected in the personification of nature serves as a pre scientific explanation for the unexplainable and brings human and nature closer together. In the region that is now Bolivia, many indigenous peoples of the Andes Mountains revere the gods of the earth and above, and believed the mountains to be the home of the gods.<sup>4</sup> A key example of this reverence is ceremonial honoring of the god “Tío” who is thought to protect mine workers and bless them with prosperity. Andean miners give thanks to Tío as they do to other gods of the earth and above. The ceremonies represent a type of repayment or reciprocity for what they have taken from the earth<sup>4</sup>. The miners’ relationship with Tío exemplifies the spiritual relationship of respect and reciprocity between indigenous cultures and the earth.<sup>5</sup>

A high rate of extraction and exploitation of nature for profit marked the Spanish colonial presence<sup>27</sup> in Bolivia and much of Latin America. Spaniards destroyed mountain ranges in their pursuit of gold and silver. Andean peoples observed the obsession with useless commodities like gold, it is said that they asked the Spanish if it was gold they ate (Bonilla 2003). Accumulation of material goods for economic profit, or capital, by means of the destruction of sacred ground and a clear lack of respect of reciprocity was quickly associated with colonial ideals of profit making and conquest.

---

<sup>27</sup> Spanish colonists were first present in 1532 (Arnold 2006)

Spirituality continues to be an important aspect of modern day cultural resistance to the capitalist development framework. Adhering to practices that honor deities of the earth is an important display of ongoing resistance against the exploitative economic and political structures of colonial rule and neocolonial policies. Displays of spirituality also provide basis for a system of values, social structures and practices based in influences of culture and ethnicity influence an alternative to the (neo)colonial political model. However, it is important to note how these rituals have been adapted due to the modern mixture of cultures. In reference to the Tío example, Andean miners continue to practice rituals while working within the free market structure. They mine sacred mountains for gold and silver to sustain themselves in a world of unequal exchange. They appeal to the gods for protection and for forgiveness but are forced to choose between traditional relationships with the earth and survival in the modern global economy.

Spirituality is a source of solidarity amongst many peoples of the Cochabamba and surrounding Bolivian Andean region. These priorities lend to cohesive interests and powerful ideologies that contribute to meaningful and successful resistance against global capitalist commodity fetishism and the profit based system. Spirituality is an aspect of many indigenous social structures that functions as a channel for political association. This avenue is a valuable alternative to conventional channels that often ignore the interests of the indigenous majority in favor of elite and foreign interests.

Aymara and Quechua indigenous<sup>28</sup> ideologies incorporate the value of the earth into a more representative, less profit based, and more earth conscious political model that should be taken seriously in U.S. and European conversations developing modern theories of equitable and sustainable democracy. Although practices are distinct, to generalize the interests and beliefs of “the indigenous” would be an outrageous generalization, there are commonalities amongst systems of belief provide a powerful contrast to the typical western conception of the earth as a resource for the profit of humans<sup>29</sup>. Here, I focus on beliefs of the Andean and Cochabamban indigenous. Considering the similarities among these diverse beliefs could have significant implications for the development of a plausible non-western environmental political theory. Considering the influence of spirituality in promoting principles of sustainability and equity in these cultural, political and social contexts necessitates acknowledging that there may *positive* overlap of religion and politics in some contexts. Andean Quechua and Aymara indigenous

---

<sup>28</sup> I will not go into the specific belief systems of the 36 indigenous groups officially recognized by the Bolivian census. The two largest groups, Aymara and Quechua, are influential in the region upon which this study focuses. These groups are known to worship the goddesses of the earth. Sacrificial ceremonies and the centrality of the goodness of the earth to both groups reflect the inherent value of the earth in many indigenous cultures. Worship further reflects the non-western idea that the people owe something to the earth for its goodness, rather than the earth as a source of commodities and material goods. (Diccionario Kkechuwa Español 1944) (Avendaño 2009). In a modern context, the inclusion of Pachamama (goddess of the earth) and the rights of the earth itself in *La Nueva Proyecto Constitucional* reflect that the rights of the earth are in the interest of the Bolivian indigenous majority (Congreso Nacional 2008).

<sup>29</sup> See *Derechos por la naturaleza o derechos de la naturaleza?* For an account of the politics of the rights of the earth, not to the earth, as conceptualized by an indigenous woman of Aymara dissent.

practices show that the influence of spirituality in democratic practice is not inferior to secularity as U.S. theoretical approaches often argue. Recognizing the validity of these indigenous approaches to community and environment implicates recognizing the validity of a religion in the realm of politics. This does important work on a political theoretical level. Spirituality is an element of politics that has yet to be widely considered in the United States. Nevertheless, it is an integral part of maintaining stable, unified, just Andean indigenous social and political systems. This is certainly theoretically significant in developing theories for the global South, if not globally.

The dynamic between the global South and North is one where natural resources of the global South are continually exploited to fuel the cycle of profit accumulation in the capitalist world. Although currently, the Bolivian economy is improving quite rapidly<sup>30</sup>, spirals of debt and inflation that characterized the 1980s and 90s reflected the implications of neocolonial rule for vulnerable indigenous populations (Roddick 1988). This late twentieth century debt cycle, backed by a long history dating to the colonial era, left Bolivia without proper infrastructure to guarantee essential resources while at the same time having been ravaged for natural resources by developed industrial and post industrial nations.

---

<sup>30</sup> According to World Bank statistics, in 2009, the rate of poverty in Bolivia was 51.3%, down from 59.6% just four years earlier in 2005. Directly relevant to this study, World Bank statistics showed that rates of improved rural water sources were at 72% as opposed to 56% in 2000 (during the water wars) (World Bank 2009, 2012). These two statistics are examples that suggest a correlation between decreasing neoliberal control and Bolivian economic and political stability that counters the problematic capitalist development rhetoric.

It is important to consider indigenous Andean political practices and conceptions of the value of nature founded in cultural and ethnic identities. These systems of value are concrete examples of more viable development trajectories. Further, these ideologies can contribute to a necessary redefinition of progress that may more effectively address modern environmental crises and the connected growing disparity between rich and poor peoples and nations. A combination of the Marxist critique of capitalism, grassroots democratic practices, and indigenous perceptions of spirituality, community and land help conceptualize an alternative political theory that considers the value of ethnic identity in influencing environmental identity. The prominence of ethnic identity and diversity in Bolivia, especially modern urban areas like Cochabamba filled with displaced workers after the 1980s debt crisis (Mallén 2013; Spronk 2007), is extremely prominent in comparison to the United States. As Michael Hardt argues in his La Paz, Bolivia lecture “Imperio, multitude y sociedad abigarrada”, it is impossible to think of political organization or capitalist production in the Bolivian context as it is conceptualized by many theories of the global North. The politics of environment must combine these approaches in a politics that considers heterogeneity, plurality and variegation of culture and ethnicity in Bolivia (Negri et al. 2008).

Why an Intersectional Praxis?

The intersectionality of environmental identities and inequalities with Bolivian Andean ethnic identities is significant. Historically speaking, Andean identity has been influenced by conceptions of the power of nature and a respect for nature dating back to pre colonial civilization (Silverblatt 1987). It is important to

consider the structured inequalities that have formed for centuries around indigeneity in Bolivia. Environmental inequalities, resource allocation and scarcity, and land (over)use directly affect the experiences and identities of the Bolivian people. Environmental inequalities and identities cannot be analyzed in isolation from experiences influenced by ethnicity. The traditional western environmentalist rhetoric does not properly consider how race plays an integral role in the politics of environmental justice. Belkhir explains the importance of integration of fields of study of histories of inequality and identity formation in her analysis of intersectionality, “Combining sociology and history to account for economic and power relations as these reflect racial processes give rise to a more informed analyses of the interconnections among race, class and gender” (Belkhir et al. 2001). Along these lines, I argue it is important not only to add the study of environmental identity to the intersectional theory but to *integrate* it with these other three more established intersections of identity in order to more effectively analyze issues of environmental identity, injustice and to come up with alternatives that take into account historical processes of identity formation in these four intersecting areas.

Adding environmental identity to an intersectional theoretical analysis of Bolivia during the water wars of 2000 is globally significant. Integrating this axis of identity emphasizes the connectedness of ethnically and environmentally shaped experiences and complicates the Marxist capitalist critique. Marxist analysis argues that capitalism emphasizes racial, gender and class differences to maintain disunity among the affected and prevent the unification of the working class.

Although the role of racism in the Marxist framework is valid in that the working class in the capitalist class does share some unified interest, the traditional analysis does not emphasize what the Bolivian example and theoretical principles of intersectionality help to articulate. Ethnicity is as fundamental as economic class identity in forming social, economic and political identities.<sup>31</sup> Historical context reveals that capitalism has indeed relied on the division by race, gender and other social status symbols to divide the working class and maintain the capitalist system despite its being in the interests of the minority (Derek Bell 1992).

I argue for considering the integration between Bolivian indigenous ethnicity and identities formed by environmental needs and “one’s position as part of a living ecosystem”. This intersection of theories can concretely affect movements towards justice by expanding the movement for indigenous rights to encompass interests of environmentalism. Further, the intersection progresses the academic field of U.S. environmental political theory by shifting focus from Eurocentric government models. Further, Andean Bolivian examples suggests that the “western” world should take note from Bolivian systems of communal grassroots democracy influenced by spirituality, reciprocity with the natural world as important examples that should be used to progress political theory in a way that meets modern environmental concerns.

---

<sup>31</sup> The Marxist critique can be countered by Critical Race Theorists (i.e. Derrick Bell), who argue for the centrality of race in explaining inequality on a theoretical level. I would like to think that by introducing intersectionality, I am arguing that these identities are intersecting and of equal influence – one does not precede the other in importance. Nevertheless, these two critiques on capitalism provide useful perspective. (Bell, 1992)

### **Chapter 3**

#### **Intersections Between Gender and Environmental Identity in Bolivia**

Gender identity is related to systems of oppression. Male domination and *machismo* culture in many areas of the world influence gender roles, gendered relationships, and gendered connections with the lived environment (i.e. domestic roles, wage laboring roles). Inequalities between men and women in affect individual access to essential environmental resources and services. Further, gen-



der roles shape environmental identities because they partially determine the role that an individual will take on in appropriating natural resources for the survival and development of their own selves, families and societies. Gender roles have an effect on the relationship that communities and individuals hold with the domestic and the natural environment, and their direct reliance upon, as well as their access to, essential natural resources like water. Although gender roles vary greatly across cultures, it is common for men and women to take on distinct roles. The female tie to domestic labor cuts across many cultures; 83% of domestic labor<sup>32</sup> is performed by females (Luebker, Oelz, and et al. 2013). Gender divides in areas of physical labor, domestic life, and more mean that women and men face different struggles and develop different relationships with their environment. My analysis of the intersection of gender and environmental identity will clarify the extent to which gender inequality is related to issues of environmental access, environmental equality, control over ones environment and influence over major policy decisions affecting the environment.

Although the pre colonial era was not entirely rid of gender divides and inequalities (Pape 2008), modern gender roles in Bolivia should be considered in a context of neoliberal influence and international neoliberal efforts towards capitalist development. Imposition of European educational models, the commerciali-

---

<sup>32</sup> According to the International Labor Office, a domestic worker is “any person engaged in domestic work within an employment relationship.” Domestic work is defined as “work performed in or for a household or households”. Although this does not include the number of women engaged in domestic labor outside of an employment relationship, it suggests a correlation between women and domestic labor that extends beyond wage labor positions and into unpaid housework.

zation and fetishism of U.S. and European gender ideals, and gendered labor roles worked to mold Bolivian gender roles to fit “western” standards under the pretense of “civilizing” and “advancing” Bolivian gender roles (Stephenson 1999). Gender and the natural environment have been simultaneously colonized by European, and later United States, imperialism.

In a global political context, decisions affecting the future of the environment are generally made by an international male dominated decision making structure where female counterparts, especially non white women of the global South, have been given little say over important environmental policy decisions (Laurie 2011).

It is essential to understand Bolivian gender roles in a context of intersectionality of ethnicity that was considered in the last chapter in addition to intersections of gender and environment. These three intersections add to a discourse that is relevant to specific non-European, non-white gendered experiences. Although the intersectional analysis of gender identity gains some of its strength from creating alliances amongst diverse groups of women, the racialized experience of Bolivian women cannot be successfully addressed through white normative feminist critiques of gender roles. This means understanding the specific experiences of Bolivian women and the obstacles they face as indigenous women of the global South fighting against neoliberal privatization policies an unequal gender roles stemming from both imperialist and indigenous practices. (maybe add something about the legitimate theoretical alternatives gendered ideologies present?)

To analyze the intersection between environmental and gender identity, I will first discuss the complex role women played in the Cochabamba water wars. I will then discuss examples of Bolivian gender roles in modern 20<sup>th</sup> century history in order to discuss women's roles in Bolivian resistance to neocolonial economic imposition, corrupt government, and cultural oppression. These examples show how colonial forces have worked to normalize gender to a Eurocentric standard. On the other hand, they showcase effective gendered resistance against neocolonial cultural hegemony in the 20th century were often gendered. Gender identity was not only an area of colonial oppression, but also serves as a powerful avenue for resistance to these cultural, political and economic impositions. This gives context to women's influential, yet unequal role in the wars as organizers and participants.

In the latter portion of the chapter, I will consider how Bolivian gender roles and environmental inequality fit into an intersectional framework. Understanding the extent to which these forms of injustice are connected is an effective way to theorize the politics of inequality stemming from environmental and gender identity. Articulating the intersectionality of these two sources of identity has potential to affect concrete progress towards developing effective solutions for conflicts over water and resource scarcity. The Bolivian example is theoretically valuable because the examples of simultaneous gender and environmental colonization help in understanding how various forms of colonization reinforce one another. This means that global struggles for environmental and gender justice cannot be considered in isolation. This concept is admittedly abstract and complex,

the examples in the rest of this chapter will help explain how these two forms of oppression and exploitation are concretely connected and constantly reinforcing.

#### Gendered Roles in The Cochabamba Water Wars of 2000

Women played influential roles as organizers and resisters in the water wars of 2000. Their role in the water wars changed understandings of gender in resource conflicts and in politics of resistance towards neoliberal forces in the global south. Even prior to privatization conflicts, women were generally in charge of water collection for their families and often held leadership roles in raising funds and developing water infrastructures (Laurie 2011). Women went on to play important roles in organizing and monitoring protests during the wars (Laurie 2011).

Privatization of water networks was closely connected to neocolonial efforts to control and colonize the domestic and economic lives of Bolivians. Because water is integral to daily life, free market control over Cochabamban water from 1999 to 2000 allowed for increasing control over the domestic sphere in Bolivia. During decades of neoliberal economic involvement leading up to, and during, the brief timespan when private enterprises owned Bolivian water, the domestic lives of Bolivians were increasingly controlled by the powers of the “free” market. Due to gendered roles in household and waged labor, women experienced this control over the lives of indigenous Bolivians in a different way from their male counterparts.

Although they often received less formal recognition than their male counterparts, women took on complex, influential and dangerous roles in the protests (Laurie 2011). This counters North American and European essentialist domestic

depictions of women and politicizes their relationship with natural resources and the lived environment. Women's powerful roles in the Cochabamba water challenge both hegemonic ideals of women as domestic and depoliticized. Persisting inequality and lack of formal recognition, on the other hand, reveal influences of Bolivian machismo culture as well as normative gender ideology stemming from the global North. These disparities in equality between men and women limited the extent to which women were recognized for their contributions to the successes in Cochabamba.

Understanding the importance of gender identity in resource conflicts is a move away from the tendency to frame the discussion in terms that overemphasize the importance of ethnicity and take focus from ongoing internal (inter - Bolivian) and external (neocolonial - Bolivian) gender injustices. The water wars are representative of the ideological influence of gender norms in neoliberal development tactics. Perhaps more importantly, the protests show the importance of women in acts of resistance against imposed exploitative modes of capitalist production.

#### Gender in Andean Indigenous Histories

The opposition between neoliberal concepts of gender and traditional indigenous gender roles does not constitute a binary. It is a flawed, but common, understanding that the conflict between various ideals of gender in countries of Latin America is a relatively simple conflict between indigenous traditional values and western modernity. Rather, cultures interact in a fluid way that influences a changing, hybridized, modern conception of gender in the Bolivian context.

Colonial, and later capitalist, presence in Bolivia attempted to normalize gender roles to a European standard. Colonization was characterized by both economic exploitation and ideological hegemony. Environment and labor were exploited by the Spanish, and later the global North, for economic ends while cultural practice and gender identity underwent ideological domination.

#### Women in resistance: new conceptions of womanhood and domesticity

In the Spanish colonial effort to “civilize” rural Bolivian Andean populations, indigenous women’s bodies and identities were subject to imposed European gender ideals and roles. This domestic sphere is an important site of cultural conflict where different ideologies are continuously clashing, mixing and shaping modern indigenous identities and practices. In *Gender and Modernity in Andean Bolivia*, Marcia Stephenson studies examples of an Aymara group’s cultural practices. Her study includes a discussion on meanings behind these women’s continuing use of traditional clothing and hygienic practices in the modern world. These examples show the effect of the interaction between indigenous cultural practice and Eurocentric ideologies on women’s gender identity. The traditional garb of a *chola* is used as a symbol of resistance towards oppressive forces. By dressing in this way, the women resist an imposed educational model that aimed to define what was acceptable for a ‘civilized’ woman to wear (Stephenson 1999). Dating back to colonial times, the domination of physical appearances and domestic lives of Andean peoples facilitated material dependence on imperial markets

for manufactured goods related to the imposed notion of “civilized”. Western women’s wear and cleaning products like soap were typically imported from Europe and facilitated continued dependence on European commodities that added a cycle of exploitation and dependence (Stephenson 1999). Powers of the global north warped gender norms and fostered economic dependence by defining womanhood in connection with materialistic consumerism characteristic of their oppressors’ cultures.

By propagating the “western” notion of “womanhood”, these ideologies defined women’s roles in association with a particular culture that was not the indigenous *chola* woman. Rather than accepting these norms, indigenous women appropriate imposed educational systems as tools of resistance by openly refusing to conform to foreign standards of womanhood<sup>33</sup>. This display of resistance to (neo)colonial oppression is part of a movement towards decolonization of gender and the home. Indigenous women’s resistance frames their practices as equally viable and modern conceptions of womanhood.

The Marxist critique on capitalism adds a useful dimension to this gendered analysis of environmental identity in Bolivia. This criticism of the global free market and neoliberal policies of modernization can be used to explain how gender norms are manipulated to foster ideological hegemony and material depend-

---

<sup>33</sup> Andean Aymara women began to learn Spanish in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century colonial education system in order to undermine efforts to take indigenous land (Mamani Caprichi 1992). This is another example of rural women successfully appropriating imposed models, whether they be educational, cultural, economic or political, to develop tools of resistance in the struggle for autonomy from outside oppressors.

ence. Gender norms that promote the use of western products by defining femininity in terms of hygiene and dress facilitate 'free' market dependence. Neocolonial systems of gender normativization associate ideals of womanhood with the idealized North American domestic woman. Free market economics and the rhetoric of modernization as synonymous with happiness function as tools of both cultural and economic dependence.

This example shows the power of women in shaping indigenous discourses. The role of Aymara women in acts of resistance towards ideological colonization is significant in relation to the intersection of environmental identity. By rejecting the western notion of civilization, Aymara women's resistance rejects the ideology that was developed to justify exploitation of Bolivian peoples and natural resources. Aymara women fight for their own definition of advancement, one that consists of indigenous principles of domesticity and communalism rather than those imposed political and social values. In his discussion the concept of "the other" in the context of colonization in the Americas, Enrique Dussel argues that colonial rhetorics justify practices of hegemony and exploitation in the name of advancement. However,

“cuando éticamente se descubre la dignidad del Otro (de la otra cultura, del otro sexo y género, etcétera); cuando se declara inocentes a las víctimas desde la afirmación de su Alteridad como Identidad en la Exterioridad como personas que han sido negadas, como su propia contradicción, por la Modernidad” (Dussel 1991).



This argument explains the importance of accepting alternative conceptions of gender as legitimate in relation to developing an environmental political theory that takes into account experiences of Latin American indigenous women. The myth of modernity has obscured the dignity of these women in order to justify their own economic expansion. Through protest, women demand that their own gender identities be recognized as legitimate. By recognizing “the dignity of the other/la dignidad del Otro”, exploitation in the name of “advancement” is no longer justified. Recognizing these women's dignity as part of an equally viable and modern culture means that this narrative no longer works to justify explorations of the environment that are only backed by the false assumption that capitalism is end goal.

#### Women as writers of history: textile and knowledge production

Andean Aymara women also played a significant role in indigenous resistance as textile weavers. Dating back to pre-colonial times, textile patterns formed a means of communication in Andean indigenous society. In her analysis of the structure of traditional Andean fabrics, Frame argues that there are multiple layers of language discernible in a single fabric (Frame 2006). This suggests that indigenous women have a more important role in controlling discourses of resistance than is often assumed by U.S. studies on these movements of the global South<sup>34</sup>. In his study of the narrative structures in South American indigenous tex-

---

<sup>34</sup> This expands the commonly accepted notion of writing and communication to include textile design. These conversations within textiles are perhaps more complex than the European alphabet. This is relevant because it counters the colonial rhetoric

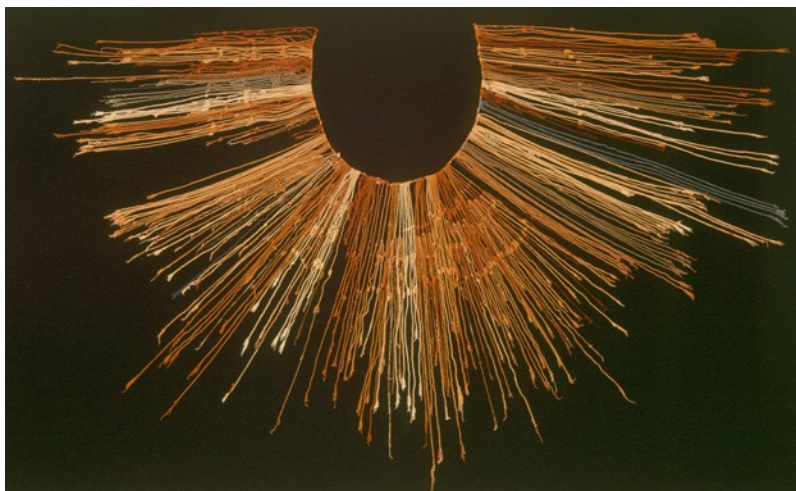
tile patterns, Cary Urton compares the coding in textiles to the level of complexity in modern computer coding (Urton 2003). Many studies emphasize the interweaving of coded communication and cultural connectedness (Arnold 2006).

Women's role as weavers in the pre colonial era as well as the post colonial era gives them a powerful relation to the means of highly complex textile, and therefore knowledge, production<sup>35</sup>. This is important in relation to the intersection of gender and environment for a number of reasons. First, recognizing the advanced nature of these forms of communication calls into the question the colonial 'myth of modernity'. Second, recognizing women's role in textile production recognizes their role in shaping alternative political discourses and in maintaining the structure of indigenous social structures dating back to the Incan Empire. Gender roles in knowledge production have given women influence that is often overlooked by historical narratives.

---

modernity. Textiles are an example of how pre colonial society was already extremely advanced. This has much to do with the "Myth of Modernity" that Enrique Dussel critiques in his lectures in La Paz and Frankfurt: "La Modernidad tiene un "concepto" emancipador racional que afirmaremos, que subsumiremos. Pero, al mismo tiempo, desarrolla un "mito" irracional, de justificación de la violencia, que deberemos negar, superar" (Dussel 1991, pp. 1-2).

<sup>35</sup> Kipus (complex 'talking knots') were used as templates for state rule that contributed to the success of the Incan Andean empire by serving as forms of communication to communicate messages across the vast geographical span of the Incan empire. Textiles were also used document governmental proceedings, societal structures, and organization of the empire (Arnold 2006).



Traditional Incan Kipu (Quipu) or complex system of “talking knots”  
(Larco Museum Collection)

### Transnational Gender Networks and Water Access

Gendered water networks<sup>36</sup> display of the simultaneously utility and danger of connecting gender equality movements to environmental struggles. This intersection creates powerful alliances of common interest across cultural and national boundaries. The Gender and Water Alliance (GWA) argues for women's specific water needs. By reaching out to a diverse group of activists and NGOs, this feminist alliance coordinates with many groups to develop an expansive network that connects gender and environmental causes across the globe. These networks give women a more influential role in United Nations world water forums and decision-making when before water development decisions affecting women were

---

<sup>36</sup> Since the United Nations released Millenium Development Goals (MDGs) in 2000 that addressed needs related to gender inequality and access to adequate water supplies, networks around gender and water have increased in number. These rely on cross cutting alliances between different interest groups and NGO funding.

made by mostly men (Laurie 2011). United Nations' gendered coalitions provide a space for women to intervene in international policy decisions surrounding water development issues.

Although the goal of international alliances is to approach issues of environmental development and equality in an intersectional manner that considers the concrete, specific problems facing indigenous populations, (United Nations 2011), it does not negate the necessity of maintaining a greater focus on Bolivian solutions to Bolivian problems. If our analysis maintains that grass roots, indigenous solutions are of equal or greater importance than international level approaches, it acknowledges that indigenous approaches to modernization and sustainable resource allocation are viable alternatives to hegemonic structures of the global North. This does not negate the importance of transnational alliances, but rather frames them as a secondary support system that does not obscure the specificity of water issue in Bolivia as characterized by culturally specific experiences related to gender, as well as class status, environmental identity, and ethnicity.

Bolivian Andean indigenous women face specific barriers to water access, these are related to both international patterns of gender inequality and culturally specific gender divides. International aspects that contribute to women's unequal access to, or control over, their water include women's in domestic labor (Luebker et al. 2013), men's overwhelming control over United Nations policy decisions that affect women (Laurie 2011), and undervalue in the wage labor market. In fact, Atal, Ñopo, and Winder found in their 2009 study of 18 Latin American countries including Bolivia that men get paid between nine and 27% more than

women (Atal et al. 2009). Specifically relating to the Andean context, the influence of Machismo culture, gender divides originating from pre colonial, colonial, and neocolonial practices, contribute to women's unequal burden in water crises. Further, colonial history shows that gender and environment have been simultaneously colonized. To address one form of colonization, one must consider how these economic and ideological oppressions are mutually reinforcing.

This hybridized concept of gender and individual identity, wrought through struggles against internal forces oppression and external colonial hegemonic ideals cannot be understood as separate from environmental inequality. Gender roles and divisions of labor by gendered divides affect one's relationship with the lived and the natural environment. Individuals' direct relation to water and other resources is influenced by established gender roles. For example, in Cochabamba, urban indigenous women testify that they were in charge of water collected and distribution (Laurie 2011), and historically rural women in the Andean and lowland eastern regions were responsible for gathering water and other essentials (Radding 2001). Historically and politically, both women's and men's struggles are tied with struggles against environmental exploitation and the identities that form out of a reliance on nature, however specific lived experiences are tied to gender norms stemming both from indigenous ideologies and imposed values of the global north.

The modern Bolivian conception of gender is a hybridized identity stemming from neocolonial, colonial, and traditional indigenous values. Women's simultaneous empowerment and discrimination in modern Bolivian history gives

historical context for the influential yet unequal role of women in the Cochabamba water wars. Indigenous women took on influential positions as leaders and organizers, yet official political histories often fail to officially recognize the part they played (Laurie 2011). Oppression stems from a combination of gender ideologies ranging from the ideal domestic woman of the global North to *machismo* culture of indigenous societies.

Why Intersectionality Matters for Gender, Environmental Identity and the Marxist Critique on Capitalism

The intersectional framework can be used to articulate the nature of the modern intersecting, hybridized identities – a conception of identity that rejects the notion of binary indigenous-tradition-versus-western-modernity conceptions of identity in the global south. Being that they exist in the present day, all of these cultures are inherently modern<sup>37</sup>. Different cultural experiences and identities intersect to form a modern hybridized Bolivian indigenous experience. The influence of gender inequality in Bolivian environmental resource conflicts should not separate gender from racialized experience as traditional white feminist rhetoric often tends to do. The idea of an intersection of identities and ideologies complicates the romanticized notion of a clash of civilizations.

The intersection of gender and environmental identity explains the empowered yet unequal role of women in the water wars of 2000. For example, women's experience in organizing community *fiestas* was a useful skill in protest leader-

---

<sup>37</sup> Dussel terms this *trans modernidad* in order to redefine modernity in a more fluid, all encompassing manner (Dussel 1991)

ship (McLane 2012), their politicized role as *supermadres*<sup>38</sup>, their role as water collectors and distributors in urban and rural settings, and their in depth knowledge about water pricing coming from experience in household water budgeting (Laurie 2011). Women outlawed *chicha*, a popular alcoholic beverage, so that the military could not discredit protestors for their drunkenness (Bustamante et al. 2005). Women played integral roles in leadership, and occasionally in militant protests, but were not fully recognized for their contribution. Further, interviews with female participants reference sexism, a female Coordinadora member expresses that she felt unsafe in a jail cell with men of the same movement. This gender conflict complicates the role of gender in the water wars as one of simultaneous empowerment and struggle against *machista* values. Indigenous women were integral both in developing alternative water infrastructures and in political organization surrounding the water wars of 2000.

Indigenous women's role in communal and household water collection and distribution affects their environmental identity is an example of the intersection of gender and environmental identity. Gendered roles in water distribution mean that women have an especially salient connection to water. They are directly responsible for getting water to their families and communities. Globally, women's role as domestic laborers means they have a direct reliance on, and intimate

---

<sup>38</sup> Nina Laurie defines *supermadres*, "a hybrid identity in which women's roles as mothers become politicized. In this way, by protesting about their 'legitimate' concerns as mothers, women gain access to the public and political arena. Their concerns include a range of issues relating to the provision and management of water" (Laurie 2011, p. 179).

knowledge of, guaranteed access to water for their livelihood. The role of women in the wars exemplifies this connection between gender and environmental resources.

Although these systems of hegemony are vast, cultural resistance amongst Bolivian women is very powerful. Through examples, this chapter has only given a small number of examples of these influential displays of resistance. By refusing to adopt the ideals of international political superpowers of the global North, women in Cochabamba and in rural communities show that they are not powerless, these women are more than the exploited parties in a system of colonial domination that “do gooder” rhetorics of international development powers often paint them to be. Women’s powerful acts of microaggression that reject hegemonic structures of free market capitalism have significant impact. These cultures of resistance based in gender and cultural identity complicate the traditional Marxist economic analysis. The centrality of Bolivian women's gender identity in relation to environmental identity and resistance movements relays yet again the importance of the intersectional approach. These factors were significant in Bolivian water wars and should not be considered as subsets of economic conditions and class identity as traditional Marxism argues (Marx 1867).

#### Conclusion: why connect gender to environment?

Gender identities and natural resources have been simultaneously exploited for free market profit. As a result, issues surrounding these two sources of identity formation are so intertwined that effective solutions must consider the two in conjunction. An analysis of the Bolivian water conflicts provides a more relevant po-



political theoretical framework of the politics of inequality. The micro Andean Bolivian scale of some of these approaches and experiences adds a necessary dimension of cultural specificity that is beyond the scope of global forums on the politics of environmental crises. Intersectionality should consider the mutual influence of identity on micro and macro scales *and* the value of the intersection between these two levels of identity formation and solution making.

The intersectional analysis is important on a concrete level: it can work to unite feminist efforts with environmentalist movements to form a more effective and larger scale movement towards justice. Globally connected forums of discussion are indeed they are valuable tools for connecting oppressions related to environmental identity across vast geographical regions and cultural divides.

The gendered analysis of environmental identity should foster these alliances amongst women facing unequal access to resources while avoiding generalizing Bolivian women's experiences through recognizing specific cultural practices, beliefs and gender roles that contribute to the uniqueness of their position in relation to access to water. Further, by gendering the Bolivian experience, the intersectional analysis counters the common tendency to essentialize the indigenous experience by considering the effect of machismo values, differentiations in women's and men's control over land, water, and political decision-making within indigenous social structures.

The next chapter will focus on the intersection of class and environmental identity. This will give opportunity to analyze the effect of varying class status within the indigenous Bolivian population. The gendered analysis intentionally

limits the discussion of cultural and class variation between various Andean indigenous populations in order to focus on patterns of gender division throughout Andean Bolivian cultures. Class analysis delves deeper into divisions within indigenous populations of this region by considering tensions and commonalities amongst rural farmers, urban homeless, and rural peasant classes. With 36 recognized groups, the indigenous population is extremely diverse and to discuss in detail the ideologies and experiences of each is outside of the scope of this thesis. Instead, the class analysis provides the opportunity to focus centrally on some important divisions in interests and motivations for involvement in the water wars that has resulted partly from varied class experiences within the indigenous population.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Intersections of Economic and Environmental Identity**

Deepened class divides and an increase in national debt and dependency that dramatically affected employment rates and redistribution of national wealth the poor characterized the Latin American debt crisis of the late 20th century. The negative effect of neoliberal economic modernization policies varies in extremity and character amongst Bolivian populations. Distinct experiences of neoliberal trade and investment policies in Bolivia, and throughout the Global South, are explained by class identity formations. Water privatization and related free market

economic policies have resulted in inequalities and exploitations, these are factors in a politics of inequality that cannot be explained without considering an intersection of class identity.

Beginning in the 1970s and throughout the rest of the 20th century, Latin America has been plagued with growing international loan debt and shrinking exports<sup>39</sup> (Roddick 1988). This era was one of increasing nationwide political instability and dependency. Perhaps the most affected groups were peasant and working classes. In 1984, President Siles Zuazo instated a moratorium that suspended interest payments on international loans as Bolivia could not pay its loans after a particularly bad harvest on top of economic instability with roots in previous military dictatorships. In 1985, as a result of increasing loan interest and monetary inflation due to their creditors' unwillingness to recognize the President Zuazo's moratorium, the newly instated President Paz Estenssoro was forced to adhere to structural readjustment plans laid out by Bolivia's creditors (Roddick 1988). This resulted in fewer jobs for those in lower classes and subsequent deepening of class divides over the 1980s and 1990s (Portes, Hoffman 2003). As a result of this recent economic history, international loans associated with the free market have a logically negative connotation for many middle and lower class Latin American populations.

---

<sup>39</sup> Bolivia's major export, tin, has plummeted in value in recent history. The tin collapse led to economic conditions in the 1970s and 80s resulting that led to structural reform policies (Roddick 1988).

Water privatization is first and foremost an economic policy. Since economic instabilities and inequitable resource distribution directly resulted in water privatization and the ensuing wars of protest, a classed analysis is perhaps the most obvious way to critique the debt crisis, the water crisis, and their implications for the people of Bolivia. This does not mean that an analysis of class identity lacks complexity. Rather, the classed analysis is an essential aspect of intersectional politics of environment, ethnicity and gender in the Cochabamba water wars. Further, it creates an space for considering diverging class roles within the indigenous community in greater detail. This complicates North American political theory's tendency to generalize, dismiss, or romanticize indigenous connections to environmental issues and resource allocation. Thirdly, a classed analysis provides space to discuss economic aspects of a long Bolivian history that influenced economic instability during the 1980s, 1990s and early 2000s, as well as a general skepticism towards neoliberal policies of economic "advancement" and "development".

#### Bolivia: The Poster Child of Neoliberal Reform

A number of factors converged at the time of Bolivian water privatization that contributed to a social climate capable of successfully rejecting water privatization policies that were enforced by powerful institutions like the World Bank and the IMF. One must consider a long history of class related and economic factors that led to privatization in order to understand how the Bolivian people eventually successfully rejected the internationally backed structural 'development' reforms after decades of exploitation by controlling creditor institutions of the 'free'

market. I will begin with a brief explanation of Bolivian debt accumulation in recent decades, and the historical colonial roots of economic instability that fostered the dependency apparent in the debt crisis of the 1980s.

An overview of the cycle of debt and dependency is a useful basis for considering how free market exploitation, economic instability and debt creation affect Bolivian class identities on both macro and micro levels. Bolivia, along with many debtor nations in Latin America, began to experience lower prices for export commodities in the international market (Spronk 2007). Since consumer economies in industrialized and post industrial nations benefit from these prices, there is nothing to stop them from demanding that Latin American countries continue to export at less than fair prices to pay off their international loans. The pressure of debt ensures a cycle of competition amongst debtor nations that have no option but to sell exports at low prices, resulting in further commodity value depreciation. Schnaiberg develops the concept of “the treadmill of production” to argue that capitalist cycles of production rely on infinitely increasing production and consumption. This continuous extraction of labor and natural resources has severe social and ecological consequences that hit vulnerable populations first (Gold et al. 1996; Pellow 2007).

20th century Bolivian economic instability has roots dating back to the colonial era. A historicization of Bolivian economic dependency emphasizes the extent to which these instabilities are rooted in a history of exploitation and intentional fostering of economic dependence of the global South on the global North. Second, more detailed consideration of the 20th century Latin American debt cri-

sis lends insight into how these relations have played out over the past decades.

An overview of colonial and, centuries later, neocolonial policies that contributed to 20th century economic instability in Bolivia and relationships of economic dependence between the global South and the North explains the climate of increasing instability and hostility towards international intervention and control at the time of the water wars.

Eduardo Galeano's *Open Veins of Latin America* provides a useful history behind economic dependence dating back to the colonial mining economy in Bolivia and Brasil. In the 1500s, Spanish colonists "discovered" rich veins of gold and silver. By the mid 1600s, 99% of exports from all of Latin America consisted of silver (Galleano 1997). One of the largest mines was located in Potosí, in present day Andean Bolivia. Exploiting Latin American land, resources, and manual labor to extract precious metals was the basis for economic growth in the Spanish empire, and Britain as a portion of Spanish raw material imports from Bolivia ended up in British factories (Galleano 1972). However rich the economy was made from plentiful gold and silver mines, reliance on a single export meant that prosperity was fleeting and only had lasting benefits for the empirical economy. Colonial ideological hegemony worked to normalize the use of western material goods as signs of a "civilized" and "advanced" culture. Further, by forcing indigenous peoples into the empirical mining economy, previously self-reliant indigenous peoples were forced into the Spanish colonial economy that worked to exploit indigenous peoples and the land. With this tremendous accumulation of gold and silver, the empirical economy benefited while the Bolivian, along with the

greater Latin American, economy grew more dependent on overpriced material industrial imports. The temporary success of the Bolivian mining economy stimulated the beginning of a relationship of economic dependence that would continue into the 20th century. The basis of these rich nations' wealth lies in history of stripping less industrialized nations of the wealth of their land (Galeano 1972). Not only did this cycle of economic dependence result in the Bolivian economic crisis of the 1980s, it explains a basis of empirical wealth accumulation. The accumulation of economic resources due to exploitative practices over the centuries does something to explain why neocolonial powers have had the ability to build infrastructures for things like water distribution while the economic conditions in Bolivia have resulted in limited ability to guarantee these basic necessities. This brief history complicates the assumption that countries like Bolivia have unstable economies as a result of their own poor economic planning and irresponsibility. Although a colonial history of material exports is not the only reason behind 20th century Bolivian instability, it is important in that it suggests that the rhetoric of economic dependency can be easily reversed. In other words, the development of industrial nations has indeed depended on the economic resources of the global south. Who, then, should be considered the "debtor nation"?

The New Economic Policy (NEP) instigated by the IMF and the World Bank laid out new social, political and economic choices for Bolivia as terms for receiving international financial support. These mandated less governmental spending, which meant closing down the majority of mining operations and laying off 23,000 miners between the years of 1985 and 1987. Further, 31,000 public service

jobs and 35,000 manufacturing jobs were lost by the end of the 1980s (Roddick 1988). Job loss resulting from NEP structural reforms continued into the 1990s, international economic development policies came to be associated with the loss of working class jobs and cuts in essential social services and were met with increasing hostility leading up to water privatization in Cochabamba (Spronk 2007). Burdens of the unstable economy following the 1980s were placed unduly on the working class with cuts in government spending on employment, and rises in prices for essential goods like water. The economic climate in Bolivia during the two decades preceding the water wars helps to explain immediacy of the widespread and successful rejection of water privatization.

The history of the economic implications of colonial rule and, later, neoliberal influence, parallels a history of environmental colonization and destruction. Neoliberal policies have a simultaneous effect on the economics and the class identities of Bolivian peoples and also on the state of the environment and resource allocation. The water wars serve as an ideal example of the convergence of the two in direct relation to free market economic influence. I argue that these histories of colonization are not only parallel to one another, but intertwined. Dating back to the Spanish colonial mining economy, foundations of economic development were rooted in the physical colonization and exploitation of environmental resources. Fast forwarding to 2000, free market profit in the form of private water companies is directly linked to the appropriation of Bolivian water, systems of water and peoples who depend so closely on access to water. For these reasons, the economic history of Bolivian class identity provides context



that is completely relevant to both class and environmental identities and, in fact, economic policies often lie in the middle of this intersection.

Urbanization, debt crises, deepening class divides, and neoliberal economic policies

After establishing a general understanding of essential colonial relations that govern the economic history of Bolivia, and how this influences resource allocation, it is important to discuss the differentiation in class identity among the Bolivian Cochabamban indigenous to avoid a generalization of indigenous class identity. Attempting to consider every nuance of class identity amongst Bolivian peoples is outside of the scope of my research, but I will consider some of the most influential class identities in the Andean and Cochabamban regions in the context of their roles in the water wars of 2000.

After urbanization over the past decades following neoliberal reforms of the 1970s, 80s and 90s, 67% of the Bolivian population has been displaced to urban locations (CIA 2010). Before this period of rapid urbanization, cities had been reserved mainly for the white and mestizo elite. As a result, shantytowns in urban areas like Cochabamba expanded rapidly with migrants from local rural areas as well as far off regions due to rapid mine closure across the vast altiplano region (Spronk 2007). This intense mixing of Indigenous ethnicity resulted in urban multi class alliances. The vast majority of Bolivians, spanning across class divides, had been affected negatively by neoliberal reforms like the NEP of , early privatization, and other conditions enacted by lender nations and international free market institutions. In the 1980s, inflation and debt had reached a peak. Monetary in-

flation peaked in 1985 at 8,170% (Roddick 1988, p. 4). The state had no money to pay workers, and the vast majority could barely subsist. Creditors refused to freeze interest or loan payments. A solution was necessary at the time that structural readjustment was adopted continuing into early privatization leading to water privatization in 1999-2000. To say that privatization and proceeding IMF/World Bank instituted plans negatively affected the Bolivian peoples is not to say that a solution was not needed, but rather that the “band aid” solutions of structural readjustment and resource privatization was not an effective approach. Slashing imports and government spending was, at best, a temporary solution that did not benefit the majority (Roddick 1988 ch. 1, 3)

Although indigenous classes shared this common enemy, their post-privatization interests differ. Bolivian classes were united in their rejection of international free market control, but their differing environmental identities and economic interests meant that this source of unity was only partially effective. By understanding how the different class identities are related to different vested interests in lived and natural environments, we can understand the strengths and weaknesses of the water war activism. The intersection of class and environmental identity gives us a better understanding of the politics of identity in the wars and it shows the role of environment in economic policy and visa versa. Theoretically, this intersection reveals connections between different Bolivian identity politics that will lead to a more comprehensive, accurate theory of environmental politics as deeply tied to economic identity on individual and national levels.

Indigenous Class in the Cochabamba Water Wars

Beginning after the Revolution of 1952, the Central Obrera Boliviana (COB) functioned to coordinate interests of proletarian, peasant and working classes. However, given large rates of unemployment in the 1980s and 1990s resulting from the NEP and subsequent privatization (Roddick 1988), workers' unions become increasingly ineffective. Organization against neoliberal policies became increasingly regionally, rather than class, based (Spronk 2007)<sup>40</sup>. Despite cross cutting alliances amongst classes, understanding class explains one of the reasons behind differing motivations amongst water war activists. Further, divergent class interests help to explain the splintering of interests and demands in the post-privatization era. I will go in to a brief discussion of some influential class divides in the context of the water wars.

#### Indigenous Classes in the Cochabamba Water Wars

Beginning after the Revolution of 1952, the Central Obrera Boliviana (COB) functioned to coordinate interests of proletarian, peasant and working classes. However, given large rates of unemployment in the 1980s and 1990s resulting from the NEP and subsequent privatization (Roddick 1988), workers' unions become increasingly ineffective. Organization against neoliberal policies following the debt crisis of the 1980s was largely region, rather than class, based

---

<sup>40</sup> The majority of modern labor is both urban and informal, i.e. self employed as street vendors, manual laborers, in middle class homes as servants (Spronk 2007). This makes regional rather than class based - usually union - organization more effective as is apparent in the 2000 water wars.

(Spronk 2007)<sup>41</sup>. Despite cross cutting alliances amongst classes, understanding class explains one of the reasons behind differing motivations amongst water war activists. Further, divergent class interests help to explain the splintering of interests and demands in the post-privatization era.

I will consider the following economic classes: miners, peasant farmers and the urban poor and how their class status has affected their relationship to natural resources like water. Water privatization affected a majority of Bolivians negatively in different ways. Land-owning farmers were unable to afford to run their farms due to the increasing expense of water. Miners were displaced by economic reforms leading up to water privatization that cut the number of dramatically. Peasants had maintained ancient water systems without government aid that were now sold without their permission to Betchel. The urban poor of Cochabamba presented a combination of the three - a diverse group of indigenous poor and working class displaced by free market economic policies of the late 20th century.

### Peasant Irrigators

Peasant irrigators<sup>42</sup> had developed and maintained their own water systems without government assistance using systems of allocation influenced by indige-

---

<sup>41</sup> The majority of post debt crisis (following mine/manufacturing/public service job loss) jobs are both urban and informal, i.e. self employed as street vendors, manual laborers, in middle class homes as servants (Spronk 2007). This makes regional rather than class based - usually union - organization more effective as is apparent in the 2000 water wars.

<sup>42</sup> Peasant mobilization was previously discussed along cultural and ethnic lines in chapter two. However, this group is also very influenced by their identity as *campesinos*. For this reason, peasant irrigators are considered in the context of class identity in Bolivia as well as Ethnic identity.

nous pre-colonial systems. Indigenous *usos y costumbres* irrigation systems are common in rural Andean Bolivia (Fabricant 2012). Small-scale water systems in rural Andean regions were given little to no state attention in comparison to urban water reform. As a result, indigenous peoples maintained communal water systems (Perreault 2008). These systems combined cultural symbolic value of water, including values of *Pachamama* with concrete solutions for the water needs of rural agrarian peasants. As mentioned briefly in previous chapters, *Pachamama* is an important goddess of the earth and of fertility. Belief in *Pachamama* is common throughout groups of the Andean region – including, but not limited to, Quechua and Aymara people – and much of the rest of Bolivia (Avendaño 2009; Bonilla 2006). Her inclusion in the new national constitution is reflective of the universal importance of this deity in Bolivia in relation to protecting the rights of the earth (Congreso Nacional 2008).

This history makes sense of why the rural peasant population was motivated to start a movement against water privatization: these groups had worked to establish systems without state aid and privatization took ownership nevertheless. Historically speaking, rural Andean peasants had experienced being exploited by the hacienda and the colonial economies (Perreault 2008). The more modern development of neoliberal policies of privatization directly paralleled principles of these systems and was met with immediate hostility. This hostility took immediate form in the water wars.

Peasant Irrigators integral role in developing rural water systems and their displacement to urban Cochabamba following structural reforms of the 1980s ex-

plains why *Federación Departamental Cochabambina de Regantes*, or FEDCOR, the organizational network connecting rural peasant irrigators and campesino communities, was one of the first to act and one of the most influential organizations in the Cochabamba water wars of 2000. It worked in conjunction with the Coordinadora<sup>43</sup>, and acted as an organizational tool to align the interests of urban and rural poor against international private water companies. Rural irrigators acted as militant participants in the Cochabamba water wars.

Looking past the wars, their history in constructing communal systems through policies of *usos y costumbres* gave rural peasant irrigators a background in developing alternative models and a concrete vision of what the system could resemble in place of the privatized model. Peasant participants fought against neoliberal reforms to maintain their autonomous, traditional water networks in the face of privatization. Their injury was dramatic; peasant water systems had been established over thousands of years and then privatized without permission. Their active, militant role in Cochabamba protest groups is logical<sup>44</sup>. Although these motivations diverged from the interests of urban poor and displaced miners, their

---

<sup>43</sup> As mentioned in chapter three, the Coordinadora was an urban organization defending the right to water.

<sup>44</sup> Apart from obvious injury as a motivation, rural peasant groups have a history of successful communally based political activism. For example, in 1989 el Movimiento Bolivia Libre (MBL) was able to elect government representatives that moved towards including Andean Aymara interests (Leyva et al. 2008)) This showed the common interest amongst Andean indigenous in instating structural reforms that were *not* those neoliberal reforms instituted by the government. This consolidated movement amongst Andean indigenous is an example of the political attitudes and organizational experience that led to the immediate reaction to water privatization in Cochabamba.

common injury and past experience in communal political organization is a factor that led to the successful rejection of Betchel and the return to the municipal water system, all in less than a year.

### *Altiplano Miners*

Although laid off altiplano miners were not as directly dependent on systems of water for their livelihood, as they were not farmers, they were still part of a class for which privatized rates made water unattainable. Poor miners, predominantly jobless due to the mine closures of the 1980s, entered the water wars with a history of bad experiences with neoliberal policy. In fact, miners as a class had lost 23,000 of 30,000 jobs due to structural reform policies (Spronk 2007). They shared with rural peasants a history of having sustained themselves off of communal, self-constructed water systems with little government assistance.

In the 20th century, miners had experienced the highest rates of job loss due to neoliberal loan policies. It is no wonder that they were active participants in the water wars given privatization's obvious connection to past western development policies that had done more to foster the free market economy than to develop unstable nations like Bolivia (Bonilla 2006).

These two populations are examples of influential peoples that, when displaced in urban Cochabamba, took up influential roles that were partially a result of their economic class background and experience of international economic policies.

### Intersectionality of Class and Environmental Identity in Cochabamba

The intersection of class identity with environmental identity shows how class identities affect environmental identities, as well as how environmental opportunity affects class identity. Environmental identities are partially determined by access to resources and an (un)willingness to exploit those resources for profit. These identities affect economic identities.

Class intersects with environmental identity on micro and macro scales. International economic relationships help to explain the basis for Bolivian environmental and class experiences. Dependence and exploitation between Bolivia and the global North have determined the environmental needs of, and resources available to, Bolivians. Historically, colonialism has influenced environmental identities. The use of natural and human resources for economic growth continues today in the form of neoliberal economic policies. However, this broad context is just that, a context. Within Bolivia, indigenous relationships with the natural environment have been shaped by individual experiences that vary along lines of ethnicity, gender and class. These lines are intersecting and mutually influential, cases of the Andean mining and peasant classes show how access to economic resources and occupation have a great influence on environmental identities. Further, the case studies show how environmental class identities influenced the trajectory of the water wars.

As in the cases of gender and ethnicity in their relationship to environment, the intersectional approach works on one level to foster greater solidarity amongst movements. By emphasizing the centrality of the connectedness of different sorts of inequalities, class conscious activists and advocates for equitable economic



policy will come to realize that they cannot separate their interests from the interests of environmental justice advocates. With an intersectional approach, movements become both stronger in numbers and equipped with a more accurate, complete knowledge of injustices at hand in the Bolivian context. When applied to the field of environmental political theory, this functions to articulate the connectedness of different forms of oppression on a global scale.

On a theoretical level, employing a Marxist critique of capitalism in the context of the intersectionality of class and environment complicates and decentralizes the class analysis without diminishing its importance. The importance of class in the context of other identities employs theories borrowing from Marxism but bringing a peripheral perspective the theoretical table that understands how Marx's critique on capitalism should be employed considering the foundations of racism and cultural exploitation upon which these economic relations were built<sup>45</sup>.

---

<sup>45</sup> In his conferences, Enrique Dussel explains the race related, Eurocentric origins of the concept of development.

“La palabra española "desarrollismo" es intraducible al alemán o inglés. Su raíz no permite la construcción de derivado despectivo, negativo, excesivo....Se trata de una posición ontológica por la que se piensa que el "desarrollo" (=desarrollismo) que siguió Europa *deberá ser seguido unilinealmente por toda otra cultura*. Por ello, la "falacia del desarrollo" (=falacia desarrollista) no es ya una categoría sociológica o económica, sino una categoría *filosófica fundamental*. Es el "*movimiento necesario del Ser*, para Hegel; su "desarrollo" inevitable. El "eurocentrismo" cae en la "falacia desarrollista" -son dos aspectos de "lo Mismo".

This analysis of development theory effectively describes how the concept is so deeply rooted in European culture of conquest. These are the connotations of the concept of development. This is the theory that serves as the basis of justification for capitalist exploitation. Dussel's analysis of development and Eurocentrism explicates how international capitalist relations are founded on a racist hierarchy of nations and the idea of linear development. This adds to the Marxist analysis because it understands

Marx is very valuable on his own as critical deconstruction the processes of the free market, but his work is dated and weakened by its euro centrism and its narrow focus on class identity as preceding all other forms of subordination and identity formation. Considering Latin American philosophers like Enrique Dussel, adds a relevant perspective while the doing so within an intersectional framework of class, ethnicity, gender and environment<sup>46</sup> serve to complicates Marx's capitalist critique's linear nature.

Adding class to the theory of environmental intersectionality adds something that ethnicity and gender do not. First, the classed history of Bolivia emphasizes the extent to which colonial, and later capitalist, economic development is dependent on environmental exploitation in the rest of the world. In this way western economic growth affects the environmental identities of global South populations. Second, considering class and environment gives space to consider alternative models of resource allocation that are most closely associated with classed groups. In this way, the class intersection introduces viable alternatives to free market development that, when theorized, have potential to shape environmental politics on larger scale.

---

how issues of class should be considered as founded in non-economic identities (i.e. colonialism, inequalities of race, gender and even environment).

<sup>46</sup>Intersections of environment and class are important because they complicate the traditional notion of Marxist class analysis. They exemplify how free market economics are directly reliant on the exploitation of environment. Further, I would argue these economic exploitations (or economic profits made from environmental exploitations) are often a result of groups more willing to exploit nature for economic profit taking advantage of those groups with a more reciprocal idea of the relationship between human and nature. This is a generalization, however there is a certain tendency of capitalist nations to consider earth as a resource for profit and little more.

There are viable alternatives for water, and other natural resource, allocation that come to the forefront when looking at intersections between environment and class in Bolivia. These systems are very relevant on a concrete level in the search for sustainable alternatives given modern environmental crises. Although they are small in scale and their methodology would not directly transfer to many contexts, ideologies of communally based distribution systems, principles of respect for the earth not only as a source of economic profit, and direct involvement of the people in resource allocation decision making could certainly prove ideologically valuable aspects of an environmental political theory relevant on a broader scale.

These networks help to emphasize the connection between class status and individual, or group, relations with the environment. They also function to suggest that systems such as these stemming from an intersection of class, ethnicity, gender and environmental identities in Bolivia, are viable alternatives to western resource distribution models.

The abstraction of class and environment are useful in a number of ways, although these are context specific, themes of colonialism and economic dependency can be theorized to address an environmental politics applicable, at least to some extent, to a broader environmental politics of the Global South. Although specific class based solutions to resource allocation are Bolivian, the theoretical gain from this is that we recognize the legitimacy of subaltern infrastructures in the search for better, more just environmental models. In this way, the environmental intersectionality I present is a politics applicable not only to the Global South, but also useful as a tool of self-critique for the Global North.

## **Conclusion**

“El trabajo que se requiere para juntar las cosas es infinito y la sociedad ha hecho innumerables esfuerzos en ese sentido, porque lo que prevalece en la sociedad es, sin duda, la fuerza de la segregación que es lo normal; no lo normal es la fuerza de agregación. Construir mecanismos de agregación...el tener que comprender que las estructuras políticas tenían que tener este carácter flexible de alianzas y no de monolíticas organizaciones” (Hardt 2008, p. 38).

Hardt's analysis of the variegated, diverse nature of modern Bolivian politics explains the necessity of uniting these sources of difference in an intersectional manner. Experiences of ethnicity, gender, class and environment intersect to form complex identities. These identities are ever evolving, and for this reason solutions must be fluid. The changing nature of these various sources of inequality means the work of connecting these identities in a intersectional environmental political theory is continuous.

However complex, this approach to the politics of inequality makes space for 'la fuerza de agregación'. When applied to concrete situations, the political theory of intersectionality has potential to serve as a ideological basis for flexible mechanisms of aggregation. This theory can create powerful, crosscutting global alliances. On the other hand, the specificity of the Bolivian context exemplifies the importance of the flexibility of intersectionality. Changes in the manner this theory can be applied varies according to cultural contexts and the fluid effects of the cross cutting intersectional identities discussed throughout this paper.

The theory of environmental intersectionality has potential to influence the pursuit of a more sustainable model for political growth in an age of environmental resource scarcity and climate disaster. It has potential to more adequately address injustices caused by inequitable distribution of environmental resources and burdens. This theory does work that moves away from monolithic approaches to injustice. Instead, it works to develop a multifaceted approach that acknowledge how one form of injustice cannot be addressed in isolation from other axes of injustice.

Adding an axis of environmental identity contributes to the theory of intersectionality in that it more accurately explains injustices influenced by environmental factors that are not fully addressed by more widely accepted axes of identity. Politics of environmental justice and impending resource scarcity are so central to the global modern political landscape that they should not be considered as subsets to other sources of identity formation. This sense of identity in relation to the living ecosystem, as Hayward terms it, is in fact increasingly important as discrepancies in access to adequate resources grow more severe.

## References

- Achtenburg , Emily, and Rebecca Currents . "From Water Wars to Water Scarcity: Bolivia's Cautionary Tale." *NACLA: North American Congress on Latin America*. 06 Jun 2013: n. page. Web. 13 Apr. 2014.  
 <<https://nacla.org/blog/2013/6/5/water-wars-water-scarcity-bolivia%E2%80%99s-cautionary-tale>>.
- Antezana, Luis E. "La reforma agraria campesina en Bolivia (1956-1960)". *Revista Mexicana de Sociología*. 31.2 (Apr. - Jun., 1969): 245-321.
- Arnold, Denise. *The Metamorphosis of Heads: Textual Struggles, Education, and Land of the Andes*. 1st. Pittsburgh : University of Pittsburgh Press, 2006. . Print.
- Arredondo, Ramiro Orias. "Bolivia en el comercio mundial: entre la globaliza

- ción y la marginalización". *Estudios Internacionales*. 30.118 (Abril-Junio 1997): 216-234.
- Avendaño, Tatiana Rao. "Derecho a la naturaleza o derechos de la naturaleza?." *Ecología Política* (2009) 38:1. 17-22. Print.
- Bell, Derrick A.. *Faces in the bottom of the well: the permanence of racism*. New York: BasicBooks, 1992. Print.
- Bolivian National Government. National Congress. *Proyecto de Nueva Constitución Política del Estado para consulta en el Referéndum*. U.P.S. Editorial , 2008. Print.
- Bonilla, Heraclio . "Religious Practices in the Andes and Their Relevance to Political Struggle and Development: The Case of El Tío and Miners in Bolivia." *Mountain Research and Development*. 26.4 (2006): 336-342.
- Belkir, Jean, and Bernice Barnett. "Race, Gender and Class Intersectionality." *Race, Gender & Class*. 8.3 (2001): 157-174.
- Bustamante, R., E. Peredo, and M. E. Udaeta. "Women in the 'water war' in the Cochabamba valleys." *Opposing currents: the politics of water and gender in Latin America*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2005. Print.
- "Campesino." *Merriam-Webster.com*. Merriam-Webster, 2011. Web. 3 March 2014.
- Christoff, Peter, and Robyn Eckersley. *Globalization and the environment*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2013. Print.
- Commission on the Status of Women*. Rio de Janeiro : United Nations, 2011. Web. 22 Mar. 2014. <<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw/csw55/panels/Panel4-E.pdf>>.
- Dussel, Enrique. "1492. El encubrimiento del Otro Hacia el origen del "mito de la Modernidad"." *Colección Académica Nro. uno*. Ed. Multiple Editors. La Paz, Bolivia: Centro de Información para el Desarrollo, 1991. Web. 13 Apr. 2014.
- Butler, Ian. "Derek Wall: 'Ecosocialism places Marx at the centre of its analysis'." *Green Left Weekly*. (Jan 2010): *Democratic Socialist Perspective*. Print.
- "'Febrero negro', a diez años de la crisis." *Péridico Cambio* 13 Feb. 2013: n. pag. Print.

- Frame, Mary. "The Question of Symmetry in Andean Textiles." *Textile Narratives & Conversions: Proceedings of the 10th Biennial Symposium of the Textile Society of America*. 1.1 (2006): Print.
- Frank, Andre Gunder. *ReOrient global economy in the Asian Age*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998. Print.
- Galeano, Eduardo . *Open Veins of Latin America: Five Centuries of the Pillage of a Continent*. 25th Anniversary Edition. Monthly Review Press, 1997. 33-69. Print.
- Hayward, Tim. *Political Theory and Ecological Values*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998.
- Kubiszewski , Ida , Robert Costanza, Carol Franco, Philip Lawn, John Talberth, Tim Jackson, and Camille Aylmer. "Beyond GDP: Measuring and achieving global genuine progress." *Ecological Economies* 93(1): 57-68. Print.
- Laurie, Nina. "Gender Water Networks: Femininity and Masculinity in Water Politics in Bolivia." *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*. 35.1 (2011): 172-188. Print.
- Leyva, Xochitil , Araceli Burguete, and Shannon Speed. *Gobernar (en) la diversidad: experiencias indígenas desde América Latina. Hacia la investigaci3n de co-labor*. Centro de Investigaciones y Estudios Superiores en Antropolog3a Social, 2008. Print.
- Linera, lvvaro Garcia, Marxa Chvez L3on, and Patricia Costas Monje. *Sociolog3a de los movimientos sociales en Bolivia: Estructuras de movilizaci3n, repertorios culturales y acci3n pol3tica*. 3rd. La Paz, Bolivia: Plural Editores, 2004. Print.
- Luebker , Malte, Martin Oelz, et al. " Domestic workers across the world : global and regional statistics and the extent of legal protection." *International Labor Organization*. (2013): xi-134. Web. 21 Mar. 2014. <<http://labordoc.ilo.org/record/454497?ln=en>>.
- Mall3n , Patricia. "Bolivian Census Highlights How Changes in Bolivian Demographics Might Affect President Evo Morales' Power Base." *International Business Times* 07 Aug 2013, n. pag. Web. 18 Feb. 2014.
- Mamani Caprichi, Humberto. *La educaci3n india en la visi3n de la sociedad criolla: 1920 - 1943.* 1st. La Paz: Aruwiyiri , 1992. 79-98. Print.



- Marx, Karl. *The Marx-Engles Reader: Das Kapital*. 2nd Ed. New York: Norton & Company, 1978. P. 469-500. Print.
- McLane, Brenden. "Fighting Privatization in Contemporary Bolivia: Cultures of Resistance." *UW Bothell Policy Journal*: 21-29. Print.
- McNeish, John-Andrew. "Stones on the Road: The Politics of Participation and the Generation of Crisis in Bolivia." *Bulletin of Latin American Research*. 25.2 (2006): 220-240. Print.
- Mills, Mike. "Green Democracy: the search for an ethical solution." *Democracy and green political thought: sustainability, rights, and citizenship*. London: Routledge, 1996. 97-114. Print.
- Negri, Toni, Michael Hardt, Guiseppe Cocco, and Judith Revel. "Imperio, multitud y sociedad abigarrada ." *Imperio, multitud y sociedad abigarrada*. La Paz: CLASCO, 2008. Print.
- Pape, I.S.R. "'This Is Not a Meeting for Women': The Sociocultural Dynamics of Rural Women's Political Participation in the Bolivian Andes." *Latin American Perspectives*. 35.6 (2008): 41-62. Print.
- Pellow, David. *Resisting Global Toxics: Transnational Movements in Environmental Justice*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2007. Print.
- Pellow, David N., and Robert Brulle. *Power, justice, and the environment: a critical appraisal of the environmental justice movement*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2005. Print.
- Perreault, Tom. "Custom and Contradiction: Rural Water Governance and the Politics of Usos y Costumbres in Bolivia's Irrigators' Movement." *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*. 98.4 (2008): 834-854. Print.
- Portes, Alejandro, and Kelly Hoffman. "Latin American Class Structures: Their Composition and Change during the Neoliberal Era." *Latin American Research Review*. 38.1 (2003): 41-82. Print.
- Radding, Cynthia. "Historical Perspectives on Gender, Security, and Technology: Gathering, Weaving and Subsistence in Colonial Mission Communities in Bolivia." *International Journal of Politics, Culture and Society*. 15.1 (2001): 107-123. Print.
- Roddick, Jackie. *The Dance of the Millions*. Nottingham: Russell Press, 1988. Print.
- Schultz, Jim. "Bolivia: The Water War Widens." (Privatization in the Americas):

34-37. Print.

Silverblatt, Irene. *Moon, Sun and Witches: Gender Ideologies and Class in Incan and Colonial Peru*. Princeton : University of Princeton Press, 1987. Print.

Spronk , Susan. "Roots of Resistance to Urban Water Privatization in Bolivia: "The 'New Working Class,' the Crisis of Neoliberalism, and Public Services." *International Labor and Working-Class History*. 71. (2007): 8-28. Print.

Stephenson, Marcia. *Gender and Modernity in Andean Bolivia*. 1st. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1999. Print.

Ticona, Esteban, Gonzalo Rojas, and Xavier Albó. *Votos y Wiphalas: Campesinos y Pueblos Originarios en Democracia* . 1st ed. La Paz, Bolivia: Fundación Mileno y CIPCA, 1995. Print.

Townsend-Bell, Erica. "What is Relevance? Defining Intersectional Praxis in Uruguay." *Political Research Quarterly* 64: 187-199. Print.

UN General Assembly, *United Nations Millennium Declaration, Resolution Adopted by the General Assembly* , 18 September 2000, A/RES/55/2, available at: <http://www.refworld.org/docid/3b00f4ea3.html> [accessed 14 March 2014]

United States. Central Intelligence Agency. *People and Society: Bolivia*. 2014. Web. <<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/bl.html>>.

Wall, Derek. *The rise of the green left inside the worldwide ecosocialist movement*. London: Pluto Press , 2010. Print.