

# Anatomy of a Regional Conflict: Tarija and resource Grievances in Morales' Bolivia

Denise Humphreys Bebbington

University of Manchester

[denisebebbington@yahoo.com](mailto:denisebebbington@yahoo.com)

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# Outline

- Aim of research
- Brief history of extraction and recent contexts
- Triggers to Protest
- Interpreting protest: Conflicts within and between resource nationalism and resource regionalism
- Grievance and Guaraní mobilisation
- Concluding thoughts

# Aim of research

What happens to debates about extraction and its relationship to development when a new government comes to power on the back of a social movement process?

Look at three different contexts:

- Regional politics (Tarija)
- TCOs Guaraní
- TCO Weenhayek

# A brief history of extraction

- Extended history of extraction: silver, tin, rubber
- Hydrocarbons discovered in 1920's
- Chaco War 1932-1935
- Nationalisations and privatisations

# Recent Contexts

- 1990s increased FDI sparks gas boom;
- Legal framework re-worked to favour foreign investment;
- Technology advancements spark new discoveries;
- Promotion of a new energy supply zone – linking Bolivia's gas fields to urban centres of consumption in Brazil & Argentina.

# Recent contexts

- Rising social unrest (1995-2003);
- Strengthening of social movements and new social actors (indigenous, *cocaleros*, in alliance with NGOs, intellectual left);
- Discursive points of convergence between *cocalero* movement and indigenous peoples movement;
- Formation of MAS
- Social conflicts: Guerra del agua, Guerra del gas

# The September Strike: Triggers to Protest

- Struggles over IDH revenues
- Regional autonomy
- Revocatorio

# Interpreting Protest

- Conflicts in Tarija directly linked to access to and control over natural gas operations and rents derived from those operations;
- Central management of revenue versus departmental versus sub departmental management of revenue versus indigenous authority;
- Autonomy Sí but ...



# Concluding thoughts

- Despite SM social control, weaker groups (i.e. guaranies) continue to be vulnerable with limited influence on debates around extraction;
- Social-environmental and territorial concerns subordinated to anti-globalization frame;
- Mixed experience with negotiation process (how the Guaraní see the state);
- Extractive led social policy model dependent upon expansion of hydrocarbon frontier.



**Outside the offices of the Consejo de Capitanes Guaranies of Tarija, January 2009**