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

Denise Humphreys Bebbington
University of Manchester
denisebebbington@yahoo.com
“Territories, Conflicts and Development in the Andes”
www.sed.manchester.ac.uk/research/andes/

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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 Guaraníes of Tarija, January 2009