

Conflicts over the Countryside: Civil Society and the Political Ecology of Rural Development in the Andean Region

Monitoring Report from rapporteur

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The inaugural seminar of the *Conflicts over the Countryside* project was held at the School of Environment and Development, University of Manchester, on 22 October 2007. Around 30 participants from academic and non-academic organisations were present, including a representative from a civil society organisation in Peru (see below), whose participation had been supported by the project.

Project director, Anthony Bebbington, welcomed participants and opened the seminar with an introduction to the project, entitled 'Territory, Conflicts and Development in the Andes', in which he gave an overview of previous and ongoing work on civil society, development and territorial transformation in the Andean region, on which *Conflicts over the Countryside* builds. He presented the project aims and research themes, the project team, and described the contexts and situations in some of the case study sites in Peru (Cajamarca and Piura) and Ecuador (Cotacachi), which would provide the basis for comparative work. Project researcher, Leonith Hinojosa, gave the second presentation, 'In the name of the environment: The political economy of socioenvironmental conflicts in Altiplano mining areas of Bolivia'. In her paper, Hinojosa gave an overview of preliminary fieldwork carried out in Bolivia, in which she described the current situation in Bolivia, characterised by both a shift from metals mining in the traditional highlands to hydrocarbon extractions in eastern Bolivia and the liberalisation of the mining industry, and considered the social and environmental implications of these changes.

The afternoon session comprised presentations from two external participants, both representing civil society organisations. José de Echave, from Cooperación, a Peruvian NGO based in Lima that supports communities affected by mining, gave a talk on 'Mining in Peru: between the transformation of conflicts and the programmatic challenge' in which he described the current situation across Peru in terms of the implications of the current rapid and large-scale expansion of mining on highland communities and the emergence of conflicts over local resources. Echave, one of Peru's leading commentators on the mining sector, made particular mention of the strategies employed by a range of social actors (communities, civil society organizations, local and national governments and mining companies) to deal with these issues and conflicts, and the specific pressure imposed by the mining sector to employ self-regulation as opposed to government-imposed standards. The final presentation, given by Brian Pratt of INTRAC, an Oxford-based NGO that supports capacity building in the civil society sector, presented findings from INTRAC research supported under the ESRC Nongovernmental Public Action programme. Pratt focused on the emergence and nature of indigenous organizations and movements in the Peruvian Amazon, with a particular focus on the Machiguena organization COMARU. He explored internal dynamics within COMARU and in particular the nature of its relationships with NGOs, above all international environmental NGOs. Arguments related to the development of the Camisea natural gas project were used to illustrate some of the convergences and tensions involved in these relationships.

The seminar ended with a plenary session that focused both on discussion of topics and questions arising from the four papers, and also raised points and perspectives that could usefully be considered in the research project as it develops. One point, noted by both the research team and the seminar participants, was that it would be

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good to achieve a more balanced representation of research across the three case study countries – Bolivia, Ecuador and Peru - in the project, since previous work, in particular that undertaken by both Bebbington and Hinojosa, had centred primarily on Peru. The discussion also focused on how to continue with the seminar series. It was agreed that it would be ideal if the seminar could “travel” around the UK as a means of widening participation and ownership and of evening out costs of attendance. Participants from Oxford University, Newcastle University, St. Andrews and the International Council on Mining and Metals each expressed interest.

Indeed, the second seminar of the project was held at St Antony’s College, University of Oxford, on 2nd May 2008. This focused on ‘Understanding the political dynamics of social protest and elite response around extractive industries’. It comprised five presentations: two from project researchers (Anthony Bebbington and Denise Humphreys Bebbington) on Ecuador and Bolivia, respectively, and three from external speakers (Rosemary Thorp, Lewis Taylor and John Crabtree) all of whom focused on Peru, with Crabtree presenting a comparative analysis between Peru and Bolivia. The seminar was very well attended, with an audience of 35 participants, mainly from academia (UK and Latin America) but also from civil society organisations and the private sector, and also one international attendee facilitated by the project through an SSRC-ESRC fellowship.

The seminar opened with a presentation on the project and its progress to date, including feedback on the first seminar, and the programme for the second seminar.

The first two papers focused on the hydrocarbons industry, or, more specifically, the transition from hydrocarbons to (mineral) mining in Ecuador, and from mining to natural gas development in Bolivia. Anthony Bebbington started with a presentation entitled ‘Debating mining in Correa’s Ecuador: social movements, constituent assemblies and cabinet frictions’, in which he discussed the role of different social actors from the local, national and international levels vis-à-vis the expansion of mining concessions and ventures in Ecuador (the national government, the World Bank, international (especially Canadian) mining companies, communities, civil society organisations). He outlined the current situation in Ecuador, whereby an increasing number of concessions for exploration have been granted to foreign mining interests in the Andean region under the mining law, the *Mandato Minero*. The focus of his paper was the position of the Ecuadorian government in relation to the expansion of mining (exploratory) concessions and the conflicts generated, and social resistance by civil society organisations, which had tended to follow the geography of the increased exploration, and the complexity and diversity behind these political dynamics. Denise Humphreys Bebbington followed with a paper entitled ‘The many politics of gas development in Tarija, Bolivia’. Drawing on ongoing doctoral research, she discussed the role and implications of expanding natural gas production at both a regional and a national scale, resulting from the liberalisation of natural resources sectors in the 1908s and with ongoing support from the World Bank. She analysed the various conflicts generated by local protests against gas pipelines and the uneven concentration of wealth created by the gas industry. She also discussed the contested potential for Bolivia to export gas to neighbouring countries – a venture that has been abandoned by current president Evo Morales, who is restructuring the natural gas industry to replace participation from private companies with state entities from socialist and former socialist countries (e.g. Venezuela and Russia) and redistributing revenue from the hydrocarbons tax to pension funds rather than infrastructure developments (unlike in Peru).

The other three papers concentrated on Peru. John Crabtree spoke on ‘Social Movements and Political parties: comparisons from Peru and Bolivia’. He examined the convergences and contradictions in the relationship between the state, political parties and social movements. He noted that, in Peru, political parties have limited

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reach beyond Congress, implying that social movements had limited representation within the state and thus largely lacked access to state funding. Nevertheless, Crabtree advocated a cautious comparative approach given the different cultural and political contexts of the two (and other) countries, and the different histories and trajectories of their extractive industries. The following two papers focused more specifically on the local context of particular major mines or mining regions: the city and department of Cajamarca in northern Peru and Tintaya mine in the south of the country. Lewis Taylor gave a lively presentation on 'Social protest and elite response in Cajamarca [Peru]'. He analysed the history of elite groups in the Cajamarca region, noting that these had fragmented from a relatively cohesive group of landowners and merchants to a mix of large commercial farmers, entrepreneurs and those involved in the narcotics trade. He then explored the powerful Benavides family that owns Minera Yanacocha, and its dealings with both government and social movements that have taken up social and environmental issues arising from the mine's expansion, identifying a strategy of 'divide and rule' whereby local academics are coopted with consultancy projects and local communities with flimsy development projects, often relying on micro-credit initiatives as a strategy to increase communities' dependency. Rosemary Thorp gave a paper on 'The micro and the macro of protest and response: the case of Tintaya'. She gave an overview of her research, conducted in 2005, on the development of the gold and copper mine and (sometimes violent) social protests surrounding it. She analysed the roles of a progressive local mayor, the ombudsman (from Oxfam Australia), and civil society organisations in addressing social and environmental issues – or 'environmental abuses' – such as CONACAMI, Cooperación and Oxfam (America and Australia), the role of the ombudsman (from Oxfam) in mediating conflicts. Here, Thorp stressed two mechanisms: the *mesa de diálogo* (dialogue table) and a strategy whereby top executives of international mining companies were taken to live in affected communities for a period of 2-3 weeks (not in the same area). Although she acknowledged various shortcomings on the part of the mining company in the Tintaya case, her analysis was slightly less critical of the private mining company than that of Taylor.

The seminar concluded with a plenary discussion that focused on the development of extractive industries over time and space (i.e. between the 'first wave' and 'second wave' of mining expansion in the Andes), and its implications for national and local development, environmental governance and civil society engagement (whether by direct actions of NGOs, round tables, government intervention or indirect mechanisms). A particular theme that arose in these discussions was the role of neoliberalism in the above dynamics. This was taken up in relation to the market liberalisation of the mining sector throughout the Andean region and the associated rolling-back of the state and the power imbalance between private (especially multinational) mining companies and South American governments, as well as the potential contribution of financial revenue from mining to state economic and social development. Many comments surrounded the issue of how this could be better organised in order to provide benefits to those living in mining areas while avoiding cooption of local peoples and politics by mining companies (under corporate social responsibility) on the one hand, and strengthening the executive and regulatory capacity of the state on the other. This aspect of the discussion was characterised by some moments of heated debate between some representatives of the private mining sector and other participants. An important point of note was that more attention was perhaps needed to Andean traditional cultural understandings of territory and development, in contrast to 'western' notions of the assumed benefits of economic development and monetary compensation.

Anthony Bebbington closed the seminar with some final remarks in which he noted the complexity and contradictions raised by the analyses of the political economy of

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extractive industries; such as the tension between private companies and the state, whereby companies' attempts to support the state, especially through corporate social responsibility initiatives and under the guise of 'partnership', are inevitably framed as cooption; and also in the relationship between political parties and civil society organisations, whereby this legitimate association often results in political parties being branded as radical, and social movements as politicised.

The second seminar makes an important contribution to the research project in two key ways. Firstly, building on the first seminar, it was able to continue developing a two-way process whereby project researchers are able to present their research to a select group of people interested in extractive industries, discuss it and receive feedback on it, while also acting as a forum in which the latter can present their own work to a specialised audience and thus also benefit from engagement with a major body of work being conducted in their area of interest. In this regard, the project has established contact with quite an impressive range of people with interests in this fairly specific area, and from a variety of backgrounds and institutional affiliations. Special note should also be made of the project's facilitation of a number of international attendees to this and the first seminar. Secondly, the project has made a conscious effort to engage with non-academic audiences in the seminars, and this has resulted in the contribution of a wider variety of perspectives and experiences to the studies and ideas being discussed. As noted above, these are valuable for both the project team and the academic members of the audience, and play an important role in shaping the possible future questions and directions of the research. In this kind of largely academic forum, however, it is perhaps inevitable that representatives of mining companies will come under particular scrutiny, and hopefully some heated moments of discussion will not deter them from attending future events or continuing their participation in the project. Indeed, the third project seminar will be co-organised with a private sector organisation, the International Council on Metals and Mining (ICMM), and will be held on 24 October 2008 in London.

More generally, the project researchers have to date demonstrated research collaboration with individuals and institutions both in the Andean countries and elsewhere, organised two successful seminars and participated in a large number of other events, and have produced an impressive range of research and policy publications, many in collaboration with South American partners. In this way, the project is quite clearly committed to working in a collaborative way with researchers and institutions in the Andean countries, rather than just using those places as a research site, and thus supporting their own research on the hugely significant expansion of extractive industries that is occurring in their countries. As a result, the project has so far produced and/or developed a set of in-depth empirical case studies that will form the basis for the analysis of a range of themes related to mining, civil society, development and environmental governance in the Andean region, with also the possibility for comparing and contrasting between cases and contexts.

The project's dedicated website (<http://www.sed.manchester.ac.uk/research/andes>) acts as a portal for the project research team and partners, but also for the wider community interested in extractive industries and development in the Andes. It contains an impressive amount of detailed information on the programme of research, project staff, events and publications, in both English and Spanish, and is regularly updated.

One of the key aims, and benefits, of the project seminars is to develop ideas on important themes and perspectives that could be developed either by project activities, or by parallel initiatives. In this regard, two key challenges for the project as it advances will be, firstly, to draw out the general trends, but also the divergences, between the different project case studies, as well as external studies (such as those by Taylor and Thorp); and, secondly, as acknowledged at the second

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seminar, to mobilise the analyses of those studies to inform governance practices at a more conceptual level (whether related to local or national development, or natural resources management and environmental change). Perhaps one further direction that the project could usefully focus on slightly more explicitly would be an engagement with theories of political ecology. These could be further developed, for example, in relation to the *discursive* dimensions of mining, development and civil society – such as the ideas that Peru is by nature a “mining nation” or the mobilisation of notions of Andean traditional culture as a strategy to resist the development of extractive industries – as opposed to the purely material outcomes of environmental degradation, social exploitation and infrastructure development. They could also be developed in relation to the ways in which territory and natural resources might influence the ways in which social relations (such as politics, governance and resistance) are shaped, perhaps through a critical engagement with the tempting, yet somewhat environmentally deterministic, idea of the ‘resource curse’.

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