

Transnational companies and transnational civil society

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INTRODUCTION

At the time of writing (June 2009) the Peruvian government was in the midst of its worst political crisis since it was elected in 2006. The cause: a highly conflictive situation in Peru's Amazonia where indigenous peoples were protesting against the government's decision to pass legislation that would facilitate hydrocarbon exploration, mining, commercial farming and logging in their territories. This event, though remarkable for its scale and the authoritarian response it induced from government,¹ was hardly an isolated incident. As *The Economist* (Jun 11th, 2009) noted "Peru has seen many conflicts between foreign mining and oil companies and local people, who complain of environmental damage and/or a lack of tangible benefits from these investments". Nor is it only the centre right Peruvian government that has systematically promoted the expansion of extractive industry. In March 2009 the ostensibly post-neoliberal government of Ecuador, already lauding the benefits that "responsible" foreign mining investment could bring to the country, withdrew the legal status of the country's most vocal environmental NGO.² The Bolivian government, claiming both post-neoliberal *and* indigenous credentials, has likewise promoted foreign investment in extractive industries and appears to brook relatively little dissent on the matter from indigenous organizations.

¹ On June 5th, 2009 soldiers opened fire on protesters. The number killed is disputed ranging from less than one to several dozens of people. In response, protestors also killed policemen.

² This was later reinstated, following international outcry.

This contention reflects the existence of quite different views on the role that extractive industries might play in national development. While foreign and national governments, and private investors alike, see mining as a source of great potential profit and revenue, many communities and civil society groups have opposed excessive expansion because profit has come at the detriment of host localities. These groups express concern about environmental damage (resource depletion, contamination, species extinction, landscape transformation, etc.) and the social and economic costs that can accompany extraction (livelihood decline, forced labour, the introduction and dissemination of new diseases, enclave economies, etc.)

This contention is a direct consequence of neoliberal reforms that, since the early 1990s, have created substantially more favourable environments for foreign investment in extractive industry. However, one effect of this contention – as well as of international pressure and the lessons of history – is that these ‘new’ private, mostly multinational, investors are under pressure to establish greater linkages with local economy and society, demonstrate greater environmental responsibility and respond to the demands of affected populations. In this process, NGOs, civil society networks and other non-community organizations have played a significant role in shaping the emergence and evolution of communities’ reactions as well as in influencing the responses of multinational companies and governments.

This paper aims to show the basis on which conflicts provoked by the expansion of the mining industry arise and the role that international and domestic actors have played in deepening, mitigating or resolving these conflicts and – as a result – in influencing the trajectory of mining expansion in particular territories. We argue that in order to understand how conflicts emerge and evolve, it is necessary to analyse two phenomena in particular: mining expansion as

part of a neo-liberal development strategy, which has territorial implications, and the transnational nature of the role played by civil society actors in challenging that strategy. While transnational relationships have often allowed greater leverage, they have also sometimes been asymmetric and on occasion have provoked mutual criticism, tension and rupture within coalitions, as well as conflicts with actors from different spheres. We illustrate our argument with vignettes from our research in Peru, Bolivia and Ecuador (for more detail see Bebbington et al, 2007a, 2008; Bebbington, 2007 and Hinojosa, 2007).³ Finally we suggest that the dynamics of these conflicts have changed since the election of ostensibly post-neoliberal governments in Ecuador and Bolivia, and will change again in the face of the global financial crisis.

NEOLIBERAL POLICIES AND MINING AS A STATE FINANCIAL STRATEGY

There is consensus, across diverse theoretical and ideological positions, that the 1990s saw neoliberal policies spread throughout the Andean countries (c.f. Gwynne and Kay, 2004; World Bank, 2005). While this has produced macroeconomic stability and some growth, these have primarily favoured urban areas. These policies have also produced growing rural unrest mainly because much of the economic growth occurring has been based on the extraction and export of minerals and hydrocarbons (primarily, oil and gas) found precisely in some of the poorest areas of the Andean countryside (Keenan et al, 2002). Indeed, despite the period of optimism experienced since 1990 when the economies of Peru, Ecuador and Bolivia grew on average by 4.7, 4.2 and 3.1 per cent per year, respectively, poverty – and in particular, rural poverty – shows no significant decline (Hall and Patrinos, 2006).

³ See also the website www.sed.manchester.ac.uk/research/andes.

As Gwynne and Kay (2004) suggest, neither investment of such importance (foreign direct investment in Andean countries increased from 4333 to 14714 millions of US dollars between 2000 and 2007 (ECLAC, quoted in Lara and Silva, 2009)) nor its effect on growth would have been possible without a specific set of policies aiming to incorporate the national economies into growing global markets. In the case of the mining sector, these policies aimed to attract and facilitate the entrance of large companies with fresh capital and modern technology for exploration and exploitation. The goal was that these companies would modernize the sector and provide governments with the revenue so eagerly needed for public investment – a position strongly argued by the Peruvian President (García, 2008).

In Peru, the successive governments that ruled since the 1990s guaranteed full advantages to firms willing to invest in the country – they received the same treatment as national investors, all barriers to repatriation of profits were removed, fiscal provisions requiring that they pay no more than regular company tax and long-term stability in taxation rates were guaranteed, and imports of inputs and technology were facilitated (Bury, 2007). In Bolivia, the ‘new economic policy’, implemented since 1985, likewise produced a favourable environment to foreign investors and in Ecuador similar policies were established, although at a slower pace, with less enforcement mechanisms and mostly emphasizing the hydrocarbons sector (Anderson, 2004). These domestic policies were complemented with external accords. For instance, the Peruvian government signed and ratified international agreements on private investments such as those with the Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency (of the World Bank Group) and the US Overseas Private Investment Corporation, plus 28 other bilateral agreements that guaranteed favourable conditions to private investments operating within Peruvian territory (cited in Bury,

2007).

As a result, FDI in the extractive industries increased. In Peru, investment increased five-fold between 1990 and 2000, with an additional 12 million hectares being given in concession to mining companies and producing an increase of US\$ 3.1 billion of the mineral exports over the period 1990-2003 (Bebbington et al, 2007a). In Ecuador, where the emphasis was on the oil sector, FDI grew at about 2.5 per cent per year. By contrast, mining projects were unable to shift from exploration to full-fledged mineral production, accounting for only 0.2 per cent of the total value of the country's exports (Anderson, 2004). In Bolivia mining investments were important in the late 1980s and in the 1990s investments in the hydrocarbons sector were dominant.

In order to complete the neoliberal package, investment policies were accompanied by sets of institutional reforms that modified land tenure laws and legal mechanisms for changing the preferred uses of land, which would affect the regulation that applies to the mining sector in each one of the countries. These reforms were meant to ease the establishment and further expansion of private capital and property rights in areas of the countryside with rich mineral deposits. However, the implementation of these policy changes took longer than that of the investment promotion policies. The superposition of formal laws and contradictions between the formal legal system and customary norms and practices governing the access to and control of land in the Andes (Bebbington and Hinojosa, 2007) have delayed the process of privatization and land reallocation but did not stop it. Notwithstanding their incoherencies, the institutional reforms have allowed national and transnational companies to occupy and assume a degree of control over the mineral-rich rural territories (Bridge, 2004; Bury, 2007) – areas which would otherwise

remain under agricultural use and community governance.

NEOLIBERAL MINING EXPANSION, SOCIAL CONFLICT AND CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS

The new mineral and hydrocarbon concessions in Peru, Bolivia, and increasingly Ecuador, have covered immense areas for potential exploitation. These spatial consequences of globalizing neoliberal capitalism have threatened (or created a perception of a threat to) the viability of small and medium farm agriculture as well as urban and rural water supply. Furthermore, given that mining investments occur in areas currently occupied by peasants and small farmers, this mineral expansion challenges the ability of rural people to control the patterns of change in the lived environment. In the process they have also deepened existing ruptures in society across ethnicity, class and region. At the heart of many of the ensuing conflicts lies a confrontation between the economic dynamics of deregulated neoliberal capitalism and the political dynamics of rural populations (and certain parts of the local/regional and national civil society) determined to insist on a right to be heard and to dispute central government's and private capital's decisions and actions regarding the use of rural land.

Consequently, the surge of conflict in areas affected by mining and hydrocarbons reflects the pre-eminence given to export oriented resource extraction over the last two decades of economic liberalization, and the efforts of civil society groups and social movements to exercise some form of control over these activities and their impacts. This conflict is as much a struggle over whose rights and voices count in political economic decision making as it is an argument over different pathways of economic development. For some it is also a conflict over models of

ownership and indeed, within mining protest movements, there are many actors calling for a return pre-reform state-owned extractive industry and a rejection of the multinational dominance of the sector that is currently observed.

Two phenomena are noteworthy in these struggles: the spread of conflict to urban and regional spaces, and the particular roles played by *social movement organizations* (SMOs). Indeed, in many mining conflicts urban and regional “defence fronts” play an important role. In some cases the concerns of these urban actors are issue based, above all when populations become concerned about the implications of the mine expansion for the urban environment – in particular water quality and quantity, and air and noise contamination. In other cases, the involvement of urban groups at a regional level has had a more ‘ideological’ and rights based component. Here, to paraphrase many informants, people criticize ‘the unfair terms on which multinational companies derive profits from national resources’. The more general point is that within protest movements, one encounters both urban and rural voices and urban and rural concerns – and that while these are partially aligned they are not always completely aligned. The strength that comes from numbers can therefore be offset by weaknesses that come from divergence of interests (Bebbington et al, 2008a).

Social Movement Organizations’ Dynamics and Effects

Territorially based protest has become increasingly organized in and through a range of SMOs working alongside rural populations. Some of these SMOs have emerged specifically in response to extractive industry, others already existed around interests (e.g. indigenous rights and territory) that have been threatened by extraction. Examples of such SMOs are CONACAMI (the National

Confederation of Mine-affected Communities, Peru), CONAIE (the Ecuadorian Confederation of Indigenous Nations) and in Bolivia CONAMAQ (the National Council of Indigenous Organizations from the Qullasuyu).⁴ These SMOs have been assisted by local and national NGOs (for instance, CIPCA and GRUFIDES in Peru, Acción Ecológica in Ecuador, CISEP, CEPA and FOBOMADE in Bolivia). During the conflicts these NGOs have helped to connect community organizations with international organizations to obtain financial support and influence negotiations through debate, lobby and direct pressure. International NGOs and agencies and networks (e.g. Friends of the Earth, Oxfam International, the Mining and Communities network, together with their respective national affiliates) have also sought to connect with local organizations to offer financial and logistic support as well as to develop actions in the international arena where they lobby international governmental organizations and national governments, and promote national and international campaigns advocating for environmental and social justice.

As the cases described in this chapter illustrate, the evolution and outcomes of conflicts between communities and large mining companies must be understood in the light of this involvement of non-community actors – often referred to perhaps unfairly as ‘outsiders’. These non-community actors although substantially different in certain respects, share visions, values and principles that involve a commitment to some kind of sustainable and inclusive pattern of development. Nevertheless, a recurrent theme in mining conflicts is that the involvement of these organizations is always controversial. Business, media, government, and other broadly pro-

⁴ An imperfect translation for *Consejo Nacional de Ayllus y Markas del Qullasuyu*.

mining actors criticize them and question their legitimacy and right to become involved in what these actors seek to cast as national or even local debates. Much of the debate about their role hinges around whether they are viewed as inducing and intensifying these conflicts or as mitigating and resolving them.

Whatever the case, ‘outsiders’ have played an important role in drawing attention to the information and power asymmetries between companies and local communities, and between states and citizens. At the same time they have suggested – more or less explicitly depending on the case – that the rapid and deepening roll out of neoliberalism depends on the existence of such asymmetries. In the face of such asymmetries these actors advocate for local communities both at national and international levels, generate new information and analysis, foster public and policy debate and provide direct support to local organizations (though usually on a very modest scale). This role has generally been recognized as valid and useful by communities, particularly when it has produced tangible outcomes. Nonetheless, the relationships between the local communities and NGOs have also involved a fair share of disagreements with regard to the degree of representation that the NGOs should assume on behalf of communities. These disagreements have had (generally negative) implications for the strength of social movements around mining issues (Bebbington, 2007).

With these thoughts in mind we now discuss four separate mining conflicts in the Andes.

MINING AND SOCIO-ENVIRONMENTAL CONFLICTS IN THE ANDES

Yanacocha (Peru)

Minera Yanacocha (MYSA) – a joint-venture between the USA-based Newmont Mining Corporation with 51.35%, the Peruvian Compañía de Minas Buenaventura with 43.65% and the International Finance Corporation from the World Bank Group with 5% – is the biggest open-pit gold mine in Latin America and the 5th largest in the world. Given its high level of production, the richness and purity of the mineral deposit and low production costs, Yanacocha is an especially profitable venture (Bury, 2007; Puplava and King, 2004). The mine extends across 10000 hectares in the Cajamarca region (Northern Peruvian Andes), an area larger than the regional capital city. Given that the land market is quite underdeveloped in the area, 1,386 square kilometres of land were acquired from peasant households through mechanisms that later were denounced as unfair, coercive or dishonest either in terms of the prices agreed or in the manipulation of land titling processes and the exercise of pressure over individuals to sell their land.

Although such machinations had not led to a large scale conflict – at least not in the early years of the mine - the effects of MYSA in the Cajamarca region have been controversial. The mine brought significant resources that have had a positive effect on the regional economy. Investment reached around US\$860 million, whilst the expenditure on goods and services between 1992 and 2000 was approximately \$1,7 billion. Though only 7 per cent of this spending occurred in the Cajamarca region itself, \$153.6 million were spent on creating jobs and \$11 million on various social programmes. Nonetheless, such an injection of fresh capital has also led to criticisms that an ‘enclave economy’ has been reproduced with negative effects on the

dynamics of domestic markets, and that this injection of resources has caused social dislocation (c.f. Roca Servat, 2009; Gorriti, 2004).

MYSA has also generated significant environmental impacts, transforming landscapes, changing vegetation patterns and disturbing water courses. Although initially conflicts between local population and MYSA occurred mostly in the communities directly affected by land purchases, urban discontent was also growing. In 2000 in the roadside village of Choropampa, a mercury spillage from a MYSA contractor's truck generated severe health effects and led to increased alarm about urban water supply. When in 2004 the company attempted to expand its operations into Cerro Quillish – the mountain that is deemed to contain the water reserves for domestic use in the region – the conflict became thoroughly urbanized (Bebbington et al, 2008).

The process of social mobilization and protest thus gained strength, incorporating a number of new actors from rural and urban areas. Three local NGOs (ADEA, ECOVIDA and GRUFIDES) became more visible, in response to MYSA's negative impact and its dismissive attitude towards affected communities. Their work initially emphasized the dissemination of information, environmental education, and awareness raising about the mine's activities among the local population. Contacts were also steadily developed with international organizations such as Oxfam America and Global Greengrants Fund in order to seek financial support. Over this same period, national and regional organizations such as CONACAMI and the Federation of Women Peasant Vigilance Organizations of Northern Peru were also actively advocating for community rights, mobilizing rural people, and connecting to international organizations such as Project Underground to get funding and additional support. The trajectory of these organizations, however, has involved increased tensions due to internal disputes and controversial agreements between some of their leaders and MYSA. Indeed, by the early 2000s, efforts to create a regional

basis of CONACAMI had failed in Cajamarca.

Nevertheless, in spite of differences among community organizations and local NGOs, the movement that they produced has influenced the relationships between MYSA and the local population, as well as the relationship between mining, livelihoods and development. Furthermore, at an international level, where the relationships between international NGOs and local organizations have also been characterized by tension and ruptures, Yanacocha-Cajamarca has become an emblematic case used by global civil society organizations to show how campaigning, lobbying and advocacy strategies can contribute to the furtherance of environmental justice.

Majaz (Rio Blanco) (Peru)

The Rio Blanco project is a concession acquired in 2001 by Monterrico Metals plc. (a London registered company that since 2007 has been owned primarily by Chinese capital) to exploit copper and molybdenum deposits. Located in the high Andes at the east of the Piura region (Northern Peru – border with Ecuador) the project occupies land that belongs to two peasant communities who use it for extensive grazing and as a ‘reserve’ for community purposes. Via its wholly-owned Peruvian subsidiary Minera Majaz SA., Monterrico began exploration in 2002, following the government approval of the company's environmental evaluation. The evaluation process was non-transparent and has subsequently been criticized by local and national organizations as well as by the Peruvian Ombudsman. The company still needs to secure approval of its environmental impact study in order to convert the exploration project into a fully fledged open-pit mine.

Reaction and mobilization against Minera Majaz began in the early phases of the

exploration process. This protest revolved around the legality of the governmental resolutions that allowed the company to occupy community land without a prior permission from the affected villagers and, subsequently, challenged the validity of the environmental evaluation presented by the company in order to begin exploration. Throughout the protest, the two most affected communities were joined by federations of peasant organizations and local municipalities as well as by the communities, municipalities, and activists from two neighbouring provinces of Cajamarca, which, due to their location downstream, could be potentially affected by the project. Much of the mobilization was non-violent, yet in both 2004 and 2005 a series of confrontations with the local police led to the death of two peasants as well as several injured.

These incidents induced the Regional Government of Piura to create a space for negotiation. The initiative failed, however, as local activists and communities accused the coordinators of assuming a pro-mining position. An earlier mission composed of the provincial Catholic bishop, and representatives from Oxfam America and CONACAMI also failed. Indeed members of the mission wondered out-loud whether it had been deliberately sabotaged – the main indicator of this being that the air-force helicopter transporting them deposited them at a site far from the protest and then the police prevented them from walking to the location of the protest. These incidents were followed by a mass-media “war” which sought to generate public distrust in the coalition of NGO, church and peasant organizations, suggested they harboured ‘terrorist’ sympathies.

During 2007, local, regional, national and international activists came together in several initiatives to put more pressure on the company. In one case, the Peru Support Group of the UK produced a report on the case that it then, in conjunction with a UK parliamentary body, fostered public debate and media coverage in Peru and the UK (Bebbington et al, 2007). In another case,

Peruvian organizations drew on international support to organize and sponsor a citizen referendum on the mine's future. The result was a firm rejection of the mine by over 90% of votes. While both the government and mining sector dismissed the referendum as illegal, it had projected local demands and fostered public debate. That said, the government still insists that mining is fundamental for Piura's and Peru's overall development and communities and other civil society actors continue to emphasize the threat posed by mining to the natural environment and the sources of their livelihoods. They criticize the bias of a state that, they argue, protects foreign investments above its own citizens' rights (Burneo, 2007). Meanwhile in 2009, UK lawyers opened a legal case against the company in the UK courts.

Cotacachi-Intag (Ecuador)

Canton Cotacachi is located in the North-West Ecuadorian Andes, some two hours drive to the North of Quito, and extending across both high altitude grassland and humid tropical valleys. It includes the Intag sector where copper reserves were found in the 1980s by an exploratory mission funded jointly by the Belgian and Ecuadorian governments. In the 1990s after a larger scale phase of exploration financed by the Japanese International Cooperation Agency, the project passed to Bishi Metals (a subsidiary company of Mitsubishi), subsequently bought by Roque Bustamante which, in turn, sold the concession to Ascendant Copper Corporation (a Canadian company based in Colorado, USA). In turn, Ascendant Copper transferred the property to its subsidiary Ascendant Ecuador in 2005 (Bebbington et al, 2008). After more than 20 years since the exploration phase had begun, and despite the fact that significant mineral reserves were found at the time of a global, emergent market-fuelled boom in copper production, the project at Intag failed to progress towards serious geological exploration. This apparent halt in the

expansion of mining capital can be explained by the four following factors.

First, from the very beginning there has been strong – at times violent – opposition to the mine expansion from the local population, which was assisted by the local Catholic Church, and national (Acción Ecológica - AE) and local (DECOIN) environmental NGOs. Indeed, DECOIN itself was created with the participation of the *campesino colonos* as well as urban activists in response to the initial activity of Bishi Metals. Second, this local protest mobilization has been combined with an active programme of environmental education directed especially towards local youth and women. The programme also facilitates visits to areas elsewhere already affected by open-cast mining. AE, DECOIN, certain local activists and international networks played an important role in this process. Third, given the existing connection between AE and international networks of NGOs (including Friends of the Earth International, Rainforest Action Network and Global Greengrants Fund) and between Intag residents and foreign nationals, the Intag case quickly acquired visibility and international support. Fourth, the case shows the importance of the position assumed by the local government in determining the trajectory of these conflicts and the expansion of mining capital. Cotacachi's indigenous mayor, Auki Tituaña, himself nationally and internationally visible for his commitment to local democracy and inter-cultural relationships, has assumed an increasingly environmentalist and anti-mining discourse and provided support to local activists. More significantly, the municipality together with local organizations have dedicated time and effort to elaborate an alternative strategy for local development based on more sustainable economic sectors such as ecotourism, organic coffee, handicraft production and watershed protection.

Inti Raymi (Oruro, Bolivia)

The department of Oruro is located in Bolivia's high plateau and characterised by remarkably low indicators of social development. Yet the department hosts the country's richest open-pit gold mine, Inti Raymi (IR), owned primarily by Newmont Mining Corporation. In 2004, due to the exhaustion of gold deposits, IR announced the closure of its Kori Kollo mine (the other site, Kori Chaca, will continue to operate). This has caused the rural communities in the surrounding areas to begin voicing their concerns about the environmental damage caused by the mine over its 20 year long operation. Local communities demanded that the government intervene and carry out an environmental audit in order to ensure some compensation. The demand was accepted by the government in 2004; however, at the time of writing this audit is yet to be completed. The company argues that its operation was developed within an existing framework for environmental protection, complying with the mandatory environmental standards and taking steps towards the reduction of the environmental damage potentially caused. By contrast, the affected communities claim that there are signs of substantial environmental degradation.

In this case, the confrontation between the company and local communities has continued unabated. In their struggle, the conflicting parties have not acted alone. Inti Raymi relies on a group of external advisers (lawyers, consulting companies and experts) and its External Community Relations team which is in charge of easing the tensions between the company, the local communities and the state. In turn, the local communities receive assistance from the NGO sector, which has supported the communities by providing them with information, advice and financial help. These NGOs and local activists also engaged in direct lobbying and advocacy with the state officials in La Paz (Bolivia's capital city).

CONCLUSION

Transnational Civil Society and Effective Protest

Mining expansion and the conflicts that it has engendered in the Andes have been characterized by significant presence of international actors – private, public and non-governmental (Bebbington and Hinojosa, 2007). The mining industry has become increasingly dominated by multinational corporations, entering into joint-venture, subsidiary, and sub-contractual commercial arrangements with national companies and, through these partnerships, inserting themselves into some of the most remote localities in the Andes. Likewise, civil society action around mining has involved collaborations among international, national and local groups (often on the basis of prior long-standing relationships).

Given that pro-mining interests have portrayed external NGOs as one of the most important factors fuelling the conflict, these NGOs are continually under close scrutiny and criticism from mining companies and national governments. In the majority of cases NGOs have not been recognized as ‘genuine’ representatives of local communities and people’s interests, not to mention regional or national interests. They are criticised for being ‘biased’ towards environmentalism and against economic development. The local NGOs are also accused of adhering to a foreign anti-globalization agenda, and lacking the knowledge about what both the local communities and countries *really* need (which, according to government and the sector, is FDI and growth: Garcia, 2008). As such, NGOs and networks of civil society organizations have been labelled as a threat to the supposedly *well intentioned* efforts of national governments aimed at promoting economic development by attracting foreign investment; particularly in sectors such

as mining where the Andean countries have, for reasons of natural resources, an absolute or comparative advantage.

While we must not generalize too much about the ways in which NGOs participate in conflicts between local communities and big multinationals, certain aspects of the internal dynamics of social mobilization help explain the uneven effect of protest against mining across our cases. Of particular importance are the following: 1) the extent to which NGOs were able to develop close collaboration with community organizations; 2) the extent to which such collaborations have in turn generated alliances with local governments; 3) the strength of the alliance between the local NGOs and international actors; and 4) the role played by the central government. At the same time, the strength and cohesiveness of local capacities (of individuals and community organizations) to organize and mobilize – and to propose alternatives – has been the key to a successful mobilization against the expansion of mining.

The two Peruvian cases have shown that the intensive involvement of local and national NGOs and the deployment of international support has created awareness of, and drawn media attention to, the conflict between the mining expansion and rural citizenship. In Ecuador and Bolivia, the conflicts have been kept at a ‘more local level’ with the central governments playing a less clearly defined (though still a pro-mining) role; as a result, the mining companies have had to deal directly with the local communities and their representatives. In the Ecuadorian case, the result has (so far) been that the mining industry has been unable to develop the mine in Cotacachi. In the Bolivian case, the mining corporation has found a way to continue its expansion, yet at the same time, it has had to create compensatory mechanisms to mitigate the conflict. Though civil society actors have at times pursued different (even self-interested) goals

and strategies, the NGOs that collaborated with local communities have indeed played an important role in reducing some of the relational asymmetries (especially regarding knowledge and information) which give mining companies and central governments much more power vis-à-vis local organizations and communities. NGOs have also played an important role in giving *voice* to local community concerns in those spaces where for practical reasons it was otherwise quite unlikely that the communities themselves could have assumed a direct presence. Nonetheless, when the NGOs have assumed ‘excessive’ leadership, the cohesion and legitimacy of such a mobilization has weakened. In these cases at least, a ‘successful’ transnational network has not merely been the one with local, national and international actors, but rather the one which was able to elaborate a well articulated strategy, cutting across geographical scale while giving prominence – particularly in the public sphere – to community organizations.

Transnational Civil Society and Post-neoliberalism

What does the current moment – defined by an international financial and economic crisis and the presence of self-styled post-neoliberal governments in Bolivia and Ecuador – imply for such transnational NGO strategies around mining? We consider this issue along two dimensions: the impact of the credit crunch on mining investment; and the posture of Andean governments vis-à-vis protest. Firstly, the crisis has led to a slowing of investment across all of the world’s major mining companies, as they have responded to a fall in price for most minerals (except for gold) as well as to capital scarcity. This slowdown in activity should provide transnational networks with time to reflect more strategically on the broader objectives of the movement and perhaps to institute a shift from reactive to more proactive positioning. However, the economic slowdown has not been the only consequence of the crisis. Non-traditional companies and

capital, in particular from China, have moved into the Andean region (for instance, Chinalco purchased 20 per cent of the mining giant Xstrata in Peru). This change in the composition of the sector presents a challenge for social movement organizations for which the institutional cultures of these new companies are unknown. A second consequence of the crisis might be that Andean governments, increasingly desperate for investment, will become increasingly intolerant of protest. Indeed, as noted in the introduction, 2009 has seen violent repression of protest in Peru, legal repression in Ecuador and Peru, and discursive repression from all three government, neo-liberal and post-neoliberal alike. The implication is that even under ‘post-neoliberalism’ and in the presence of crisis, it will be largely “business as usual” in the extractive sector. It will continue to generate a similar set of impacts in mineral-rich territories and hence will also continue to induce local protest and a mobilized opposition. However, for such mobilization to be effective in the new ‘post-neoliberal’ context, both the strategies and broader alliances of civil society organizations will likely have to change. Crisis *is* an opportunity, but it is *also* a crisis.

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