

## INTRODUCTION

After 500 years of resistance, we now move forward and take power for another 500 years . . . the battles for water, for coca, for natural gas have brought us to this point, brothers, and sisters. . . . We want to govern with the law that our ancestors left us. . . . I am confident it will now be Bolivia that teaches me to manage well. I will fulfil my commitment, as Subcomandante Marcos says,<sup>1</sup> to lead by obeying. I will lead by obeying the Bolivian people (Evo Morales inauguration speech, cited in Sivak 2010, 161, his translation).

You [the United States] came here because we were overthrowing presidents. Now you come because we elected a president (Evo Morales speaking to journalists the day after his election, cited in Sader 2008, 42).<sup>2</sup>

I am renouncing [the presidency] so that our brother leaders [of social movements] do not continue to be persecuted. I lament this civic coup. I want to say to my brothers and sisters that the fight does not finish here. We will continue to fight for equality and peace (Evo Morales stepping down as president, cited in *Página Siete* 2019ad).

I arrived in Bolivia in January 2016 eager to study firsthand the relationship between radical social movements, which represented the culmination of years of Indigenous and working-class struggles, and the government of Evo Morales. During the first decade of the century, the ascent of left-wing governments to power across much of Latin America—collectively known as the pink tide (see below)—sparked hope among subaltern people and progressives in the region and beyond. Nowhere was the sense that something different was happening more palpable than in Bolivia, where in 2005 the country's first Indigenous president, Evo Morales, was elected following five years of popular insurrection. *Hermano* Evo (Brother Evo), as Morales came to be known in Bolivia, was

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considered by many the people's president. He represented an end to colonial oppression and the racism against Indigenous people fostered by Spanish colonialism—whose legacies are still keenly felt to this day—and to the hardships of the neoliberal period (1985–2005). Morales's supporters from historically oppressed and excluded groups proclaimed, "Now we are in power," encapsulating some of the fervor that surrounded his presidency. As Morales's inauguration speech suggests, his election as president was the culmination of years of social movement struggle and represented for many Indigenous, working-class, and peasant Bolivians a moment of hope, a sign that things were changing after five hundred years of colonial and republican domination and twenty years of some of the harshest neoliberal reforms experienced in Latin America.

The initial weeks in the field shattered my preconceptions about Morales's presidency. January 2016 was the period leading up to the referendum to decide whether he could contravene constitutional term limits and run for a fourth term. Having followed dusty pathways and an abandoned railway, I arrived at a rally in the city of El Alto calling for people to vote against Morales and his running for a fourth term in the next elections. El Alto was one of Morales's strongholds throughout his presidency, so I was initially surprised by the location of the protest. Its participants likewise took me aback: they were not the historic right-wing opposition to Morales, but a coalition of Indigenous and working-class groups frustrated by the continued poverty and inequality in Bolivia and the country's subordinate position in the global system. At the rally Morales was labeled a "vende patria"—a traitor to his country—and a stooge of "Yankee imperialism" by speakers who lamented the continuation of historic injustices under his government. What had happened to the radical potential and revolutionary hope that initially surrounded Morales's regime? This was the question that shaped my subsequent seventeen months in the field, which I spent investigating the organizations and actions of different social movements across the country. It was, however, the violent protests and the coup d'état against Morales in late 2019 that laid bare the need to interrogate the transition from a radical opening for social transformation to a right-wing resurgence. Following Morales's fall from power, those in social movements who had collective dreams of a different society at the turn of the century remained frustrated, still at arm's length after fourteen years of Morales's presidency.

This book tells the story between the opening quotations, statements made by the former Bolivian president, Evo Morales, at either end of his presidency that paint a vivid picture. Morales's words conjure the hope for and expectation of a better Bolivia that accompanied his election in

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2005, and capture his unceremonious fall from grace in November 2019 following a coup d'état that threw the country into turmoil. I tell the story of the rise and fall of Evo Morales to interrogate the possibilities of radical change within capitalism. This is not the only story one could tell drawing from this period of Bolivian history, but I believe it is a compelling one. It plays out over Bolivia's political scenery, shaped as it is by the legacies of colonialism and natural resource extraction, Indigenous social movements, and a history of radical working-class activism, neo-liberalism, and crisis. The cast of characters is colorful, but does not fit neatly into the Manichean world often portrayed in Hollywood films. The radical social movements, government officials, working-class and Indigenous people, and conservative elites are complex and multifaceted and are characterized by the messiness of human interaction and social life. I try to capture this incongruence by homing in on snippets of quotidian relations and practices through which I hope to bring Bolivia during this period to life. It is, as we shall see, a gripping tale.

## INTRODUCING BOLIVIA

Bolivia is not a place whose history is generally well known across the globe. As a country that is often overlooked even by those who study Latin America, it needs a proper introduction. This is no small feat, for despite its relative obscurity, it is a country with a rich and complex history. Bolivia is a poor, landlocked South American country with roughly eleven million inhabitants. It straddles the Andean cordillera and extends into the Amazon to the west and the Gran Chaco desert region to the south. This geographical variation blesses Bolivia with incredible biological diversity, and it is no surprise that the country is considered "one of the world's thirty-six biodiversity hotspots" (Farthing and Becker 2021, 1). It is also culturally diverse, home to thirty-six recognized Indigenous groups (including the Aymara, Chiquitano, Guaraní, and Quechua); notably, Bolivia is the Latin American country where Indigenous people compose the highest proportion of the population.<sup>3</sup> Moving beyond such descriptions, I want to highlight three important historical characteristics of Bolivia: the role of popular movements from below, particularly Indigenous and working-class movements; regional tensions; and the omnipresence of natural resource extraction.

What is now modern-day Bolivia was placed firmly on the Spanish colonial map following the discovery of a mountain of silver in Potosí in 1545. The mining of silver in Potosí would shape the colonial period: Indigenous peoples from the Andean highlands, the Altiplano, were forced down into the mines through the *mita* labor system;<sup>4</sup> tributes to

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the Spanish crown were paid on crops farmed by communities, cementing Cochabamba's place as the food basket of the region; and Aymara communities were concentrated into villages (Klein 2011). The brutal oppression of Indigenous communities was far from unresisted. Túpak Amaru and later Túpak Katari led mass Indigenous uprisings in what became known as the Great Andean Civil War (1780–1782) (Thomson 2002). Katari laid siege to La Paz for over six months, killing half the city's population. This etched Indigenous resistance into the memories of the local elite and left a legacy that would later be recovered by Indigenous activists during the twentieth century, initially by Kataristas and later by the Taller de Historia Oral Andina (Andean Oral History Workshop, THOA) in the 1980s (Stephenson 2002). Indigenous struggles—by early precursors of what today we call “social movements”—and natural resources were important features of Bolivian history from the outset.

Following independence in 1825, the country remained relatively unchanged for several decades, ruled by a backward feudal elite with little interest in transforming the country and dependent on natural resource exports. Nonetheless, a series of wars from the late nineteenth century until the early twentieth century would leave an indelible mark on the country. First, the War of the Pacific (1879–1883) would see Bolivia lose its seacoast to Chile; the sense of historic injustice surrounding this war persists in Bolivia today, a loss that is mourned annually in Day of the Sea celebrations. Next, the Federal War (1899) pitted the elites of the capital, Sucre, against those of the city of La Paz. The elites of La Paz allied with Indigenous forces led by Zárate Willka, an alliance that ruptured following a massacre of *sucrenses* troops by Willka's men (Condarco Morales 1983).<sup>5</sup> This brought back the ghosts of Túpak Katari and, terrified of an Indigenous rebellion, the elite factions put aside their differences to defend their position at the top of a social hierarchy defined by race. Part of the compromise between elite groups saw the seat of government moved from Sucre to La Paz, shifting the economy toward La Paz in the process. The Bolivian economy moved away from silver (controlled by Sucre) toward tin (controlled by the liberal elites of La Paz), ushering in a prolonged period when the export of tin was the principal driver of capital accumulation in the country. Finally, the Chaco War (1932–1935) between Bolivia and Paraguay saw tens of thousands of Indigenous men recruited to fight and sent into the Gran Chaco without food, water, or supplies (Arze Aguirre 1987; Zavaleta 1990). It was perceived that the war had been started by the oil giants Standard Oil (of the United States) and Royal Dutch Shell (of the United Kingdom), stok-

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ing the fires of resource nationalism (Almaraz Paz 2009). As a result, the military populist governments that followed the Chaco War created the Yacimientos Petrolíferos Fiscales de Bolivia (Bolivian State Petroleum Company, YPFB).

The disquiet surrounding foreign influence over Bolivian resources, as well as that of Indigenous communities about their treatment during the Chaco War, laid the ground for the National Revolution. In April 1952, workers and the middle classes toppled the national government in a relatively bloodless revolution (Dunkerley 1984, 39). A nationalist government was formed by the *Movimiento Nacionalista Revolucionario* (Nationalist Revolutionary Movement, MNR), supported by the workers, who established the *Central Obrera Boliviana* (Bolivian Workers' Central, COB) (García Linera, Chávez León, and Costas Monje 2004). The COB formed one pillar of the National Revolutionary State, supporting the national government (Zavaleta 1988). The tin mines were nationalized, cementing the potent political force of tin miners in the country, and universal suffrage was granted to all Bolivians for the first time (Gotkowitz 2007, 287). Indigenous peoples were included in this new Bolivia through an assimilation process known as *mestizaje* (which roughly translates as “mixing”). For their part, Indigenous communities across the Altiplano occupied the semifeudal latifundia and started de facto processes of agrarian reform,<sup>6</sup> which the MNR government formalized a year after the revolution in 1953 (Gotkowitz 2003). The inclusion of Indigenous communities was always uneven and incomplete, and in large parts of the country they maintained significant autonomy from the state (Rivera Cusicanqui 2003). Agrarian reform also created new capitalist agricultural production units, which were offered access to new technology and credit by the state, and encouraged Aymara peasants from the Altiplano to migrate to the agricultural frontier to “colonize” Bolivian territory in lowland Amazon regions (Eckstein 1979; Gill 1987).

A military coup in 1964 ended the democratically elected MNR governments. Although the economy was still centered on tin, the Hugo Banzer dictatorship (1971–1978) directed capital and state resources toward Banzer's home department of Santa Cruz (Gill 1987). This laid the basis for the consolidation of the lowland elite, which started producing monocrops such as cotton, coffee, rice, and later soybeans, becoming increasingly integrated into transnational circuits of capital in the process (Soruco 2008). The COB was still a central pillar of the National Revolutionary State, although during this period it was a foil for state violence. Struggles between the COB and the Bolivian state formed the

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center of politics during the dictatorships. Indigenous communities, particularly in Quechua-speaking regions in the semitropical valleys of Cochabamba formed a pact with the military, though this pact did not stop Indigenous communities from supporting miners during periods of particularly intense state violence (Hylton and Thomson 2007, 84). When this pact shattered following the massacre of Indigenous peasants by Banzer's government at Tolata in 1974 (Albó 1987, 388–96; Rivera Cusicanqui 2003, 156–58), the dissident Indigenous groups that emerged as the backbone of the Katarismo movement increasingly aligned with the COB (Albó 1987; Hurtado Mercado 1981). Indigenous activists and the COB eventually took to the streets together for the first time to resist the violent coup d'état of Alberto Natusch Busch in 1979 (Zavaleta [1983] 2013). The struggles of workers and Indigenous groups were integral to ensuring the return of Bolivian democracy in 1982. Out of these struggles the Confederación Sindical Única de los Trabajadores Campesinos de Bolivia (Trade Union Confederation of Bolivian Peasant Workers, CSUTCB) emerged and became the principal organizational node of the Indigenous movement following its inception in 1979.

In 1985, following a period of record-breaking hyperinflation, Bolivia received the harshest neoliberal shock therapy in the entire region (Conaghan, Malloy, and Abugattas 1990). The Bolivian peso was drastically devalued through its floatation and the economy liberalized as food subsidies were removed, protection for labor decimated, and the financial sector opened to foreign capital (Gamarra 1994, 105). The New Economy Policy closed state-owned tin mines and starved the miners out of their encampments. The COB resisted the implication of neoliberal reforms but was defeated after a confrontation with the military at Calamarca, marking the end of its status as one-half of the Bolivian state (Nash 1992). The state's functions were massively reduced and it stepped back from productive activities and the provision of social programs. The result was an enormous increase in poverty, the informalization of labor, the mass migration of peasants to urban centers in search of work, and the explosion of informal settlements around urban centers, particularly in El Alto, Cochabamba, and Santa Cruz (Farthing and Kohl 2006; Rivera Cusicanqui 1996). During the 1990s, state-owned enterprises were privatized, including the YPFB. This significantly decreased the income of the Bolivian state and led to a fiscal crisis in the late 1990s (McGuigan 2007).

The social immiseration and crisis of the state precipitated by neoliberal reforms constituted the backdrop of radical social movements that punctuated the period 2000–2005 in Bolivia. Massive protests took

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place against the privatization of water in Cochabamba in 2000 (Olivera and Lewis 2004), and again in El Alto in 2004 (Spronk 2007). *Cocaleros* (coca growers), who had emerged as an important part of the Bolivian economy and the CSUTCB following neoliberal shock therapy, battled with the US-directed programs aimed at eradicating coca (Ledebur 2002). And most notably, huge nationwide protests centered around the city of El Alto demanding the nationalization of gas toppled two national governments (Hylton and Thomson 2005; Mamani 2005; Webber 2012a). It is easy to pick out the threads of working-class as well as Indigenous social movements and natural resource extraction that run through this historiography. These are the central tenets of Bolivian history that formed the basis of Evo Morales's rise to power.

Morales was the leader of the coca growers' federation and came to power promising to refound the state and give Bolivians control over their natural resources. To this end, he promulgated the nationalization of hydrocarbons and oversaw a Constituent Assembly that produced one of Latin America's most progressive constitutions when it came into force in 2009. Following the period of social movement struggle between 2000 and 2005, Morales proclaimed his government a "government of social movements" enacting a "process of change" (*proceso de cambio*). It is this process of change that sits at the heart of this book.

## DEBATES ABOUT THE LATIN AMERICAN PINK TIDE

*Now We Are in Power* unfolds over two different levels. On the one hand, I draw from the Bolivian case to develop theoretical claims about passive revolution and how the politics of change function in capitalism. We will get to the theoretical substance of these claims in due course. On the other hand, I interrogate the historical processes of change in Bolivia to make a series of empirical claims about the possibilities, limitations, and durability of change there, pointing to some tentative political lessons to be learned for the next generation of left-wing movements in the region.

Forming the backdrop for this book are several important debates around the Latin American pink tide and the government of Evo Morales in Bolivia. The first set of debates concerns the continuity with or change from the prior neoliberal period. It is widely accepted that Latin America was the region where the transformations wrought by the neoliberal phase of capitalism were most keenly felt (e.g., Anderson et al. 2003), so the political upheaval and crisis provoked by neoliberal transformations produced great interest from scholars and activists alike. Slippages in the term "neoliberalism," however, meant that there was no clear consen-

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sus on appropriate terminology to capture the character or significance of the historical changes under study (Ruckert, Macdonald, and Proulx 2017). “Post-neoliberalism,” “New Latin American Left,” and “pink tide” were all bandied about in debates over this period. While “pink tide” and the “New Latin American Left” were used to capture the ideological and political content of movements and governments in the region (e.g., Levitsky and Roberts 2011; Webber and Carr 2013), “post-neoliberalism” was harder to pin down. “Pos-neoliberalismo” was first used by the political sociologist Atilio Borón (2003) to underscore the emergent political forces and alternatives to the Washington Consensus that began to flourish in Latin America following the ripple effects from the 1997 East Asia Crisis in the region. It offered the Latin American Left a hybrid solution to the maladies of neoliberalism, treading a third way that balanced the democratic socialism of Salvador Allende and the guerrilla warfare of Cuba and the Central American conflicts of the 1970s and 1980s. Debates around post-neoliberalism reveal some of the optimism around the Latin American pink tide and highlight the sense that something different was indeed happening. Emir Sader (2008, 22) saw this as a moment when it was possible not only to propose alternatives on paper but also to build forces capable of reoccupying public space and moving beyond the economism of the traditional Left to include social movements animated along other axes of oppression (see also Tapia 2011).

The trouble was that the hybrid solution offered by post-neoliberalism meant different things to different people. For example, while the Venezuelan president Hugo Chávez spoke of leading Venezuela toward a post-neoliberal “twenty-first century socialism,” the Bolivian vice president Álvaro García Linera maintained (at least initially) that Bolivia was only capable of a post-neoliberal future characterized by Andean-Amazonian capitalism (Stefanoni 2008, 23). Most agreed, however, that post-neoliberalism captured a combination of the various elements present in Latin America at the turn of the millennium: “popular uprisings, electoral exits and a refounding of the state” (Sader 2008, 21). Julian Yates and Karen Bakker (2014, 64) helpfully distinguish between post-neoliberalism as a “utopian-ideological project” and as a “set of on-the-ground processes and practices.” On the one hand, scholars, politicians, and movements debated the possible alternatives offered by the pink tide. These included heightened social inclusion and new forms of citizenship (Grugel and Riggirozzi 2012), the redefinition of the relationship between the public and private spheres at the national and regional level (Sader 2008, 29), increased and redefined autonomy (Marston 2015), and forms of governance drawing on Indigenous knowledge and



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worldviews, most notably in the notions of *vivir bien* (good living) and plurinationality (Farah H. and Vasapollo 2011; Schavelzon 2015).

On the other hand, post-neoliberalism addressed the concrete implementation of pink tide political projects. Here, debates focused on the best processes and practices to implement post-neoliberal imaginaries and centered on the role of the state, new development models, and political economic forms. Neo-structuralism, neo-developmentalism, and neo-extractivism were all used by authors to underscore different dimensions of the political projects of the pink tide. Neo-structuralism was promoted by Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) economists such as Fernando Fajnzylber, José Antonio Ocampos, and Oswaldo Sunkel (e.g., ECLAC 1990; Sunkel 1991; Treviño 2000).<sup>7</sup> It was an attempt to create a new political economic orthodoxy in Latin America and reimagine the role of the state, democracy, the market, and growth in development processes (Leiva 2008a, 2; Webber 2010b, 211). Neo-structuralism aimed to achieve this goal by focusing on five interrelated areas: systemic competitiveness, technical progress, proactive labor flexibility, concerted action, and virtuous circles (Leiva 2008a). Neo-structuralism became popular with pink tide governments for two reasons: (1) it lent itself to state-led development programs that had clear policy briefs; and (2) it proved discursively seductive (Leiva 2008a).

The upshot of neo-structuralism's influence on the pink tide was the consolidation of "export-orientated regimes of accumulation" across the region (Leiva 2008b, 15; see also McNelly 2020b). This in turn, sparked debates over the other concepts prefixed with "neo-." Parallel to neo-structuralism, neo-developmentalism gained influence in Latin America through the work of, among others, Luis Carlos Bresser-Pereira and Aldo Ferrer. However, Claudio Katz (2015) gave the concept its most analytical purchase. Katz (2015, 141) argues that the development models followed by Cristina Kirchner in Argentina and Lula da Silva in Brazil were distinct from the developmentalism of the prior period of import substitution industrialization (ISI). He contends that neo-developmentalism, instead of focusing on industrialization as a move away from agriculture, sought growth through the industrialization of agriculture. The period of the pink tide consolidated the position of agribusiness established during neoliberalism, with the exportation of monocrops such as soy and beef becoming central to the political economy of Argentina, Brazil, and, to a lesser extent, Bolivia (Colque 2014; Giraudo 2019; McKay and Colque 2016; Vergara-Camus and Kay 2017).

"Neo-extractivism" is probably the post-neoliberal practice that has proved most controversial and sparked the greatest debate. The

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move away from the Washington Consensus imagined by Borón, argues Maristella Svampa (2013), led to a new consensus on development models driven by natural resource extraction. Although claims about the re-priming of Latin America may be overstated (Grigera 2013), there is no doubt that the commodities boom between 2002 and 2013 provided the backdrop for pink tide governments. These governments were able to take advantage of the knock-on effects on the global economy caused by the rapid rise of China, with the high demand for primary commodities raising prices for an extended period, allowing states to claim a larger slice of the pie and fill their coffers. The political ecologist Eduardo Gudynas (2010) argues that neo-extractivism is qualitatively distinct from its neoliberal predecessor by dint of the role of the state in managing and redistributing natural resource rents. However, this form of extractivism still came at an ecological and social cost, sparking rounds of political conflicts with communities dispossessed and displaced by the mining of natural resources and the growing networks of infrastructures needed for their expanded extraction (Acosta 2013; Svampa 2017, 2019).

Throughout *Now We Are in Power*, I pick up some of the central threads of these debates. However, I am less interested in highlighting similarities and differences with the neoliberal period than in tracing the evolution of social forces, the state form and its functions, and political economic trends through the frame of passive revolution. Using this approach, I touch on the cornerstones of the debates outlined above without, in some cases, making a definitive intervention. This is partly due to the political developments that have transpired in the time between these discussions and my writing of this book. Where I do make a decisive intervention is in the debates around the end of the progressive cycle (Gago and Sztulwark 2016; Gaudichaud 2015; Katz 2017; Modonesi 2015; Modonesi and Iglesias 2016; Modonesi and Svampa 2016; Salazar 2015; Svampa 2017). In the context of the end of the commodities boom and the return of the Right to power across the region, scholars and activists have sought to explicate the limitations and legacies of the pink tide, reflecting on the dynamics that led to the “end of the progressive cycle.” In a sense, my arguments here are driven by these tasks. However, I contend that the cycle narrative prematurely forecloses the possibilities opened by the pink tide. I am thus interested in the field of possibilities and alternatives opened by the post-neoliberal frame, and I take up some of the theoretical strands of my arguments and extend them to reflect on the possible lessons the pink tide offers to the new generation of leftist social movements.

## THE CENTRAL ARGUMENTS OF THE BOOK

Bolivia has long been a country of missed chances, of lost riches, of natural resource wealth that slips agonizingly through the fingers and out of reach. In the introduction to her seminal piece of scholarship on Bolivia *We Eat the Mines and the Mines Eat Us*, anthropologist June Nash (1993, 1) laments the paradox of stupendous wealth—first silver, then tin (now hydrocarbons)—that has led to nothing but abject poverty for most of those who live in this landlocked South American country. Many feel that the government of Morales offered an opportunity for change that was “squandered” (Farthing 2018). After the initial optimism surrounding the election of Morales, the former llama herder who sat at the helm of a broad-based coalition of some of Latin America’s most powerful anti-neoliberal working-class and Indigenous social movements, why was his government unable to fulfill its apparent potential and enact meaningful social change? Or, in more general terms, what are the prospects for pursuing a transformative political agenda of change at the peripheries of capitalism? Are places like Bolivia doomed to play out a preordained destiny or can alternative futures be built here?

The central arguments of the book emerge from my attempts to grapple with these questions. Starting from crumbling capitalist hegemony at the end of the twentieth century across Latin America—the product of an economic crisis, fiscal crises of the state, and widespread rejection of neoliberalism—I explore the politics of change pursued by social movements and the reestablishment of the conditions required for capital accumulation through what I contend are processes of passive revolution. Drawing on Antonio Gramsci’s framing of the politics of crisis through the revolution/restoration dialectic (which we will discuss later), I argue that pink tide governments were the state forms assumed in the face of a regional crisis of capitalist hegemony, the vehicles by which processes of capitalist accumulation based on extractive rents from primary commodities were reestablished and extended.

This argument has two dialectically interwoven sides. The first side explores the “passive” element of Gramsci’s oxymoronic concept of passive revolution. It concerns the revolutionary drive of social movements that in a moment of crisis were able to transcend a mere challenge of the status quo and establish alternative future horizons (Dinerstein 2015; Gutiérrez 2014). However, following the zenith of the moment of catharsis (we will fully explore the significance of this term below), movement leaders, along with their central demands, were incorporated into the state, thus turning movements from offensive actors pushing for change

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to defenders of the Left in state power. This is the second moment of passive revolution, transformism, and addresses the trajectory of revolutionary forces after they have unseated their initial opponents from power. In short, I trace the mechanisms and effects of social movement pacification through the course of passive revolution.

The second side of my argument examines the dynamics of restoration set in motion by passive revolution. I show how the new social and spatial configuration of power—the novel forms of power and the capitalist state that emerged in twenty-first-century Latin America—established through passive revolution are contradictory, unstable, and in continual need of renewal. By placing movement incorporation and transformism in conversation with the spatial and scalar dynamics of passive revolution, I show the tensions inherent in processes of passive revolution. I underscore how passive revolutions are also a set of socio-spatial processes that unsettle social movement incorporation and how neo-extractivism—the dominant form of value creation established by passive revolution in twenty-first-century Latin America—not only provided the material foundations for new hegemonic state practices and forms but also undermined the basis of their newfound hegemony, sparking new rounds of social conflict over accumulation by dispossession and the environmental and ecological maladies that leak from the pores of extractive industries and their associated infrastructures.

These interconnected arguments are novel in several ways. First, separating passive revolution into distinct yet intertwined threads allows me to evaluate how the contradictory and contested character of passive revolution unfolds over time and explore how its different moving parts interact with one another and shape its dynamics. Second, exploring the extractive political economy that passive revolution reestablishes alongside its composite processes teases out the dialectical fusion of the economic and political within passive revolution. Most, if not all, uses of passive revolution to explore historical moments of crisis focus largely on the superstructural level, an approach that runs the risk of reproducing the crudest economic readings of historical materialism, which conceive the economic base and the superstructure to be two discrete levels of capitalism.<sup>8</sup> I, on the other hand, read the restoration of natural resource extraction and its attendant infrastructures as a dialectical part of passive revolution. I use the temporalities produced by processes and infrastructures of natural resource extraction to underscore how passive revolution also forges contradictory and contested political economic forms that can unsettle the pacification processes at its very heart. To make these arguments, I must first briefly outline the theoretical components of passive revolution.

## PASSIVE REVOLUTION AND GRAPPLING WITH THE POLITICS OF CHANGE

Many critical Latin American scholars turned to Gramsci in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, not only because of the explanatory power that his concepts—particularly “hegemony” and “passive revolution”—had during this conjuncture but also because of the intellectual legacy of the previous moment of progressive governments in Latin American history. Gramsci originally arrived in Latin America during the 1950s via Argentina and Brazil, and was—largely thanks to the Cuban Revolution—read principally through a Leninist tradition that maintained Gramsci’s revolutionary dimension (Burgos 2002, 9–10). However, the violent military backlash to the populist regimes of the Southern Cone during the 1960s and 1970s, together with the “Soviet vulgate” of many Latin American communist parties, sparked a second wave of (re)reading Gramsci (Freeland 2014, 279–80). Exile in Mexico, in the case of militants such as José Aricó, offered the opportunity to dissect the failures of the “old” and “revolutionary” Left; and in Brazil, intellectuals including Carlos Nelson Coutinho drew on “the humanistic and historicist reading of Marxism” present in Gramsci (as well as Georg Lukács and Jean-Paul Sartre) to rethink “the radical transformation of society [based on] the logic of construction of hegemony” (Burgos 2002, 11–14). This secondary rereading of Gramsci centering on hegemony (rather than passive revolution) fed into the founding principles of the Brazilian Partido dos Trabalhadores (Workers’ Party, PT) and the municipal socialism experiments across Latin America in the 1980s and 1990s (Burgos 2002, 17–25), as well as the rise of cultural studies in the Latin American academy (Hesketh 2019, 1475). It transformed hegemony into a socialist strategy and “the people” replaced “the working classes” as the agents of historical change.<sup>9</sup> It is these more social-democratic readings of Gramsci that would come to bear directly on pink tide governments across Latin America, particularly in Argentina, Bolivia, and Brazil.

Although the concept of passive revolution remained in the background of the major contributions of the first generation of Latin American Gramscian scholars—such as Aricó, Juan Carlos Portantiero, and René Zavaleta Mercado (Modonesi 2019, 123–41)—it became central to the Gramscian readings of pink tide governments (e.g., Bosteels 2014; Hesketh and Morton 2014; Modonesi 2012; Modonesi and Svampa 2016; Webber 2016). Passive revolution is the critical framework developed by Gramsci amid the crisis of his age and his person: namely, the rise of Fascism across Europe in the 1920s and 1930s. Gramsci drew on a compar-

ative historical methodology to evaluate the politics of crisis in different historical conjunctures. Passive revolution captures the politics of pacification that nullifies a revolutionary challenge from below and (re)establishes the conditions for capitalist class rule. Gramsci first used the concept to explore how the liberal bourgeoisie was able to enact “revolution without a revolution” during the Italian Risorgimento (Gramsci 2011a, 137, Q1§44). Gramsci developed his notion of passive revolution through a dialectical combination of Vincenzo Cuoco’s original concept (used to analyze the 1799 Neapolitan Revolution) and Edgar Quinet’s formulation of “restoration and renovation,” which Gramsci also referred to as “conservation/innovation” (see Gramsci 2011c, 252–54, Q8§25, Q8§27). For Gramsci (1971, 219, Q13§27), “the problem is to see whether in this dialectic ‘revolution/restoration’ it is revolution or restoration that predominates.” Passive revolution is not another way of describing capitalism writ large but a theoretical tool kit with which to comprehend *a particular response to crises of capitalism*.<sup>10</sup> It provides a lens through which to examine the novel configurations of power that reestablish the conditions of capitalist accumulation while also transforming the physiognomy of a social formation. As Gramsci (1971, 109) states, “One may apply to the concept of passive revolution . . . the interpretative criterion of molecular changes which in fact progressively modify the pre-existing composition of forces, and hence become the matrix of new changes.”

Gramsci identified several moments within passive revolution to better interrogate the relationship between restoration and revolution. He used the term “catharsis” to describe the moment of revolutionary potential within passive revolution, a moment when the masses move from corporatist self-interest into definite action (Gramsci Q10I§6, cited in Thomas 2009a, 263). This is a moment when class struggle becomes a historical driving force so strong that, on the one hand, it produces new collective political subjects, and, on the other hand, it provokes a crisis of hegemony that the state is unable to contain. The upshot of catharsis is that the appearance of state power must change, the crisis must be resolved on the plane of civil as well as political society, and the radical potential of new political subjects needs to be curtailed through processes of resubjectification (Modonesi 2019). The state regains its position as the political protagonists, while the social movements at the heart of catharsis are resubordinated to the state, a resubjectification process that Modonesi (2017, 17) also labels “re-subalternization.”

Another two moments within passive revolution capture this restoration of state power and the conditions for capital accumulation: transformism and Caesarism. On the one hand, transformism is the absorp-

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tion of revolutionary potential into the state, the pacification of social movements within civil society through their co-optation by the state, and the resubjectification of social movements (both individually and collectively). This happens initially through a molecular process, whereby individual leaders are integrated into the new state project, and latterly through a qualitative shift as whole movements become part of the state (Gramsci 2011c, 257, Q8§36). Their revolutionary ideas form part of the new hegemonic project, twisted into bells and whistles without substance, lacking the revolutionary challenge to the status quo that drives moments of catharsis. On the other hand, Caesarism captures the exit to a particular configuration of the revolution/restoration dialectic marked by impasse and stasis, a moment that Gramsci (2011c, 211, Q7§80) called “catastrophic equilibrium.” Here, neither the revolutionary forces pushing for radical change from below nor the conservative forces attempting to restore the *ancien régime* are strong enough to become hegemonic. The equilibrium between conservation and innovation is broken by a third force that capitalizes on the crisis sparked by catharsis and pushes its own agenda. Historically, this third force has often been personified in a leader—such as Caesar or Napoleon Bonaparte—but Gramsci (1971, 220, Q13§27) is quick to stress that a political party can also offer a similar exit and replace the role played by individual leaders. These three moments or mechanisms in passive revolution structure the analysis in the subsequent chapters of the book and offer the theoretical purchase needed to grapple with the politics of change in twenty-first-century Bolivia.

### THE SPATIOTEMPORAL DIMENSIONS OF PASSIVE REVOLUTION

Having outlined the mechanisms through which passive revolution operates, we turn to the dimensions of passive revolution: space and time. These are often overlooked components of the story but are vital if we are to contend fully with how passive revolution functions and assess its outcomes in concrete historical situations. Exploring space and time in twenty-first-century Bolivia helps illuminate some of the contradictions of passive revolution and the limitations to processes of change in capitalism. And to do this, we first need to define space and time and how they both function within capitalism.

To begin with, every society produces its own forms of space and time. In capitalism, these are “abstract space” and “abstract time,” the forms of space and time that are the necessary conditions for capital accumulation. On the one hand, abstract space is homogeneous, empty, alienated space where form and function have become decoupled. It is

quantifiable, mappable, and therefore, importantly, comparable. It is a blank slate that can be represented as geometrical space and placed in relation to other abstract spaces, meaning that abstract space is simultaneously homogeneous and hierarchical. Capital accumulation can only occur if its spatial parts are differentiable from one another, if they can perform different functions, and if they can be inserted into sociospatial hierarchies (Lefebvre 2009, 188). Capital accumulation simultaneously requires and produces homogeneity from/of the whole and differentiated hierarchies formed by fragments of its parts, with different spatial segments produced to perform different sociospatial functions.

The production of capitalist space, therefore, is characterized by the tension between equalization tendencies across space and structural barriers within capitalism that lead to geographical disequilibrium. Neil Smith (2008, 180) highlights how abstract space is always produced “at some scale”—urban, regional, national, and international scales—which allows capital to achieve “a degree of spatial fixity organized into identifiable separate scales of social activity.” This is the relative character of abstract space, which is composed of different scales. These “organize and integrate the different processes involved in the circulation and accumulation of capital, [becoming] the geographic foundation for the overall circulation and expansion of value” (Smith 2008, 180).

However, abstract space is not purely the space of capital accumulation but the consequence of historically and geographically specific dynamics of class struggle (Massey 1994, 22). Space is “produced, differentiated, and contested within any hegemonic project” (Ekers and Loftus 2013, 26–27), and, as a corollary of this, space is shaped by the “uneven development of class struggle” (Hesketh 2017, 40). This is where space enters the equation of revolution/restoration that underpins passive revolution. Passive revolution must, as Adam Morton (2013, 48–49) argues, be understood as “an emergent spatialization strategy that structure[s] and shape[s] state power.” Passive revolution analyzes “uneven and discontinuous geographies” and is concerned with how relational dynamics between areas of backwardness and economic “progress,” and between city and country, bear on processes of class struggle and state formation (Morton 2013, 51).

Moments of catharsis emerge out of geohistorical contexts, while transformism, in absorbing the central actors and ideals from the would-be challengers to class power, also disperses and displaces revolutionary actors in and through space. There are multiple ways to disrupt the logic of abstract space during moments of catharsis. Social struggle is the most visible example, but practices that subvert the dominant production of



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space itself can also prove effective. For example, the spontaneous architecture of self-construction produces a “spatial duality,” whereby the effective organization of space by residents rather than the state produces the impression of a duality of political power (Lefebvre 1991, 373–74). The struggle to survive through practices of social reproduction confronts the dominant logic of capitalist space organized through production. The disequilibrium contained in the facing off of these two opposing logics makes the liminal spaces at capitalism’s peripheries places of radical potential, although these are buried beneath the drudgery and hardship that poverty, urbanization, and proletarianization entail. This radical potential appears in moments of catharsis and forms an integral part of Indigenous, anticolonial, and working-class struggle. Transformism also has a spatial dimension. The incorporation of popular sectors can be organized territorially and “defined by the physical location of the actors,” including rural Indigenous movements and urban neighborhood organizations (Rossi 2018, 24). In twenty-first-century Latin America, this had the effect of varying transformism across space as public policies and pathways to the state (and its resources) were directed at localities (rather than sectors), determined by the needs and the militancy of a place’s constituents.

At its core, passive revolution contains a spatial/scalar contradiction between dispersal and concentration. The incorporation of different sectors happens at certain localized points in space and the benefits of supposedly national projects are felt unevenly across national territory. Moreover, in the context of the Commodity Consensus in twenty-first-century Latin America, the costs of extractivism and its attendant infrastructures are concentrated at points in space. People who find themselves in the pathway of extraction are subject to displacement and dispossession, or the “slow violence” wrought by dust kicked up by trucks carrying mined minerals, drinking water contaminated by chemicals used in mining, or the trafficking of humans that follows the same extractive routes and logics (Nixon 2011). *Where* benefits from incorporation matters as much as *who* benefits, as does *where* is slated as a sacrifice zone. Indeed, it is these very spatial tensions that sit center stage in chapters 3 and 5.

On the other hand, abstract time, produced and propagated by capitalism, is “uniform, continuous, homogeneous, ‘empty’ time, [time] independent of events” (Postone 2009, 202). “It is a mathematical hollow,” writes Andreas Malm (2015, 305), “an incorporeal repository of events which stands independent of them all and never betrays their influence.” While abstract time predates capitalism, it only became generalized

alongside the commodity form of social relations, as it is intrinsic to processes of social alienation that underpin capitalist development (Postone 2009, 211–15). Capitalist development “*advances by ordering humans and the rest of nature in abstract space and time* because that is where most surplus-value can be produced” (Malm 2015, 308, emphasis in the original). That is to say, the generalization of abstract time must be conceptualized as an immanent dimension of the generalization of capitalist social relations, of capitalist development itself.

Generalized conceptions of time “as a kind of linear progression measured by the clock and calendar” only supplanted “cyclical conceptions of time” in Europe within the past couple of hundred years (Postone 2009, 200). Before this, time was grasped through the passing of “natural cycles and the periodicities of human life as well as particular tasks or processes, for example, the time required to cook rice or to say one paternoster” (Postone 2009, 201). Moishe Postone (2009, 201), calls this “concrete time.” Concrete time when a day’s tasks—“which might vary from fishing to farming, building, mending of nets, thatching, making a cradle or a coffin” (Thompson 1967, 59)—determine the length of the working day and therefore orient time. The expenditure of concrete time is itself the result of human activity and daily tasks (Postone 2009, 214–15). It is immanent to events and thus cannot be expressed as an autonomous unit; it can have qualitative as well as quantitative determinants and be cast as sublime or profane.

In contrast to concrete time, abstract time allows for different spaces to be placed in temporal relation to one another. Abstract time allows for certain spaces to be situated “ahead” of others, building temporal as well as spatial hierarchies. Teleological notions of progress that underpin much of the discussion over development in mainstream development economics are symptoms of abstract time. However, abstract time does not obliterate heterogeneous concrete times (Benjamin 1973, 265). Rather, as Fouad Makki (2015, 489) underscores, “the two temporalities coexist in tension with each other and shape the dialectic of the abstract and the concrete, the universal and the particular, and the uneven and yet combined forms of social change.” This gives modernity in the Latin American context, as I have argued elsewhere (McNelly 2022), a multiple, contradictory, and contested temporal character. Postone (2004, 64) captures the uneven temporal character of contemporary capitalism best, stating: “The historical dynamic of the modern capitalist world, within this framework, then, is not simply a linear succession of presents but entails a complex dialectic of two forms of constituted time. This dialectic involves the accumulation of the past. . . It does so, however, in a

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form that entails the ongoing reconstruction of the fundamental features of capitalism as an apparently necessary present—even as it is hurtled forward by another form of time, which is concrete, heterogeneous, and directional. This latter movement of time is ‘historical time.’”

That capitalism is marked by the articulation of one temporality (abstract time) by another (concrete time) is even more evident in peripheral places, where processes of capitalist expansion come up against societal forms that have not been fully subsumed to the logic of capital. And they never will be, as capitalist development is uneven and combined in spatiotemporal terms: continued capital accumulation is predicated on spatial and temporal unity and difference. Although the heterogeneous character of historical time is true for all of capitalism, it is at peripheral places where these differences are most evident—hence the perception of development at peripheries as “delayed” or temporally behind that of the capitalist core.

This temporal dissidence is captured by the Bolivian political theorist René Zavaleta Mercado’s notion of *sociedades abigarradas*. *Abigarrada* or *abigarramiento* roughly translate as motley or heterogeneous and “connote disjointedness, incongruousness, beyond mere difference” (Freeland 2016, 272). Zavaleta introduces *abigarramiento* to capture situations where the multiple temporalities of manifold modes of production are not constrained to the homogeneous time of the state; that is, contexts where the state fails to become hegemonic (Lagos Rojas 2018, 140). Zavaleta’s characterization of Bolivia as a *sociedad abigarrada* captures the concrete historical articulation of multiple modes of production—the organization of productive forces by different forms and grades of the development of productive relations—and how these articulations (re)produce multiple civilizational and societal forms.<sup>11</sup>

*Abigarramiento* helps capture how historical time is articulated in Latin American social formations. It also draws attention to the temporalities of deferral, ruination, suspension, and abandonment that characterize processes of passive revolution. Gramsci viewed the present as “contradictory and non-contemporaneous,” comprehended through the triad of politics, philosophy/ideology, and history that underpins his absolute historicism (Thomas 2009b, 293). Gramsci’s historicism, contends Stefan Kipfer (2013, 85), was “rooted in a method of investigation that begins with particular historical conjunctures [which] he saw as forms of a confluence of distinct, but intertwined temporalities . . . not as interchangeable instants in linear succession or as dependent variables determined by atemporal structural totalities.” Although Gramsci did not frame it in this way, I contend that passive revolution plays out over the

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complex web of historical time, with its ebbs and flows shaped by the perpetual interaction between abstract and concrete time.

Catharsis is a moment when social movements disrupt the hegemonic time of the state, opening new political and temporal horizons that stretch beyond capitalism and its abstract time. Part and parcel of passive revolution is the reestablishment of abstract time. As this occurs through concrete tasks that form the basis of concrete time, the tensions between concrete and abstract time come to the fore during passive revolution. For example, the incorporation of demands around natural resources begets construction projects and the building of infrastructure projects. Here, the presence of concrete time is inescapable, as delays to construction—the lengthening of abstract time but not concrete time—can become political crises. The temporal dimensions of passive revolution can undermine the mechanisms of passive revolution, sparking new conflicts between civil society and the state, and limiting the pacifying effects of passive revolution. These are the temporal dimensions of passive revolution that form the basis of chapter 5.

## STRUCTURE OF THE BOOK

The narrative arc of the book traces political developments in Bolivia from the crisis of neoliberalism in the late 1990s through the end of Evo Morales's time in power in 2019. The book starts at the moment of catharsis that emerged from the crisis of neoliberalism in 1999. Chapter 1 analyzes the explosive social movements in El Alto—the epicenter of struggle at the turn of the twenty-first century—and argues that the demand for the nationalization of gas politicized the configuration of social relations forged under neoliberalism. It traces the sociospatial dimension of the crisis in El Alto and contends that the crisis of liberal democracy in the city allowed the local social organizations to be captured and to direct protest from below. Chapter 1 thus offers a fine-grained analysis of the moment of catharsis in Bolivia that preceded Evo Morales's election to power in 2005.

Chapter 2 explores the reconfiguration and decomposition of social movements through their incorporation into the Movimiento al Socialismo (Movement for Socialism, MAS) government's political project through transformism. During the initial period of the MAS government, there were three dimensions of movement incorporation: (1) co-optation from above; (2) the creation of parallel social movements by the government; and (3) the propensity of social movements *to be* co-opted. The central demands of the radical social movements of the

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previous period, 2000–2005, were incorporated into the government’s project. However, the technocratic government responses were, to an extent, “conservative reforms dressed up as revolutionary transformations” (Modonesi 2012, 143), consolidating the position of the MAS government and stripping movements of their most powerful collective mobilizing frames. By 2010, the dynamics of social movement incorporation had led to a loss of independent mobilizing capabilities, creative capacity, and militancy. Following their incorporation into the political project of the MAS, social movements found themselves left only with the power to reject government policies through informal contestation.

Chapter 3 argues that the crisis of the state not only galvanized a wave of working-class and Indigenous social movements but also sparked a conservative reaction that leveraged regional differences and articulated an elite bloc on the regional scale of the eastern lowlands of the country. The chapter also explores the shockwaves of spatial pacification on social movements during transformism, revealing the contradictory and destabilizing dynamics within passive revolution in this moment. The spatial dissidence caused by the autonomy struggles of the “Media Luna” departments of Beni, Pando, Santa Cruz, and Tarija and a class compromise between the lowland agribusiness elite and the MAS produced a sense of “being forgotten,” undermining modes of incorporation and the quantitative element of transformism. The chapter therefore contends that adding a sociospatial dimension to passive revolution evinces its unstable and contradictory, contested and incomplete character.

Chapter 4 explores the functioning of Caesarism in passive revolution and its potentially explosive shortcomings. It interrogates how Caesarism played out through a careful positioning of President Evo Morales as simultaneously a fallible leader and a quasi-apostle—through what I call the sublime/profane dialectic. While the government was adept at sustaining the affective draw of Morales among much of the Bolivian population through an astute use of Morales’s Janus-faced persona—thereby advancing the formation of the state through passive revolution—this proved but a temporary fix (not resolution) to the contradictions underpinning the different processes contained within passive revolution. In the Bolivian context, Caesarism concentrated the gains and the limitations of the MAS government in the figure of Morales, personalizing politics and further displacing social movements as agents of political change.

Chapter 5 evaluates the pacifying role of extractivism, interrogating the different temporal dynamics of passive revolution and the tensions between the temporalities of extractivism and infrastructure. On the one

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hand, developmental or oil time is a shared teleology toward modernity embodied in hydrocarbons and other natural resources. Extractive-led development, I contend, attempts to reestablish a hegemonic temporality of a unilinear pathway toward a modern utopia. On the other hand, infrastructural time is marked by stasis, postponement, regression, and decay rather than any single pathway to modernity (Stoler 2013). Infrastructure projects are started but not always finished, sometimes abandoned after a few short years, at other times repurposed by the communities in their vicinity for functions not envisioned by engineers or planners. Infrastructure needs constant upkeep and maintenance, making it impossible to speak of infrastructures as finished projects in any meaningful way (Appel 2018; Khalili 2020). By analyzing extractivism and its attendant infrastructures through these two different temporalities, I shed light on their role in the pacification processes animated by passive revolution and the importance of framing passive revolution as advancing through dialectically interconnected political and economic processes.

Chapter 6 ties together the different threads of the politics of crisis analyzed in the previous five chapters. In October–November 2019, the national elections triggered a period of upheaval and unrest amid accusations of fraud and foreign intervention that polarized the country. A wave of violence followed the election on October 20, leading to Morales's resignation on November 10 and culminating in two state-led massacres in the MAS strongholds of Senkata, El Alto, and Sacaba. A tragic sense of *déjà vu* was present in these moments of violence, which were both sites of deadly violence perpetrated by previous neoliberal governments. This final chapter evaluates the limits of passive revolution. It explores the diachronism and dissonance between the processes of social movement incorporation, state formation, capital accumulation, and the sociospatial dynamics of passive revolution. It highlights how, ultimately, the different structural, spatial, and temporal fixes to the crisis of the previous period destabilized and undermined one another on the plane of politics. In doing so, the chapter ties together the different threads of passive revolution and reveals the perpetual, contradictory, and contested character of processes of passive revolution.

## A BRIEF NOTE ON ETHICS AND METHODOLOGY

Before we turn to the moment of catharsis in chapter 1, I want to briefly situate myself as a researcher. The country examined in the bulk of this study, Bolivia, is a good place to explore the politics of passive revolution

and how capitalist peripheries are (re)produced. However, even leaving aside the seeming impossibility of conducting social science investigations in Bolivia, as Zavaleta ([1986] 2008, 9) noted long ago, doing research there raises several ethical challenges. After all, investigators are always inserted into social and spatial scales constructed through difference while doing research (Massey 1993). As a white, western male, I am endowed with historic privilege emanating from the colonial condition that forms part of my research. My positionality conferred legitimacy and power on me as a researcher (and by extension, on my research); coming from a university in London implied an insertion into social hierarchies through my apparent expertise. It also raised suspicion of my being “CIA,” which is unsurprising given the long histories of US intervention in Bolivia and Latin America more generally.<sup>12</sup>

As much was glaringly apparent when I was invited to speak and explain my research to a group of local activists at a political meeting soon after my arrival in Bolivia in January 2016. My companion, also a researcher and also studying Bolivia, but Brazilian, female, and not racialized as white, was not. My racialization as a white European of male gender and inserted into the patriarchal norms that structure Bolivian society shaped my entrance into spaces of social movements and governments, enabling my research in certain ways, and limiting it in others. I was permitted entry into union meetings and protests, treated as an “expert” and therefore given access by my interlocutors, but simultaneously viewed with trepidation (for the reasons outlined above) and thus nearly always kept at arm’s-length. This shaped my interactions with movements and political leaders, both enabling and limiting the access I was given (see also Werner 2016, 19).

I have always been cognizant of the ethical dimensions of my research and the process of researching, hence my raising them here. Ethical issues crop up not just in the field, but as Sam Halvorsen (2018) has underscored, doing research in postcolonial contexts risks reproducing the colonial relations of extraction. Researchers operate in the mental space of (mainly western) academia, and the use of theoretical categories comes, some argue, with its own politics (Moore 2008). I have attempted to overcome these problems by publishing my work in Spanish in Bolivia and presenting my research findings, both at local academic events in Bolivia and by way of informal presentations to my interlocutors and their organizations.

The research itself is drawn from seventeen months of participant observation and more than one hundred semi-structured interviews. My time in La Paz, El Alto, and Santa Cruz was spent marching, attending

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meetings, and talking to people in the street and in the marketplaces. The bulk of my research focused on four different types of urban working-class organizations: labor unions, neighborhood councils, market guilds, and transport unions. Having said that, I also interviewed state officials and politicians and participated in events, activities, and protests with sections of the highland Indigenous movement. Without really realizing it, walking was a central part of my research (see Castán Broto 2019), a way to get to grips with the social and spatial configurations of power at the heart of my study. However, this book is not simply an ethnography but an attempt to grapple with the dynamics of crisis and the politics of change. It thus draws from across different disciplinary boundaries—from anthropology to geography, politics, political economy, and sociology—to build the arguments outlined here.