

Introduction

SOVEREIGNTY MATTERS



An email marked urgent arrived in my inbox in December 2016. Given that messages sent to academics are rarely marked urgent, this mail stood out amongst the list of other emails from students and colleagues. It had been sent with a red flag from someone I barely knew in Colombia. I had met Hector Jaime Vinasco¹ some months before at a research conference in Santa Cruz, Bolivia, but he was not an academic. Hector Jaime, as I had learned in Santa Cruz, is a community leader from one of Colombia's indigenous communities in the Chocó region.² He had participated with surprising oratory skills in the event in Santa Cruz along with another colleague to publicly highlight the campaign he and his people had been involved in throughout his life. Hector Jaime's eloquent presentation contained a series of important insights, but also a positioning on self-determination I had not heard stated so directly by indigenous leaders I had met before. 'We are the state', Hector Jaime announced. 'When the Colombian state arrives to negotiate with us our claims of ownership to land and resources, we respond that "we are the state in this land, not you".'

The community had earlier elected Hector Jaime governor of the indigenous reserve. Having completed his period of service in that role, he had moved with the community's agreement into the role of heading a committee focused on local environmental challenges. This was connected to an effort to confront the extractive interests of private corporations and the Colombian state within their territory. Hector Jaime was involved in a campaign aimed at the defence of his community's land from encroachment by large-scale

mining and other commercial interests. This was the continuation of a long history of struggle in which, despite the formal title given to the reserve in the mid-1500s, it had been necessary to constantly innovate institutional and political action in order to defend their territory. While Hector Jaime's territory had a history and tradition of small-scale artisanal mining, his community feared the consequences that large-scale mining and oil and gas exploration could have on the local environment. The community was well aware of the experience of other communities in Colombia and elsewhere, in which extractive activities had directly damaged and restricted the local water supply, as well as further restricting their sustainable use of the land for small-scale agriculture, hunting and fishing. Hector Jaime's email related to this historical context, but its urgency was caused by more recent and vital events.

Hector Jaime was trying to make contact because he now feared for his life. He had received an anonymous telephone message stating that an assassin (*sicario*) had been hired by a BACRIM (criminal band) organization³ to kill him and his immediate family within the coming days and weeks. A letter posted through his door further suggested that the order related to the work he and his fellow community members were doing to block mining and other extractive activities entering their legal territory. The letter from the BACRIM organization placed this in its own twisted moral terms of social cleansing (*limpieza social*). The letter states: 'We are not going to permit saboteurs like you to continue torpedoing the development of the country and the progress of good people.' It continues by stating 'we have orders to bring down those leaders and governors who support mobilization, for the defence of development, loyalty and economic patrimony of the country.' Hector Jaime's email pleaded for assistance to push, by signature campaign, post and telephone, the national police and authorities to take this threat to his life seriously by providing protection and investigating the case. This is not exactly what happened.

Hector Jaime and his family continue to live in fear despite the email campaign started by colleagues from around the world. Direct protection by the state was not granted, but as a result of outside pressure, Hector Jaime was offered a bulletproof vest and the national police increased patrols of the area. A formal investigation to identify the source of the death threat was also started. Reflecting more recently on this moment, Hector Jaime – who graciously provided consent for its recount – is quick to point out that this threat was not only one to his person, but also to his community and to their way of life.

I start with this story not only to emotively grab attention, but also to immediately exemplify the key analytic intention of the volume, i.e. to insist that sovereignty is a vital matter. Sovereignty is a matter that is directly implicated

in questions of land, territory and energy development, and a matter that persists as one of life and death for people in Latin America and further afield. It plays a key role in making the material (natural resources and their human value) political.

In recent decades, globalization and the dominance of the market economy made it appear that the importance of the state and, with it, of sovereignty was on the wane. Commodity markets – the sale of primary exports or raw materials – no longer appeared for many to be dictated by the interests of individual states and resource availability. They seemed largely controlled and guided by the operation of stock markets, trading algorithms, corporations and shareholder interests. At least this was the case until price fluctuations in the price of oil, coal, other minerals and basic materials, and the knock-on effects on the prices of food and other essential goods would intermittently remind us all of the facts. States not only continued to regulate for the market, but through the setting of tariffs, rents and prices via bilateral agreements or through negotiating bodies such as the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) have continued to hold significant sway over the economy.

As I write this chapter, the price of oil in the US has fallen below zero for this first time in history (Ambrose 2020), and the oil economy in Norway, where I live, is under serious stress because of the fall in international prices. It was only an ideological sleight of hand that created the impression that it was the market that mattered, and not the state – or the state's sovereign claims on territory and resources. This magic of the market has evidently been significantly dispelled in recent years and not only because of the instability of the international markets and fluctuations of prices.

As Piketty (2020) has newly reminded us, markets, profits and capital are all historical constructs that depend on choices, and these choices are expressed as ideological assertions. In recent years, it is clear from the election of an increasing number of populist right-wing leaders – who formally denounce liberal globalists – that the magic of globalization and the market, and the role of the state is being reworked. A new ideological sleight of hand is taking place to put a new – and very troubling – emphasis on the state and sovereignty, whilst also protecting business. New policies for immigration, border control and the relaxation of environmental regulations, as well as political decisions such as Brexit and the 'building of the wall' on the US-Mexican border, are all evidence of this. The COVID-19 pandemic has also had an impact, enabling states to express their sovereignty over land and territory in new ways, such as mandating curfews and the electronic surveillance of citizens as possible carriers of the virus.

Sovereignty is an issue that evidently still matters at the global scale. However, as this book makes clear, it is also important to draw attention to

the persisting importance of sovereignty at other scales and of its empirical implication in concrete decisions regarding the direction of development, livelihood, and opportunities of individuals and their communities. Indeed, as I will stress in the following pages, sovereignty is significantly implicated in the vital matter of national, regional and local decisions regarding the ownership, use, protection and management of natural resources.

In this regard, Hector Jaime's story is not an exceptional event. His experience is but a drop in the ocean of a myriad of histories of indigenous, peasant and pastoralist communities that have been threatened in their struggles to defend their culture, autonomy and territories. These struggles are to some extent well known from earlier anthropological texts and the publicity of international work towards the establishment of conventions to recognize and defend indigenous rights.⁴ The coverage made by the media and environmentalists of high-profile clashes over land and resources (e.g. Standing Rock and the Dakota Access Pipeline in the United States; the Alberta tar-sands in Canada; the Belo Monte Dam in Brazil; the Chevron case in Ecuador; Yanacocha and Peru; Garzweiler in Germany; Repparfjordan in Norway, etc.) have also raised public awareness that the environment remains a focus of severely opposing opinions. However, what has not been given so much attention is the fact that there are signs that the pace and severity of these clashes have newly escalated.

The assassination of people in similar positions to Hector Jaime has become an all too regular occurrence in multiple locations around the world. In its 2019 report, the international human rights organization Global Witness highlighted that on average, more than three land defenders (civil society leaders, human rights activists, indigenous and peasant leaders, etc.) were killed every week in 2018 ('Enemies of the State?' 2019). As the report states, these attacks were driven by destructive industries such as mining, logging and agribusiness. It also reveals in detail how countless more people were threatened, arrested or thrown in jail for daring to oppose the governments or companies seeking to profit from their land. Concerned about the rising trend of violence towards land defenders, *The Guardian* newspaper in the United Kingdom has launched a database together with Global Witness in an attempt to accurately record and map what they view to be a murder epidemic. Within these figures, the 'post-conflict' violence in Colombia stands out – it ranks third after the Philippines and Brazil. Despite the signing of a peace accord in 2016 with the main guerrilla organization (FARC-EP) FARC-EU, in the intervening years until May 2019, a total of 837 activists were killed in Colombia (Le Billon, Roa-Garcia and López-Granada 2020). The Washington Office of Latin America (WOLA) has been closely following this rise in the assassinations of civil society leaders, including a list of names of the dead in its monthly human rights updates on Colombia

(Sánchez-Garzoli 2017). These killings have occurred in a context in which the victims have denounced the increasing presence of armed actors in their community or territory.

Recent paramilitary and criminal actions are also tied to significant efforts to expand interests over a wider spectrum of resource extraction, i.e. timber, mining and oil and gas extraction (Grave Aumento de Asesinatos de Quienes Defienden los Derechos Humanos en Colombia 2017). Paramilitary interests in extractive projects are driven by the possibility of profits from extortion and protection rackets, from the direct control of mining operations, from the whitewashing of money through legitimate business (a long-time strategy of the cartels) as well as deals made with mining and oil companies interested in bumping up security in the face of increasing tension and conflict with local communities. In the recent COVID-19 pandemic, media reports suggest that paramilitary and related criminal organizations (BACRIM) exploited the lockdown as a means to further locate and target their victims (Parkin Daniels 2020). This also unfortunately coincides with the Colombian government's own efforts to put in place 'online' consultations as a means to speed up the extractive licensing process during the pandemic.

By placing an emphasis on sovereignty, this book seeks to study the lesser-known backstory to resource contestations in Latin America – some more violent than others – and to demonstrate their positioning within more extensive histories. In doing so, I revisit previous writing linking Latin America's economic development to the exploitation of natural resources – and return to a lesser-known literature underlining the operation and importance of subnational claims to sovereignty, territory and resources. A new connection is made here between the complex dynamics of conflict and contestation of resource extraction in Bolivia, Guatemala and Colombia. It will become evident that the politics of resource use in these three countries inherits and differently reformulates largely forgotten but still influential histories of colonization, state-formation, racism and social exclusion. It is this ongoing history in which the formation of claims to sovereignty are not formulated by states alone, but also by the dynamic interaction between states, communities and private actors in connection with international interests and pressures that I mean to characterize and capture in this book. Differing understandings of access to territory and natural resources and the expansion and governance of extractive activities are also emphasized here as an important catalyst and cause for contrasting expressions of sovereignty.

Sovereign Forces aims to provide new and necessary insights into the causes, dynamics and necessary governance responses to socio-environmental contestation of natural resource extraction and related energy developments in Latin America. It does so by emphasizing the political nature of resource extraction and energy production, and the analytic value of the concept of

resource sovereignty. Resource sovereignty is a compound concept that my colleagues and I have proposed in earlier work (McNeish 2017; McNeish, Borchgrevink and Logan 2015a; McNeish and Logan 2012), but that I intend to further detail and clarify in this volume. Put simply, resource sovereignty is a hybrid concept that recognizes the manner in which different social sectors bracket material interests and social claims together to form political claims for land and territory. As we will see in the following pages, claims of popular sovereignty often directly challenge those of the state and market, and in doing so can be generative of conflict and contestation, but also of proposals for necessary transformation and cooperation.

Emphasizing the way in which popular expressions of sovereignty interact with dominant expressions of state and corporate sovereignty, the book captures the way in which people at both the centre and the margins of states in Latin America relate to questions of energy and resource extraction. The book reveals anew the surprising centrality of indigenous and peasant peoples – often considered marginalized populations – in legitimately answering key questions regarding resource use, extraction and energy development in Latin American countries. As such, a critical view of resource politics and environmental governance in the region highlights an analytic and practical need to reinstate a substantive consideration of their claims to sovereignty in the present. By drawing attention to histories of grievance and contrasting epistemologies and ontologies, the argument developed here for resource sovereignty importantly contrasts and expands beyond earlier catch-all explanations of the ‘resource curse’, and importantly questions persistently dominant institutionalist and rational choice assumptions in the resource politics and environmental governance literature.

These points will be given further foundation in this introductory chapter, before the book’s central chapters qualitatively and empirically expand these themes. The book explores and argues in favour of the ‘everyday’ value of combining empirical insight regarding resource sovereignty with a critical institutional perspective regarding environmental governance in the region. There is, as I will demonstrate in the final chapters of the book, a crucial value to resource sovereignty beyond the analytical.

Resource Extraction and Contested Sovereignty in Latin America

I do not want to lose the reader because of unnecessary detail. A short introduction to the region’s history is provided here in order to demonstrate a key premise of the book you now read. This premise being that national sovereignty and the trajectory of development in Latin America has been largely defined by a competition to discover, exploit and create wealth

from resource extraction. To be clear, the legacy of Latin America's colonial experience and economic reliance on the extraction and export of natural resources has left a marked imprint on the political and social formation of the region. The greatly abridged history that follows serves to establish the wider political background of later chapters and my contention that expressions of sovereignty have long been contested beyond the boundaries of state and government.

Multiple authors writing about Latin America's history – from the Spanish conquest to the present day – recognize the key role that natural resources have played in drawing Latin America into the dynamics and influence of globalization and have contributed to the region's economic, political and social transformation. Eduardo Galeano is perhaps one of Latin America's best-known writers for having summed up the foundations of this story in his now classic political economic analysis of the region's development: *Open Veins of Latin America: Five Centuries of the Pillage of a Continent* (1997). Gold and silver, cacao and cotton, rubber and coffee, fruit, hides and wool, petroleum, iron, nickel, manganese, copper, aluminium ore, nitrates and tin – these are the veins Galeano traces through the body of the entire continent, from the Rio Grande to the Caribbean, and all the way to their open ends where they empty into the coffers in the United States and Europe. Whilst it would be misleading to suggest that Latin American history corresponds entirely to a story of extraction, it is nonetheless striking how many of the key moments in the region and the development of its states correspond with attempts to directly exploit or remotely control its rich natural resource base for political and economic gain. I also acknowledge that forms of governance in other colonized regions of the world were at times also crudely extractive (Hansen and Stepputat 2001).

The story of the fifteenth-century Spanish conquest and its relationship to an Iberian hunger for wealth and fortune – as much as territory and souls – has been repeated in countless popular accounts and moral tales. This story contains many well-known episodes and tropes. It starts with the landfall of Columbus on a small island in the Bahamas in search of new trade routes for the Spanish Crown and the subsequent discovery of natives wearing jewellery of hammered gold and tales of an island made of gold. Following this encounter, the rest of Columbus' five-month voyage became a restless quest not of geographical exploration, but for golden treasure across the islands now known today as Cuba, Haiti and the Dominican Republic (Markham 2019). Although Columbus never discovered what he was looking for during this or his subsequent three voyages, edited versions of his account were widely read across Europe in the sixteenth century. Later explorers and *conquistadores* (conquerers) would be significantly motivated by these accounts. This would lead to the betrayal of the Aztecs by Hernán Cortez. It would lead to Pizarro's

ransom of Atahualpa in exchange for a room full of gold. Inspiring popular writing the Spanish obsession with the promise of gold and wealth would lead to multiple doomed expeditions in both the colonial and republican periods to search for the lost city of El Dorado (where the native chief was reputed to be covered from head to toe in gold dust). A similar disastrous fate would await British Coronel Percy Faucett's 1925 search for the Lost City of Z (Grann 2009).

The colonial period also included the Spanish enslavement of the local population to work in the great silver mine of Potosí, the world's largest industrial complex in the sixteenth century. The unprocessed silver shipped from Latin American to Europe between 1503 and 1660 totalled 16 million kilograms, three times the European reserves of the time (Hickel 2015). Similar exploitation would occur in the Portuguese colonization and establishment of mines and plantations in the territory of Brazil. A new labour force was sourced from Africa as up to 8 million of the indigenous population succumbed to disease and the inhumane conditions of the mines and plantations (Blackburn 1997). African slaves mainly from West Africa would in turn die in the hundreds of thousands as they were packed into the holds of ships like sardines and fed to the extractive endeavours and plantations of the New World.

Other lesser well-known, but equally important developmental moments in Latin American history are also strongly tied to natural resources and their politics. The Indian rebellions of the late eighteenth century and the nineteenth century (including the Wars of Independence (1808–33)) occurred as a reaction to the injustices of the colonial system and a desire for political and rights at their centre (Stavig, Schmidt and Walker 2008). However, claims for freedom from colonial rule were not without connection to natural resources and the desires that encircled them. As in the American Wars of Independence, ambitions of resource exploitation and the lifting of restrictions on the trade of commodities also played a key role in igniting discontent and eventual armed action. Rebellion and revolution were inspired not only by a desire for human freedom, but also by the brokerage of entrance into market networks and the increased freedom of colonial elites to trade. Indeed, many of the leaders of these events were military officers, but they were also prominent traders, entrepreneurs, business and plantation owners. Striking cases in point are Tupac Amaru and Tupac Katari, who led large-scale Indian rebellions on either side of the Peruvian and Bolivian border in the late 1700s (Stern 1987). Both of these figures are now celebrated by the Aymara and Quechua populations as heroes who fought the white man and had considerable military success until their eventual capture and capital punishment. Bolivia even has a telecommunications satellite named after Tupac Katari. Less well known in the present day is that Amaru and

Katari were also traders who, albeit frustrated by the limits to profits caused by the regulations of the Spanish colonial economy of Alto Peru, operated and became surprisingly successful with the colonial economic system.

The destinies of postrevolutionary republican governments were also tied in different ways to a new politics of land (private titling), plantation economies and the up-swing and down-swing of international commodity prices. Throughout the end of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, political fortunes would be won and lost on the basis of the boom and bust of markets for sugar, bananas, rubber, silver, tin, gold, oil, guano (nitrogen fertilizer) and timber. Indeed, both the internal machinations of national political elites and investors and of international regional competition in Latin America circled to a large degree around efforts to capture and control these raw materials. Wars would be fought in this period to secure territories where natural resources vital to national development and prosperity were to be found. These wars would both target and make use of indigenous peoples.

In the 1870s, the Argentinean military launched a military campaign, commonly referred to as *the conquest of the desert*, to establish dominance over Patagonia, its lands and its indigenous peoples (over 1,000 Mapuche were slaughtered and over 15,000 were displaced from their homeland). From 1879 to 1884, Bolivia, Peru and Chile entered into military conflict over access to and control of the Atacama Desert, a region rich in copper and mineral nitrate (important in the manufacture of explosives). The War of the Pacific ended with Chile and Peru agreeing on the division of territory and Bolivia losing its historical land access to the sea, which is still an issue of political tension to this day. Between 1932 and 1935, Bolivia and Paraguay carried out a military campaign against each other to secure oil resources in the Gran Chaco. Whilst little known outside of Latin America, the campaign is known as one of the bloodiest of the twentieth century in which the fighting was centred in the midst of the region's dry, hot and thorn-ridden expanse (Chesterton 2017). The horrors of the war would leave an indelible mark on the national consciousness of the populations of both sides. In Paraguay, it would force the political and legal recognition of the Guarani people (making their language a national language alongside Spanish), who had been a key source of manpower and knowledge, in an otherwise racist and authoritarian state. In Bolivia, the experience of the Chaco War would lead directly to a new relationship between the indigenous majority and the state, and the reformulation of political alliances necessary to spark the later Nationalist Revolution of 1952 (Young 2017).

The Chaco War was also a campaign where clear lines were not only redrawn between two states, but where the vicious competition between oil companies and alliances between the state and corporate sectors were revealed. Indeed, the origins of the war are commonly attributed at least in part

to a conflict between Royal Dutch Shell (backing Paraguay) and Standard Oil (supporting Bolivia) in a bid to wrest control over oil resources in the Andean foothills of the Chaco from each other. Both corporations provided the opposing countries with financing for military armaments, including heavy machine guns and planes that had been developed for use on the European battlefields of the First World War. Throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, there would be a series of other notable occasions in which foreign interests, both state and corporate, would intervene in regional affairs in order to guarantee investments. Although the Spanish and the Portuguese lost their foothold in the region, other European corporations and powers were heavily invested in extractive activities in the region as well as the construction of necessary supporting infrastructure such as railways, roads and ports. Significant reaction to European meddling in Latin American affairs would come not only from regional governments themselves, but also in the guise of the determination of the United States to rid the New World of the Old.

The Monroe Doctrine coined in 1850 in the inauguration speech of President James Monroe would be understood by the end of the nineteenth century as one of the most defining decisions of US foreign policy. The stated objective of the Monroe Doctrine was to free the newly independent colonies of Latin America from European intervention and so that the US could exert its own influence undisturbed. Monroe's message proclaimed anticolonial principles, yet it rapidly became the myth and means for subsequent generations of politicians to pursue expansionist foreign policies (Sexton 2012). In 1898, President Theodore Roosevelt would importantly re-interpret the Monroe Doctrine to provide justification for the US intervention in the remaining Spanish colony of Cuba. Following its show of force in Cuba, Spain ceded the Philippines, Puerto Rico and Guam to the United States. The United States also established Cuba and Hawaii as its protectorates in this period. The Spanish-American War marked the end of the Spanish colonies in the Americas and the new assertion of the United States to intervene in Latin America in cases of 'flagrant and chronic wrongdoing by a Latin American Nation'. This was also referred to as the *Big Stick ideology* because of Roosevelt's advice to 'speak low and carry a big stick'.⁵ Although sparking outrage from Latin American governments and statesmen, President Roosevelt's corollary would become the grounding definition of US policy towards 'its backyard' for many years to come, and of its self-appointed role as the 'hemispheric policeman'.

In the early twentieth century Roosevelt's big stick policy took the form of 'gunboat diplomacy', in which concerns with the internal workings of independent states in the Pacific and the Americas would result in the appearance of American naval ships in a conspicuous show of force and influence. Such

demonstrations of force also led to the development and use of the US marines in a series of contexts considered essential to American interests, and all with resource-related importance (Cuba, Panama, Honduras, Nicaragua, Mexico and the Dominican Republic). These interventions under Roosevelt ended with the withdrawal of troops from Haiti in 1934. These military actions are often referred to as the Banana Wars in reference to the support given by the US government to the operations of the United Fruit Company in Central America (Tucker 2002). However, it is important to note that these interventions also included wider resource and strategic concerns (such as the securing of coaling stations in key Pacific and Central American ports, intervention in the Mexican Revolution to ensure continued US investment in oil production and the securing of access to the Panama Canal).

The Monroe Doctrine was officially repealed when Roosevelt left office, but its logics and intentions to a large degree remained a basic tenet of US foreign policy and action towards Latin America through the mid- to late twentieth century. Indeed, new arguments and practical application would become particularly evident with the start of the Cold War. Reacting not only to the rising political power and influence of communism, but also the Soviet Union's increasing access to economic resources in the region, the US government sanctioned a series of covert intelligence operations to turn the tide in its strategic favour. From the late 1940s through to the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, the US government used the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and other parts of its intelligence services to intervene and influence the dynamics of Latin American electoral campaigns and processes. Funding and training were given to opposition groups not only to strengthen the foundation of democratic election campaigns, but where necessary to remove their political opposition by force. The failed CIA efforts to support an invasion of Cuba by opposition forces at the Bay of Pigs in 1961 and to topple Fidel Castro were part of these plans. More successfully, a series of political alliances were formed with the political right in Latin America. Support was given by the United States to secretive campaigns not only to politically destroy the political left wing, but also to remove its presence entirely. The result was a series of counter-insurgency campaigns the length and breadth of Latin America to remove perceived dangerous elements and to secure US natural resource interests. The reformist and left-leaning governments of Jacobo Arbenz in Guatemala in 1952 and Salvador Allende in 1970 are two notable instances where US support forced political transformation became visible due to the terrible loss of life and ensuing records of human rights abuse.

These progressive governments, in line with the Mexican (1910–20) and Cuban Revolutions (1953–59) before them, had promised significant land reform and the fair distribution of profits from economic activities to all citizens. Right-wing governments, military leaders and political parties

coordinated with the United States and with each other to hunt for left-wing sympathizers, many of them academics and union leaders. This resulted in the establishment of Plan Condór in South America and Operation Charly in Central America (both involving targeted assassinations, acts of symbolic violence and the use of torture). It also resulted in the capture and killing of the famed Argentine guerrilla leader Che Guevara in the foothills of the Bolivian Andes in 1967 (he had been in Bolivia to foment a revolution amongst peasant farmers and miners) (Anderson 2010). Although indigenous communities were persecuted in some instances by the leftist insurgents because of their lack of ideological purity (e.g. Guatemala), in general the armed struggles of the left in this period relied heavily on the cultural inspiration and manpower of marginalized communities (Young 2019). Left-wing guerrilla operations continued (the Colombian National Liberation Army ELN being the longest, i.e. 1964 to the present day), but counter-insurgency actions orchestrated with North American military and financial assistance effectively removed (other than in Cuba) the chances of the Latin American left to gain a lasting foothold in government throughout the years of the Cold War. Largely as a result of this, right-wing military government would remain the norm in Latin America until the early 1990s.

Parallel to its counter-insurgency efforts, the United States also employed the more 'softly spoken' strategy of securing its material and ideological interests in Latin America through the provision of development assistance (Field 2014). The Alliance for Progress launched by a newly elected President John F. Kennedy in 1961 proposed 'to complete the revolution of the Americas, to build a hemisphere where all men can hope for a suitable standard of living and all can live out their lives in dignity and in freedom'.⁶ The revolution that Kennedy spoke of here was of course a countermove to the possibility of Communist transformation. Progress in the form of investment was guided towards countries that distanced themselves clearly from Soviet interests, or heavy state regulation of US corporate investment in the region. Because of the programme, economic assistance to Latin America nearly tripled between the fiscal year 1960 and the fiscal year 1961. Between 1962 and 1967, the United States supplied \$1.4 billion per year to Latin America. However, as regional critics at the time noted, the amount of aid did not equal the net transfer of resources and development from the region. Latin American countries still had to pay off their debt to the United States and other First World countries. In addition, profits from the investments usually returned to the United States, with this frequently exceeding new investment. The US Richard Nixon government in 1968 would result in the significant reduction of US development funding to Latin America. However, under Nixon, new funding would be released to US involvement in Latin America due to the

identification of a new developmental and existential threat emanating from the region.

In 1972, the Nixon administration signed into US law the War on Drugs. US concerns regarding drug use were initially focused on domestic consumption, drug-related crime and the rising level of narcotics abuse by American soldiers taking part in the Vietnam War. However, the rapid rise in the organized trafficking of drugs from Andean countries and of the Colombian Medellin Cartel in particular would draw US attention, money and political influence back to its ‘backyard’. Launched in 2000, Plan Colombia would prove to be one of the most expensive efforts to coordinate the eradication of coca cultivation in Latin America (Rosen 2014). By the time of its end in 2015, the US had spent \$9.94 billion of combined foreign aid, military spending (71% of the total) and diplomatic resources to curb the expansion of the drug trade in Colombia. Started under the conservative Pastrana government in 1999, Plan Colombia was hailed as a resounding success by the Colombian and US governments. They cite its military results in significantly reducing the numbers of armed guerrilla forces in the country. However, whilst contributing to a reduction in the growth of the FARC-EP⁷ and ELN⁸ guerrilla organizations and therefore contributing to the conditions of the recent peace deal, international and domestic analysts have demonstrated that it failed drastically in its goal of eradicating the drug trade (Alpert 2016). Indeed, Plan Colombia is directly connected to a series of human rights abuses in the country. Until their formal disbanding in 2005, paramilitary organizations that had been allowed to flourish under Plan Colombia carried out a series of political assassinations and massacres – often of indigenous, peasant and Afro-descendant communities resistant to their cause.

Whilst Plan Colombia has wound down and the War on Drugs is increasingly discredited in its claims of success, the certification process established as a mechanism through which the US aims to generate political leverage in Latin America continues. Enacted by Congress in 1986, the certification process continues to demand tougher counter-narcotic measures, including aerial fumigation by governments of producer countries (Alsema 2019). Countries failing the US-defined measures face mandatory sanctions, including the withdrawal of foreign assistance not directly related to counter-narcotic programmes and US opposition to any loans those countries had sought from multilateral development banks. The administration may also waive sanctions against a country that is not fully certified if it determines that doing so is in the ‘vital national interests’ of the United States. For the affected countries (Colombia, Peru and Bolivia), the certification process represented the clear continuation of US intervention and influence in regional development.

International invention through structural adjustment policies originated due to a set of global disasters during the late 1970s: this included the international oil and debt crisis, but also the hyperinflation experienced by Latin American governments in the early 1980s. From the mid-1980s and into the 1990s, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) introduced a series of conditions to international loans designed to rein in the runaway economies of the region. Commonly including a policy package aged at streamlining government spending and institutions, and the privatization of previously nationalized industries (which were deemed as insufficiently profitable), many governments in the region became beholden as never before to the expectations of the international community. Although countries were encouraged to demonstrate their ‘ownership’ of responsible economic management through the production of Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs), critics claimed that the imposition of strict market-friendly ‘neoliberal’ guidelines and limits to the contents of these policy documents curtailed national and regional sovereignty. Critics also highlighted the significant direct impacts of these economic changes on different vulnerable populations. Whilst Bolivia would, for example, be heralded for its efforts at structural adjustment (led by the then World Bank economist/ now Earth Institute’s Jeffrey Sachs) in response to the hyperinflation caused by falling tin prices in the mid-1980s, its social costs would be severe.

The World Bank’s requirements led to a significant reduction of public sector employment and the privatization and shrinkage of state-owned oil and mining operations. Thousands of tin-miners were made redundant, as were other public sector employees. Left without employment or access to land, some 500,000 people migrated from the highlands to the lowlands in search of alternative sources of income (McNeish 2006). As the 1990s unfolded, it also became evident that for many of the economically displaced, there was often no employment to be found other than in the informal economy. Itinerant street hawking, smuggling or illegal coca production grew significantly in these years. The direct effects of certification and structural adjustment would together form the background to the left-leaning and nationalist backlash that would sweep across Latin America in the late 1990s and early 2000s. The boom in international commodity prices that would simultaneously occur in this period would also encourage the rejection of neoliberalism in a number of Latin American countries.

Grievance and Greed

The role of natural resources as a catalyst for economic and political development and the expression of competing sovereignties in Latin America is im-

mediately evident in the abbreviated history given above. There are moments too when it becomes clear that it is not only the usual suspects (national and international political and economic elites) but also less powerful social actors that make their imprint – or are made to make their imprint – on the character and trajectory of both national and regional development. Despite their clear enslavement, exploitation, marginalization and targeted eradication, indigenous and peasant peoples return throughout Latin American history as figures that help to define it as protagonists in state-formation.

This is an observation that has previously been made by a series of authors working on the history and ethnography of the region. Key texts in this regard include Erik Wolf's classic text *Europe and the People without History* (1982). Writing with a focus on the Americas, Wolf takes aim at the earlier anthropological portrayal of non-European cultures and peoples as being isolated and static entities before the advent of European colonialism and imperialism. Ironically referring to a preconquest people 'without history', Wolf demonstrates that these societies possessed perpetually changing societies and were active participants in the creation of new cultural and social forms emerging in the context of regional commercial empires. Drawing on Marxian concepts and a vivid consideration for the importance of history as a means to both create and erase knowledge, Wolf traces the effects and conditions in Europe and the rest of the 'known world' beginning in 1400 CE that allowed capitalism to emerge as the dominant ideology of the modern era. In this process, Wolf shows us how indigenous peoples were written out of history, but despite this would continue to influence its direction through their protagonism.

Influenced by other revisionist historians of the state (e.g. Corrigan and Sayer 1985) and following Wolf, multiple other writers have contributed to a turn in history and anthropology focused on 'everyday state formation' (Scott 1987; Nugent 1993, 1997; Mallon 1995; Migdal and White 2013). As the historian Alan Knight has observed, 'there can be no high politics without a good deal of low politics' (quoted in Joseph and Nugent 1994: 9). In Knight's revisionist analysis of the Mexican Revolution, it is observed that state formation not only takes place in extraordinary events of rebellion and violence, but over much longer time periods and through much more mundane actions of life and interaction. While standard historical accounts emphasize either the role of peasants and peasant rebellions or that of state formation, these historical and ethnographic works document in detail the state's day-to-day engagement with grassroots society by examining popular cultures and forms of the state simultaneously and in relation to one another.

A series of texts in historical anthropology (Nugent 1993, 1997; Larsen and Harris 1995) and sometimes ethnographic fiction (Taussig 1997) overturn assumptions regarding the automatic oppositional role of indigenous

and peasant peoples, demonstrating their protagonism in state-building and the colonial and postcolonial mercantile economy. They also confound assumptions regarding the political origins of key events in history as resulting from confrontations only of territory and class, pointing instead to the deeper roots of indigenous struggles for land and justice that lead up to these events, such as in the case of the Nationalist Revolution in Bolivia in 1952 (Gotkowitz 2008). Uncomfortable though it might be to those of us inspired by debates on alternative development ideas and indigenous eco-philosophies (e.g. *buen vivir* (the good life), decolonialism, post-extractivism and the pluriverse), ethnographies of political dynamics in the recent past also demonstrate peasant and indigenous peoples engagement – and at times self-contradiction – in attempting to define the state.⁹ Postero (2017), for example, demonstrates how the democratic cultural revolution promised by Evo Morales – Bolivia’s first self-ascribed indigenous President – to reject neoliberalism and inaugurate a new decolonized society acted instead to consolidate power for a few and to reinforce the country’s historic extractivist economic model. As I will describe later in this volume, this contradiction has also played a role in the fall of Morales from power at the end of 2019.

The role of peasant and indigenous peoples as protagonists in state-formation and resource politics is then already well documented in history, ethnography and the anthropological history of Latin America. However, it is much less well recognized within the economic modelling and analysis of political change and resource politics in the region. This is not to suggest that political science ignores the importance of ethnic politics in the region entirely (e.g. van Cott 2000, 2007; Sieder, Schjolden and Angell 2011; Nem Singh and Bourgain 2013; Sieder 2017). There is nonetheless a notable gap between historical and ethnographic accounts and efforts within politics and economics to conduct a large-scale quantitative study and theorization of the wider relationship between natural resource exploitation, politics and conflict. This is especially the case in the literature that focuses on the potential of natural resource exploitation to cause conflict, to restrict or damage economic growth, and a series of negative effects on democratic practice.

The term *resource curse* – first used by Auty (1993) to discuss the common mineral-based economies – is now applied in a vast field of both academic and policy-oriented work to describe how countries rich in natural resources are unable to use that wealth to boost their economies, and how counter-intuitively these countries in general have lower economic growth and development outcomes than countries without an abundance of natural resources. Originally the resource curse was used to refer to a broad range of economy types reliant on non-renewable and renewable resources (timber, coca, oil and diamonds). However, as the debate surrounding the resource curse has developed, it is notable that non-renewable resource types vital to the global

economy have captured a particular focus and influence in policy circles, i.e. hydrocarbons (oil, gas and minerals) (Ross 2012). In the studies and policy discussions regarding the resource curse, a large number of terms have been employed in an attempt to account for the complicated state of affairs faced by resource-rich countries in the Global South: intractable conflicts, new wars, resource wars, complex political emergencies, conflict trap, resource securitization, petro-violence and blood diamonds (Kaplan 1994; Kaldor 1999; Collier and Hoeffler 2005; Watts 2008).

The consensus built between these different terminologies and theories is that an abundance of natural resources is frequently at the root of violent conflict. As a result, general acceptance has been made of the existence of what Karl (1997) – on the basis of study of the political economy of Venezuelan oil – termed a *paradox of plenty*, i.e. that the vast majority of conflict-prone and war-ravaged states in the Global South, including those having recently emerged from violent conflict, are extractive economies that are endowed with strategic natural and mineral resources, yet cannot avert declining into debilitating violence and war. Equally puzzling for many scholars has been the observation that while these states contribute essential inputs to the global economy, they largely remain underdeveloped and politically unstable.

With these observations in mind, a growing body of academic work has considered the problems and possibilities of managing these resources. Growing awareness has also been made of the limitations of earlier analytical frameworks and the persisting importance of other extractive economies, particularly in an era in which climate change is driving a search for alternative energy sources (Rosser 2006; Wennmann 2007). Whilst recent writers support the general consensus of scholarship that natural abundance is associated with various negative development outcomes, this also comes with the important critical addition that this evidence is by no means conclusive (Binningsbø, de Soysa and Gleditch 2007; Stiglitz 2007; Theisen 2008). This is particularly the case when other geographies than Africa, such as Latin America, are taken into consideration (Dunning 2008). Criticism is also made of the language and measurements of some scholars, i.e. overly restrictive tools are used to define key concepts such as conflict, war and violence (Omeje 2008; Sambanis 2004). The ambivalence between causality and reality is highlighted: the ecology of civil war is determined by a host of factors rather than only resource capture (Ross 2004). In this expanding literature on resource governance, issues of power and grievance have also notably returned to the fore and water and land (and forest areas in particular) are recognized as central resources in ongoing conflicts. However, although new approaches to the resource curse have adopted important new insights from contextual, historical and political ecological study (e.g. Kahl 2006; Williams and Le Billon 2017), it remains noticeable that the resource curse literature

has withheld some bias in terms of its top-down reading of the forces at work in state-building and the causality of resource contestation.

It was as a contribution of constructive critique to the debates on the resource curse that my colleagues and I first employed the term *resource sovereignty* (McNeish and Logan 2012). In *Flammable Societies*,¹⁰ we acknowledged the clear tendencies for natural resources to act as a catalyst for conflict and rent-seeking (the competition and siphoning-off of profits made by states and companies in commodity-focused industries). However, our research on resource politics and energy development also indicated that some further qualification was needed.

Our research on the relationship between indicators of poverty and oil and energy governance across Latin America, North America, Africa, Europe and the former Soviet Union coincided with other critical analysts in questioning the claims of the more or less straightforward correlation between resource wealth and violence made by earlier authors (Rosser 2006). We also coincided with critiques that suggested that resource curse scholars had been too reductionist in positing a deterministic relationship between natural abundance, various pathologies (irrational behaviour and greed of elites, rent-seeking by social groups, and weak institutions) and negative development outcomes (poor economic performance, civil war and authoritarianism). Collier and Hoeffler's (2004) determination that greed counts for more than grievance as a determinant of resource conflict gave insufficient attention to issues of ideology, history and political feasibility.¹¹ As such, from our perspective, they did not sufficiently account for the role of social forces and external political and economic environments in dynamically shaping development outcomes.

Conclusions that a resource curse occurred largely depended on the generalization of findings from macropolitical and economic study of exceptional cases, i.e. East African countries in the midst of civil war. Explanations for the links between natural resources and conflict had largely failed to adequately account for the role of social forces formed over time, or external political and economic pressures in shaping outcomes (Ross 2004). In line with others (Omeje 2008; Steven and Dietsche 2008), we also argued, on the basis of the qualitative research we were conducting in Latin America and elsewhere, that there was a need to pay attention to the historical particularities of contexts under study. The examination of varied histories of socioeconomic development made it obvious that states function in a variety of forms in relation to natural resources and otherwise. Indeed, they function not only on the basis of internal political and social dynamics, but also in response to international commerce and to the geopolitical interests of other states (Ross 2012). Recognizing the incomplete nature of colonial governance, projects of state formation and the fluctuating influence of globalization, it was evident that notions of state, market and law are frequently different in postcolonial

states compared to those of the European or North American ideal. As such, it was also evident that judgements of *stable*, *fragile* and *failed* in recent political science and economic analysis – even when not defined by political and morally laden criteria, but scientific criteria and variables – were of limited value as analytic tools to understand and address the underlying dynamics of resource conflict.

Resource sovereignty was coined by my colleagues in reaction to our reading of the gaps in the resource curse literature, and the rational choice orientation of ‘resource curse’ theorists in particular. It was not intended to echo the formulaic legal use of the term by the United Nations (UN) (1962) to refer to states’ ‘permanent sovereignty over natural resources’. It was also not meant to stay within the limits of an understanding of *resource nationalism* (Young 2017). Rather, it was meant to draw attention to the need for a more historically and anthropologically situated understanding of the relationship between sovereignty and resources (Sawyer and Terrance Gomez 2012). A link was made here with the recent theoretical turn and empirically driven observations of anthropologists and other social scientists regarding the operation of differing languages of *stateness* (nationhood and legality) and the significance of their interaction for resource politics (Blom Hansen and Stepputat 2001, 2006). Instead of a singular notion of sovereignty, from this perspective, competing languages of stateness and legality compete and interact over time to define the state and basis of governance through varied dialectics of struggle, i.e. the power of the state is far from simply constituted at singular events. Blom Hansen and Stepputat importantly suggest that sovereignty is understood from this perspective as a ‘tentative and always emergent form of authority grounded in violence that is performed and designed to generate loyalty, fear and legitimacy from the neighbourhood to the summit of the state’ (2001: 297). This is clearly not the classic idea of sovereignty of ‘supreme authority within a territory’, but rather an understanding of the distributed nature of sovereignty produced in everyday encounters with power. Hansen and Stepputat (2001) show how in postcolonial states as disparate as Guatemala, Pakistan, Peru, India and Ecuador, the authority of the state is particularly challenged from the local as well as the global, and how growing demands to confer rights and recognition to ever more citizens, organizations and institutions reveal a persistent myth of the state as a source of social order and an embodiment of popular sovereignty.

Sovereignty can therefore be observed to be both a politics of keeping the state at bay and as a statement of state power itself. Different attitudes towards territory and the exploitation of natural resources form an important part of this conversation and act to define ideas of social justice such as ‘our oil belongs to the people’ or ‘this land is our land’ (Coronil 1997; Apter 2005; Gledhill 2008). Resource wealth brings to the fore issues of political

and social identity under the state and ultimately the ideological orientations and identity of the state itself. It also becomes evident as the perspective moves away from a restricted understanding of governance (only focused on state institutions) that categories of geopolitical and national sovereignty overlap with informal and imminent sovereignties.

It is within this field of political interaction that processes of natural resource exploitation further expose the jagged conjunctions of different conceptions of sovereignty (McNeish and Logan 2012: 24). Not escaping sovereign rule in every case, local people imitate, appropriate and adapt to histories of state domination through the employment of what authors differentially term ‘languages of stateness’ (Blom Hansen and Stepputat 2001), ‘vernacular state-craft’ (Colloredo-Mansfeld 2009) and ‘choreographies of governance’ (Swyngendouw 2005; Lund 2006). Importantly, these languages of the state need to be seen as being expressed at different scales. Resource sovereignty, as we have expressed it, does not separate, but rather aims to concurrently capture the great games of states and corporations for economic power and energy security and the histories of everyday needs, desires and expressed identities of local populations, and the physical properties of resources themselves (McNeish 2017: 1136). Here political economy’s concerns with the history and impact of globalization (the presence of state structures and their questioning by local populations) are married with political ecology’s efforts to recognize the dual epistemological and biophysical value of resources. Resource sovereignty as we have expressed it recognizes claims for territory, identity and capital are intertwined. Conflicts over land and resources are understood from this perspective as conjoined economic and ontological conflicts regarding the equivalence of knowledge and value.

In *Contested Powers* (McNeish, Borchgrevink and Logan 2015b),¹² it was made evident that resource sovereignty was a relevant analytic lens not only to interpret Latin America’s history of non-renewable resource extraction, but to also study and more fully understand recent trends in its politics and energy development. Indeed, following the boom in commodities prices and the clear connections formed by new left governments between their post-neoliberal nationalist ambitions and the profits of expanding industries for non-renewable and renewable energy resources, it was evident that this perspective could be more relevant than ever.

For close to a decade – between the late 1990s and the late 2000s – Latin America appeared to be re-emerging as one of the powerhouses of economic and social development.¹³ In this period, a steady increase in international commodity prices led to a continent-wide push to open new frontiers of resource exploration and extraction (McNeish, Borchgrevink and Logan 2015). Foreign direct investment (FDI) in many countries (e.g. Peru, Panama, Guatemala and Colombia) in the region increasingly focused on the

extractive sector (Tissot 2012). In parallel to the extractives boom, another development also occurred in domestic energy consumption as the general level of wealth and wages in the region grew. Indeed, the growing foreign and domestic demand for raw materials and energy stimulated in Latin America an average GDP growth rate of between 4% and 5% in the years 2003–12 (Altamonte, Correa and Stumpo 2012: 7). Socio-economic conditions throughout the region improved in this period. With rising levels of wealth and middle-class consumption, the internal industrial and private demand for energy and in particular fossil fuels (diesel and petroleum) for transport also rapidly expanded (Tissot 2012: 6). However, unmatched expectations amongst the majority of Latin Americans regarding the benefits of resource wealth, and observations and strong feelings that in actual practice too much resource wealth was being siphoned off by foreign and regional elite interests, led to a disillusionment with neoliberal market-based macroeconomics and the election of a wave of new left governments throughout the region.

In the 2000s, new left governments (often referred to as resource nationalist – see e.g. Veltmayer and Petras 2014) expanded and – for a time – convincingly used the windfall of extractive industries as a tool to stimulate national development, project geopolitical influence and replace market liberalization policies adopted in the previous decade. In the words of leaders in Venezuela, Ecuador, Bolivia, Argentina and Brazil, the booming extractive economies provided opportunities for a new post-neoliberal economy in which oil, mineral and energy wealth could be democratically *sown* like seed amongst the population (Clark 2010). New developments were also starting to take hold in the renewable energy sector, with governments throughout the region providing their direct and indirect backing for large-scale hydroelectric, bio-fuel, thermal and wind power projects, and the massive expansion of related infrastructure and electricity distribution networks. With the growing global concerns over climate change and momentum in Europe towards electric vehicles, some governments in the region (Chile, Argentina and Bolivia) saw the opportunity to move towards the establishment of industrial extraction of ‘green’ rare earth materials such as lithium, which is used in new battery technologies.

As our research for *Contested Powers* demonstrated, resource sovereignty was an important inroad not only to the study of these new resource-nationalist (Veltmayer and Petras 2014) governments and activities, but to also highlight their contention by rivals at different levels. Our work on cases of energy development stretching throughout the region and on related moments of protest and conflict demonstrated that despite their rhetoric, new left governments repeated many of the exclusions and prejudices of earlier governments. Indeed, it was evident that there was little more than words that separated new left governments from those in other countries remaining

on the political right when it came to the practice of economic development, a continued reliance on extractive practice that was damaging to both the environment and human wellbeing, and the expression of prejudices and violence towards indigenous and peasant peoples and other social groups that questioned the extractive model and sovereignty of the state. It also became clear in cases of major confrontation over wind and hydro-electric development in Mexico and Brazil that renewable energy was in itself no panacea for ending the social conflicts over energy issues. Many of the same problems and cleavages described for oil and gas extraction were also seen to surround renewable energy production in Latin America and elsewhere.

Sovereign Forces continues the exploration of Latin American resource extraction and energy development. Moreover, it further deepens the empirical and theoretical basis of resource sovereignty as an important analytical device to reveal, tease apart and explain recent development dynamics. In this book, we will see that competing expressions of sovereignty not only persist as the basis of severe and sometimes violent contention, but are to large degree also responsible for the troubles and downfall of left-wing leaders and the apparent resilience and current resurgence of the political right. Indeed, as we will see, resource extraction and related activities continue to fuel these political contestations at multiple scales.

Importantly, the book further evidences the role of ‘everyday politics’ in the region’s resource politics and environmental governance. Whereas the earlier work of my colleagues and I was suggestive of the need to integrate an awareness of the everyday into both the theory and practice of environmental governance, in this book I go further by detailing the essential role that indigenous and peasant peoples have in this current process. I also make clear why this is particularly important at this moment in time.

New expressions of indigenous and popular sovereignty are being powerfully expressed by local communities the length and breadth of Latin America (Postero and Fabricant 2019). This is occurring not only because of the growing formalization of rights, a rhetoric of decolonialization, discussions of *buen vivir* (the good life) or a new culture of consultation between the community, the state and the corporate sector; rather, as the following chapters will detail, it is happening as a proactive reaction to the lack of substance of these same discussions and de jure protections, and the continued experience of structural racism and physical violence. This is intensified when people who speak out against expanding extractive development are assassinated and protests are quelled by security forces, when governments allow or encourage millions of hectares of tropical forests to burn during times of emergency (Beaulieu 2020), when nature conservation becomes an excuse for securitization and displacement (Bocarejo and Ojeda 2015), when rivers and other vital water sources are dammed and contaminated (Vidal 2017), and when

climate change is recognized, but little action is taken, forcing thousands to migrate (Markham 2019). Through digital resources and expanding solidarity networks, indigenous and peasant communities and their supporters are made aware that these dynamics are not regional phenomena. The exploitation of the natural environment essential to the livelihood indigenous and peasant peoples has sped up everywhere. Resources and sovereignty are also contested everywhere. With this, new attempts to rethink and restate the bounds and essentials of legitimate sovereignty, to restate the state and the legal, are made to contest those of the government and the market. This book further pushes this subterranean political world to the surface – i.e. in order for environmental governance to have value in Latin America, it needs to substantively address the everyday features of resource sovereignty. These are features that are still as much about grievance as they are about the problematics of greed (i.e. rent-seeking). They are features that have potential not only for conflict, but also for peace.

Peace-Building with Bricolage?

It will be evident that this book draws on a broad range of disciplinary orientations and social theory to interpret qualitative empirical observations. This is a reflection of a rather eclectic experience as a social anthropologist carrying out research and teaching in the field of global environment and development studies. It is also a requirement of reading the complex relationship between sovereignty and natural resources. I argue that such a subject requires a high degree of inter-disciplinarity. I suggest that the purposeful collision of different frames of analysis and methods, whilst not without its challenges (including the navigation of interpretive and philosophical contradictions), can enable new insight and interpretation.

My positioning vis-à-vis a series of crisscrossing debates in social anthropology, political economy and political ecology will become evident in the discussions made in the following chapters. It should also become evident that whilst I respect disciplinary ambitions, I see the greater value of these fields of study at their edges or when they overlap and come into contact with each other. I will largely allow these dialectic interchanges to unfold throughout the book, but for the reader's orientation I will flag here a limited number of interdisciplinary waypoints.

I am interested in this text to demonstrate the value of resource sovereignty to both the analysis of resource conflicts and to the theorization of legitimate environmental governance and peacebuilding. I suggest here that in order to do so, certain contrasting schools of academic literature have to talk together more than others. In this book, these literatures include those on the history

and anthropology (and historical anthropology) of everyday state-building in Latin America initially explored above. Importantly, they also include an exploration of the idea(s) of indigeneity, political ontology and the comparative legal and political science of sovereignty. Interested to establish the applied political implications of resource sovereignty, emphasis has also been given to the fields of resource politics, environmental governance and the anthropology of energy. These are literatures that deal with many of the same concerns and issues but operate with different frames and scales of analysis (McNeish, Borchgrevink and Logan 2015b). Indeed, in searching to apply resource sovereignty to the study of conflict and concrete outcomes for peace, I have been interested in the final chapters of this book in exploring a critical dialogue between critical institutionalism and resource sovereignty. This dialectic is not prescriptive but does provide important signposts that are of significance to environmental governance and, by extension, to environmental peacebuilding. It is important to note that my engagement with these literatures reflects my experience as an *engaged* political anthropologist (Bringa and Bendixen 2018) and their notable role in, and impact on, significant international and national development policy environments.

Conca and Dabelko (2002) formally introduced the term ‘environmental peace-making’ (now more commonly referred to as ‘environmental peacebuilding’) to describe the contributions of environmental initiatives to peace. The concept is now used to refer to ‘all forms of cooperation on environmental issues between distinct social groups, which aim at and/or achieve creating less violent and more peaceful relations between these groups’ (Ide 2019). With its emphasis on cooperation, the growing environmental peacebuilding literature contrasts with a wider neo-Malthusian literature that reductively places an emphasis on the link between environmental scarcity, risk and conflict (Homer-Dixon 1994; Hendrix and Salehyan 2012; Nel and Righarts 2008). Writers oriented towards environmental peacebuilding have demonstrated, for example, that, even in arid environments, interactions over international water resources are more likely to be cooperative (Wolf et al. 2003). Some posit that climate change-induced changes to water resources are unlikely to result in armed conflict (Bernauer and Siegfried 2012; de Stefano et al. 2017). Others go even further and claim that environmental issues like natural disasters may lead to a decrease in civil war risk (Slettebak 2012), provide opportunities to push along peace talks (e.g. Gaillard, Clave and Kelman 2008; Kreutz 2012), strengthen support for political leaders (Olson and Gawronski 2010), produce cooperation between conflicting parties (Endfield, Tejado and O’Hara 2004), and temporarily decrease crime rates and increase altruism (Lemieux 2014). Seeking to study conflict and produce opportunities for peace, environmental peacebuilding pursues initiatives to improve the environmental situation, prevent or

mitigate environmental-related conflicts, create or sustain dialogues between conflict parties, or promote the conditions for sustainable development and durable peace (Carius and Dabelko 2004; Conca, Carius and Dabelko 2005; Ide 2019).

From early on in the development of the environmental peace-building field, there have been calls for a systematic, comparative and interdisciplinary assessment of its scholarship and practice (e.g. Carius 2007). However, there has been little development of a systematic approach and the tendency to showcase intervention success stories has overshadowed empirical research on the influence of baseline conflict and environmental conditions. Little research has considered the roles of two kinds of mechanisms within environmental peacebuilding: feedback between potential changes in the environment, conflict and peace conditions, and feedback across scales of intervention, i.e. top-down and bottom-up. In a review of the existing literature, Ide (2019) found no evidence of environmental peacebuilding leading to positive peace. Ide (2020) importantly observes that there is a potential ‘dark side’ to environmental peacebuilding when its focus is too narrowly set on achieving outcomes and when it fails to take explicit consideration of the driving mechanisms of conflict.

Interestingly there are parallels between these observations of gaps in the environmental peace-building literature and those regarding scholarship on environmental governance. As a field of study, environmental governance grew out of the acknowledgement within political science and economics of the role of institutions in grouping different actors together and in steering their action (Evans 2012: 46). As Rydin (2010: 96–97) writes: ‘Institutions bind actors together into arrangements and patterns of behaviour that exhibit strong path dependencies . . . actors learn to behave in accordance with institutional norms and this reinforces certain behaviour.’ Mainstream institutional governance emphasized that collective action is possible if it makes rational sense to do so. It was broadly optimistic about the possibility of identifying basic principles underlying effective institutions and assisting people to use these principles to ‘design’ institutional arrangements through a conscious and rational process. From this perspective, epitomized by the Nobel Prize-winning work of Ostrom (1990, 2005), the role of institutional governance is to provide information and assurance about the behaviour of others, to offer incentives to behave in accordance with the collective good and to monitor opportunistic behaviour. Over time, Ostrom’s work inspired other analysts to adopt ‘new institutionalist’ approaches to the study and set-up of governance models. As in the ‘resource curse’ school of study, there was the introduction of ever more complex and varied sets of variables that are seen to affect the incentives and actions of actors under diverse governance systems.

Arguing that we ‘should stop striving for simple answers to solve complex problems’ and a move to ‘polycentrism’, Ostrom’s Institutional Analysis and Development Framework (IAD) was developed to contain the most general set of variables an institutional analyst may want to use to examine institutional settings (biophysical conditions, attributes of community, rules in use), but also recognized the need to respond to different resource contexts and regimes. Ostrom’s sensitivity to complex institutional settings is widely recognized for its role in dismantling earlier assumptions about the ‘tragedy of the commons’ (Hardin 1968). Aiming to demonstrate that government and wider institutional decision-making is not only a matter of individual behaviour, March and Olson (1984) coined the term ‘new institutionalism’ to emphasize that decisions are shaped to a large degree by pre-established rules and procedures through which institutions respond to real-life issues. New institutional analysis emphasizes the importance of institutional diagnostics in its search for the optimization of the design and legitimacy of environmental governance. Here ‘design principles’ are weighed up and the extent to which institutions influence the course of human affairs in a variety of social settings (causality), institutional performance and design are considered in depth (Young 1997).

The overall strength of the mainstream and new institutionalist school have been their theoretical and empirical demonstration that the management of common property through collective action is possible, that there are certain conditions that facilitate this, and that people govern resources through a range of formal and institutional forms (Clever 2012). However, despite claims of these frameworks relevance for higher scales of governance, they have been criticized for a narrow focus on local institutions and apolitical explanations of social-environmental interactions (Robbins 2004; Chotray 2007). Recent revisions from within these paradigms have started to take account of the complexities of context (Acheson 2006; Berkes 2007), the discordance of politics (Poteete 2009), and the unpredictable interaction between social and ecological processes (McGinnis 2010). However, the core assumptions, form and level of analysis of these paradigms remain intact. Critique is increasingly made of persisting rational actor assumptions regarding the direct relationship between well-designed community level institutions on the one hand and well-managed forest and improved livelihoods on the other. Citing Scott (1999), Clever highlights that in its focus on planning and design, legibility and codification, and the engineering of ‘good governance’ arrangements, mainstream institutionalism incorporates features of high modernism. As such, she claims that its modernist project of designing institutions (and systems) for natural resource management is partially doomed to failure (Clever 2012: 172)

As a recent development in the field of environmental governance, critical institutionalism claims to differ from earlier schools because the starting point is a broad focus on the interactions between the natural and social worlds rather than a narrower concern with predicting and improving the outcomes of particular institutional processes (Cleaver 2012: 13). In contrast with earlier approaches, critical institutionalism suggests that institutions managing natural resources are only rarely explicitly designed for such purposes and that their multifunctionalism renders them ambiguous, dynamic and only partially amenable to deliberate crafting (Cleaver 2012: 13). Critical institutionalists adopt a ‘thicker’ model of human agency (Cleaver 2012: 15). For them, strategic livelihood choices (about the use of resources) are critically influenced by social concerns, by psychological preferences, and by culturally and historically shaped ideas about the ‘the right way of doing things’. In building her case for critical institutionalism, Cleaver (2012) draws on the work of Douglas (1987) and her use of the concept of *intellectual bricolage*.¹⁴ Douglas extends the use of the term to refer to institutional thinking and to illustrate how the construction of institutions and decisions to act are rarely made on the basis of rational choice. Instead, she suggests, ‘institutions do the thinking’ on behalf of people, and institutions are constructed through a process of bricolage—gathering and applying analogies and styles of thought that are already part of existing institutions (Cleaver 2000: 380). *Bricolage* in this sense is furthermore acknowledged by Cleaver to be an ‘authoritative process, shaped by relations of power’ (Cleaver 2012: 49). Here the configuration of societal resources shapes the ‘institutional stock’ from which institutions can be assembled, and the choice of instruments and mechanisms that can be applied. In emphasizing that invented institutions are shaped by past arrangements and relationships of authority, Cleaver recognizes that she repeats a perspective already well captured in earlier political economy (Cleaver 2012: 194).

I suggest in this volume that in looking for the causes of conflict and the basis for peaceful and legitimate governance, environmental peace-building and environmental governance share a common cause. They share an interest in the possibilities for cooperation and legitimacy but lack context-specific ‘everyday’ detail as to what produces dispute and agreement. They also tend to be rather blinkered in their radius of study, assuming that environmental disagreements can be explained within the environmental field. Recognizing both the value and limitations of these approaches, I posit here that critical institutionalism, and its conceptualization of institutional bricolage, provides insight that is significant in terms of moving their understanding towards a more grounded and ‘critical realist’ perspective (Bhaskar 1975; Archer 1982, 1995; Porpora 2015; Vandenberghe 2015). Indeed, as I will detail in the penultimate and concluding chapters, their intended significance for delivering

legitimacy and peace can be enhanced by further adding the idea of resource sovereignty into the mix.

More Than the Sum of Its Parts

Sovereign Forces is not written as an ethnography, which is the focus of much anthropological writing. It is a book about instances of natural resource contestation, and the value of the idea of resource sovereignty to their interpretation and improved attention in environmental governance. As such, the book intends to contribute to a literature on environmental politics. It does make use of ethnographic elements, but a fair judgement could be that it does this in a somewhat fragmented and cursory way. The use of ethnographic fragments has been both a necessity and an intentional choice. On the one hand, the book is not the product of a singular research project; it is the result of piecing together different fragments of time and qualitative research experience¹⁵ stretching over multiple field visits and over twenty years (from 1996 to 2017). This is the reason for its particular focus on events and processes in Bolivia, Colombia and Guatemala – all sites of earlier research. It is also the reason for the book's particular emphasis on resource, energy and development politics in indigenous and peasant communities, which is the focus of much of this social research.

Written on the basis of fragments of time and research, the empirical details are admittedly not always as well defined as they could be. A traditional ethnography would undoubtedly give more space to detail the lives of individuals, their commentary of events and the intricacy of local everyday interactions. Indeed, as will become evident in the following pages, my observations are sometimes not the result of what I was looking for, but rather what occurred around edges of my research focus at that time. They are sometimes the result – as described later in the volume – of what I saw out of the corner of my eye, by mistake, because other information was not forthcoming or because events required other priorities at that time. In this regard, I am trying to make analytic value out of what some reviewers might term *a patchwork*. At the same time, I intend the book to purposefully be read as *more than the sum of its parts*. Indeed, coinciding with this, some anthropologists have recently launched a manifesto supporting such a patchwork approach to ethnography (Günel, Varma and Watanabe 2020). Although not the product of a single piece of research, as I have made clear above, the book interrogates issues and forces of vital social concern. In this regard, its fragmented nature is a strength.

By drawing together different ethnographic moments and locations, I am able to demonstrate that the issue of resource contestation – and the analytic

frame of resource sovereignty – has widespread and long-lasting significance. In this regard, the book has a lot in common with what some authors refer to as multisited or *global ethnography* (Scott 1998; Buroway 2000; Tsing 2004; Ferguson 2006; Ongh 2006). These global ethnographic texts demonstrate the possibilities of detailing what is happening in local settings without losing sight of the fall and rise of ideas, processes and positions, or shifts in the organization and reach of capitalism. The local and the global are seen here as mutually constitutive, and steps are taken to avoid common pitfalls of other analytic tools that ‘dominate’, ‘silence’, ‘objectify’ and ‘normalize’ the experience and knowledge of others. In this book, the specificities of resource politics in Bolivia, Colombia and Guatemala are carefully considered, but so too are common dynamics that tie these places, peoples and political economies together. This is not the account of what happened in one isolated location, but, as the individual chapters make clear, what has happened and continues to take place in multiple locations throughout Latin America. The links I make between my own research experience and existing theoretical debates are intended to reinforce this even further. Lengthy sections of literature review might frustrate some readers, but they play an important role in anchoring arguments, making connections and introducing some readers to new approaches. Each chapter is intended to reveal different characteristics of resource sovereignty, but also to build towards a common comparative conclusion.

In Chapter 1, ‘Sovereignty within and beyond the State’, I detail the significance of two major events in Bolivian politics: the *gasolinazo* (the backlash resulting from the ending of fuel subsidies) and the TIPNIS protests (a massive social response to the government’s decision to build a road and open an area of the tropical lowlands to extractive interests). I suggest in this chapter that these events are not only telling of persisting tensions in Bolivian politics, but are also indicative of the complex nature of sovereignty in the country. Both events are also used as a springboard to a discussion of the close relationship that exists between the politics of natural resources, territory and sovereign claims within and beyond the state in Latin America. As such, the chapter provides an expanded discussion of the complex history and meaning of sovereignty in general, and of its particular significance in the politics of natural resources and the people involved in these especially Bolivian dynamics. The evident contestation of sovereignty from beyond and below the state is shown to contribute significantly to state institutional and national identity formation over time. The *gasolinazo* and TIPNIS events are also shown to reveal the centrality of territory and resources in this dynamic, and the political volatility it can cause – including the fall of a government.

In Chapter 2, ‘Resource Politics at the Margins’, I further explore the links between resource governance and contrasting visions and political definitions

of sovereignty. In contrast to the preceding chapter, I demonstrate that resource politics is not limited to large-scale reactions and contestation of national policy, but a dynamic in which local actors effectively influence state and regional positions through their everyday engagement from the margins (the informal and illegal economy, the limits of national territory, and the socially excluded). As such, the chapter seeks to deepen an understanding of the multiscalar and contested nature of sovereignty and of the actively contrasting perspectives of resources and territory. It does this through empirical focus on local practices of smuggling (of fuel and natural resources) along the Bolivian (with Chile and Peru) and Guatemalan (with Mexico) borders, and an expanding panorama of militancy focused on the terms and impacts of environmental resource exploitation. The chapter also contains a further discussion and critique of the existing literature on resource politics and the resource curse. It demonstrates that these characterizations of resource politics are not wrong but are insufficient in their avoidance of competing claims of territorial and resource sovereignty that come from both below the level and from the margins of the nation-state.

In Chapter 3, 'Contesting Extraction and Sovereignty in Colombia and Guatemala', I explore in depth the intertwined politics of sovereignty and natural resources in two case studies. Whilst earlier chapters demonstrate the way in which popular sovereignty can be constituted at different scales of protest and confrontation with the state, or through efforts to circumvent state authority over territory and resources, I demonstrate here that other expressions of popular sovereignty also exist. In contrast to other global contexts in which indigenous and peasant peoples have learned the 'art of not being governed', popular sovereignty in Latin America and expressions of resource sovereignty are not only made through confrontation or avoidance. In Latin America, new political and legal spaces are not only granted to local communities but are – despite the risks of violence – actively shaped by community engagement with state entities. Indigenous and peasant communities, together with representative social movements and civil society organizations, draw on existing legal and political institutions and mechanisms in their efforts to secure a formal response to sovereign claims. Strategies of engagement with state legal and political institutions often take place concurrently with efforts to reaffirm distinct cultural and social identities, other meanings and values, and protest and strategies of circumvention. In the light of these empirical contexts, the chapter also contains an important discussion of the complex nature and meaning of indigeneity.

In Chapter 4, 'Citizens of Lithium and Salt', I emphasize that claims and contests for resource sovereignty are not only generated by economic and material claims, but often concurrently result from differing perspectives of the value and significance of the landscape, and of the possible impacts of

resource development. In this chapter, I demonstrate that this is true not only of fossil fuels, but also of resources that despite their ‘green’ credentials result in similar social and environmental impacts to what are traditionally considered to be non-renewable resources. Charting the establishment of a nascent lithium industry in Salar de Uyuni, Bolivia and its contested significance, I evidence the manner in which material claims are embedded in long-established cultural and moral relationships with the landscape. Although similar concerns with economic gain and employment are expressed by local people, the chapter highlights through its focus on the politics of the establishment of lithium production in the Highlands of Bolivia that contrasting foundations for knowledge and ontology, and changing political pacts and alliances result in dynamic expressions of resource sovereignty. It is made evident that local people, communities, the Bolivian state and private sector interests are locked into a wider discussion and negotiation of sovereignty. I suggest this is not only serious in the sense of the dynamics of tensions and contestation at the local level, but evidently of much wider impacts, which are seen here as playing a further role in the dramatic dynamics surrounding the recent departure of President Morales from office. I also show that contestation should not be understood as the marking-out of completely contrasting ontological positions. Whereas distinct positions, ideas and beliefs can be identified, these frequently overlap and periodically align with each other as claims regarding sovereignty develop through history, and individuals and their communities encounter contradictions, threats and the need to compromise.

In Chapter 5, ‘No Negotiation with a Gun to Your Head?’, I return to the normative claim made at the start of this book, i.e. that resource sovereignty matters for peace and governance. The chapter starts with an account of the legal judgment that found in favour of the protection of the land rights of the Embera Chamí community of the Cañamomo Lomaprieta in western Colombia. I suggest that the case provides a further important insight into the complex relationship between claims for resource sovereignty and mechanisms for environmental governance. The case underlines the fact that sovereignty is already an issue navigated by current governance and law, but without full acceptance, or in cynical denial of the seriousness and historical basis of the issue. It also highlights that states can in some instances share histories of collusion and the direct enabling of the illegal circumvention and abuse of these rights. I also detail the links between the case, other similar cases and the wider politics of prior consultation. Further description of the politics of prior consultation expands the background to the Embera Chamí case and places into high relief the contradictory and problematic manner in which sovereignty is treated by Latin American states. In particular, it reveals a technocratic avoidance of certain features of contested sovereignty

that require attention if environmental governance is to deliver on its aims. An exploration of the politics of prior consultation is also used as a segue to a necessary reflection on environmental governance as an academic field. I demonstrate that there is a clear correspondence to be formed between my concern with and argument for resource sovereignty with the current critical institutionalist turn. I argue that resources and sovereignty should be understood both as a catalyst for conflict but also as a signpost for environmental peacebuilding, i.e. indicators towards the logics and resolution of disagreements regarding territory and resources.

In the concluding chapter, ‘Making Use of Sovereign Forces?’, I pull together the strands of reasoning and evidence that form the foundations of the conclusions of the book. As such, the chapter re-emphasizes the significance of popular sovereignty in the context of Latin American history and contemporary politics. I underline the role of resource sovereignty as a means to more accurately detail the dynamics of resource conflict in the region. I also conclude with a further reflection on the role of resource sovereignty in governance and *local-level* peacebuilding, and of its contribution to a critical institutionalist perspective. The chapter also takes a last look at the significance of resource sovereignty within a context of current political, legal and intellectual dynamics. These dynamics suggest a more eco-centric approach to the protection of environmental resources and reliant populations.

Notes

1. Hector Jaime has asked for his name, and the name of his community, not to be anonymized so as to draw further attention to the growing list of real people who are currently being threatened in this way (personal communication, 5 August 2020). I have anonymized the names of individuals in all other instances unless they are public officials or have expressed themselves openly to the media.
2. Cañamomo Lomapieta Resguardo (indigenous reserve) in western Colombia
3. BACRIM organizations have their roots in demobilized paramilitary organizations.
4. International Work Group on Indigenous Affairs. See <https://www.iwgia.org/en> (Retrieved 2 November 2020).
5. State of the Union Address Part II (1904). Retrieved 2 November 2020 from <http://teachingamericanhistory.org/library/document/state-of-the-union-address-part-ii-9>.
6. ‘President John F. Kennedy: On the Alliance for Progress, 1961’. *Modern History Sourcebook*. Archived from the original on 3 September 2006. Retrieved 2 November 2020 from <https://sourcebooks.fordham.edu/mod/1961kennedy-afp1.asp>.
7. Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia—Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP).
8. Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN).
9. In writing this, I do not mean to ignore situations in which indigenous peoples have opposed the state or have even attempted to remove themselves from contact with state institutions and wider society. Instances of ‘uncontacted tribes’ in the Amazon are, for

- example, instances of indigenous tribal societies who have sought refuge in isolation from the damaging impacts of both disease and the expansive impacts of state-building.
10. Flammable Societies was a research project financed by the Norwegian Research Council between 2008 and 2011.
 11. An emphasis on greed over grievance is also retained in the more recent work of Collier (2011).
 12. Contested Powers was a research project financed by the Norwegian Research Council between 2010 and 2013.
 13. In 1960, Latin America accounted for 6% of the global economy (Tissot 2012). In 2009, that share had increased to 7.2 % and outperformed global GDP per capita growth by at least 1.5%. While foreign investments have been falling in developing countries, FDI inflows in Latin America rose by 40% between 2009 and 2010.
 14. *Bricolage* is a French word: 'to make creative and resourceful use of whatever materials at hand, regardless of their original purpose'.
 15. Qualitative research has included extended periods of multi-sited ethnographic research (from two years to two weeks depending on the year) and the use of semi-structured interviews, archival work and focus groups.

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