Changing conditions for political practice: FDI discourse and political spaces for labor in Bolivia

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Abstract

Various authors have pointed out that the complex processes of globalization are bringing about general shifts in political practices. In particular, these processes are seen to have weakened traditional practices relating to class and redistribution, and strengthened practices relating to identity and recognition. Organized labor seems disempowered by political and economic restructuring, while new social movements have gained influence by taking advantage of emerging spaces for networking and mobility. Yet the more precise mechanisms by which globalization encourages general shifts in political practices are less clear. In this thesis I explore how the complex processes of globalization change *conditions* for political practice. In other words, it is held that globalization should not primarily be understood as empowering particular actors, such as multinational corporations, but as more fundamental restructurings of discourses and relationships in time and space that enable some practices and constrain others.

Taking foreign direct investment (FDI) and the discourses around it as my point of departure, I focus on a particular process at the center of the restructuring brought about by globalization. FDI inflows and liberal FDI policy discourses have changed relations between private and public spheres, and between capital, labor and the state. I am particularly concerned with the knowledge aspect of FDI, or FDI discourse, how this creates conditions for political practice, and ways in which the discourse is contested. The six papers of this thesis analyze from different angles how globalization, in particular FDI discourse, shapes spaces for political practice; how different political actors (unions, NGOs and social movements) make use of these spaces; and how globalization, in particular FDI discourse, creates challenges for the workplace-based politics of the labor movement. Methodologically, the thesis relies on interviews, document analysis and secondary sources.

The first paper is a theoretical discussion of the socio-spatial reorganization associated with globalization and what this means for collective political subjectivity. The second paper shows the new potential for rescaling and networking with reference to a case in Tambogrande, Peru. The next four papers constitute the core of the empirical work for this thesis, and focus on the policy discourse of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and civil society politics, particularly organized labor, in Bolivia. FDI policy implemented through the structural adjustment programs of the IMF (mid-1980s to 2006) has been instrumental in shifting political spaces for organized labor. It has weakened collective identity formation and negotiation

strategies involved in workplace politics, thereby undermining the influence of labor in gas nationalization. But restructuring has also opened spaces for other types of claims and articulations, which has enabled organized labor to renew its position in civil society politics and take part in contesting economic liberalization, neoliberalism and FDI. Nevertheless, there are few spaces, locally, nationally or internationally, for organized labor to strengthen its influence in workplace politics.

Together, the papers illustrate new political spaces for social movements and NGOs, a narrowing of the spaces for organized labor, and the complex interrelations between socio-spatial restructuring and political practices. In returning to the question of a general shift in political practices in the discussion, it is argued that the dominant mechanisms behind this shift are that: (1) relations of production become less central to political articulation; (2) spaces are opened for articulation and rescaling of claims that resonate with hegemonic liberal discourses; and that (3) the new spaces for politics of scale are asymmetric.

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Introduction

How are the complex processes of "globalization" bringing about shifts in political practices? It seems to be a common assumption that globalization has brought about a weakening of traditional practices in civil society around class and redistribution, and a strengthening of practices around recognition and identity. The disempowerment of labor unions has been linked to economic liberalization, various forms of neoliberal policy, increasing flows of foreign direct investment (FDI) and flexible production regimes (Amin, 2002, Beck, 2000, Moody, 1997, Wills, 2001). Geographers and others have also focused on new political practices in civil society, strengthened transnational social movements and solidarity, and emerging forms of networked organization across space and borders (Castree et al., 2008, Keck and Sikkink, 1998, Routledge, 2003, Scholte, 1996). Yet the more precise mechanisms and processes by which globalization encourages general shifts in political practices are less clear.

In order to understand these shifts in practices it is necessary to explore further how the complex processes of globalization change the structural *conditions* within which practices take place. In other words, globalization should not be understood primarily as empowering particular actors, such as multinational corporations, but as more fundamental restructurings of discourses and relationships in time and space that enable some practices and constrain others. This purpose of this thesis is to explore the processes and mechanisms by which the complex processes of globalization change conditions for political practice and claims making.

The thesis is part of the research project *The Spatial Embeddedness of Foreign Direct Investment*, at the Department of Geography, University of Bergen. An FDI occurs when a company makes an investment outside the home country, but inside

the parent company (Dunning, 1993). The recent increase in FDI flows is a central aspect of globalization, reflecting the extension of multinational capital (Fløysand and Haarstad, 2008, Swain and Hardy, 1998). But it also reflects the political processes and discourses of economic liberalization that advances globalization. The purpose of the project is to go beyond econo-centric analyses of FDI, and investigate the complex dynamics between FDI and socio-political transformations in space. It applies a conceptualization that sees FDI as a composite of three pillars; *capital*, *actors* and *knowledge*. In other words, FDI should be investigated by looking at the material processes of capital accumulation, the actors and networks that are involved, and the discourses that are implied and contested around the phenomenon of FDI. The associated projects emphasize these pillars to different degrees.

I am particularly concerned with the knowledge aspect of FDI, or FDI discourse. At the center of this thesis is the knowledge environment surrounding FDI, how this creates conditions for political practice, and ways in which it is contested. With Neumann (2001), I understand discourse generally as structures of meaning interlinked with materiality, which provide conditions for practice. A central idea is that FDI and FDI discourse represent a fundamental aspect of the complex processes of globalization which influence the conditions for political practice.

Placing FDI and the discourses around it at the centre of the analysis provides an entry point into understanding the how the complex processes of globalization shape conditions for political practices. Liberal attitudes to FDI have been at the heart of the neoliberal policy regimes promoted by multilateral financial institutions such as the IMF. Foreign investors have taken advantage of privatization of state enterprises required under structural adjustment programs in the global South, changing relations between private and public spheres, and between capital, labor and the state. This can be assumed to have profound implications for political practices, as the role of the state in interest mediation is weakened and new spaces for politics emerge beyond the state. These processes are *material*, in the sense that they concern flows and control over capital and resources, but also *discursive*, in the sense that they are interrelated with particular knowledges and structures of meaning. Material and discursive aspects of these processes enable and constrain practices by affecting possibilities for collective organization, identity formation, networking and articulation of claims. Shifting conditions for practice open political spaces for certain types of interests and claims, while narrowing the spaces for other types.

This basic framework is used to investigate the processes and mechanisms by which globalization influences general shifts in political practice. Through the papers

I offer partial perspectives and arguments developing the broader problematic. This development has been both a result of conscious choices and a process of discovery. The theoretical development and empirical analyses began by reworking some of the arguments from my Master's thesis work in Peru. The first two papers are primarily focused on how globalization creates new possibilities for actors to rescale their political claims and what this means for collective subjectivity and power relations. However, my work in Bolivia forms the core of this thesis. Approaching the Bolivian context, I wanted to build on the previous conclusions, but also to broaden the scope by exploring how processes of globalization impacted upon the opportunity structures of actors that are less able to take advantage of these new spaces. This led me to focus on the labor movement and the discourse on FDI in the structural adjustment programs of the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The IMF has been instrumental in restructuring state/economy relations and internationalizing the Bolivian economy, with significant effects on the conditions for political practice. Four papers on Bolivia develop the analysis of how the complex processes of globalization shift conditions for unions, primarily, but also for social movements.

The main research question is:

- What are the mechanisms and processes by which globalization influences shifts in political practice?

Through the papers in this thesis I analyze:

- How globalization, in particular FDI discourse, shapes spaces for political practice
- How different political actors (unions, NGOs and social movements) make use of these spaces
- How globalization, in particular FDI discourse, creates challenges for the workplace-based politics of the labor movement.

Paper #1 is a theoretical discussion of attempts to conceptualize and articulate collective political subjectivity in the contemporary political climate. Elaborating themes that are returned to in the case studies, the paper introduces the basic problematic of how political subjectivities are articulated and practiced within particular socio-spatial conditions that enable some subjectivities and constrain others. I outline some general tendencies that can be said to have undermined articulations around class, and opened the way for the proliferation of new political categories and subjectivities. Further, it is argued that a language of scale is essential to understand how collective political subjectivities are, in the contemporary political

climate, mediated and made concrete at levels between the local/particular and the global/universal.

Paper #2 brings this language of scale into a case study in order to illustrate ways in which globalization enables particular practices of rescaling. It shows how globalization can enable actors to engage in networks of NGOs, to articulate claims at the national and international scales and to contest a planned FDI project. Within the new political spaces of globalization, particular actors can take advantage of increased potential for mobility and communication, and international discourses that provide legitimacy to certain claims. The paper also notes that new challenges are created for actors and practices that are less able to make use of these spaces.

Picking up on this last point, paper #3 shifts the focus to some practices and actors whose political spaces are arguably narrowed by the complex processes of globalization – organized labor. I analyze the role of FDI policy discourse in the disempowerment of labor, arguing that it articulates some of the "basics" of its political spaces. The paper shows how, by privatizing state enterprises, changing the function of the state, and introducing new standards of efficiency, the discourse has undermined resources for collective union organization and identity construction. The discursive shift towards "investment climate" concerns helped spur a transformation of collective action from workplace-based organization and claims to NGOs and social movements pressing claims mostly unrelated to workplace politics.

Paper #4 takes these findings into an examination of an attempt to reinstate a central role for the national state in economic production. Nationalization of the Bolivian gas sector was demanded by social movements taking advantage of new political spaces and also by the weakened labor movement. However, it is argued that a significant recovery of the political spaces for labor is unviable within the structural context of globalization, the international market and the enduring role of FDI in development.

Paper #5 analyzes how the labor movement maneuvers in the context of its narrowed political spaces. It discusses the practices the labor movement engages in to take advantage of new resources for contesting the discourses behind its disempowerment. It looks in particular at how transformation of work regimes fosters a rearticulation of class visions, claims and collective identities. This opens the way for a degree of merging and cooperation with social movements around common collective identities and claims, and new scalar possibilities. It also raises the question of whether these rearticulations can enable a strengthened workplace politics.

Paper #6 offers a more general perspective on the interrelations between neoliberalism and popular mobilization. It focuses on the varied and contingent aspects of roll-back and roll-out neoliberalism that have shaped conditions for political practice. We aim to go beyond simplified accounts of how neoliberalism ignites "backlashes" in the form of popular mobilization, and instead make visible the continuities and mutual constraints between neoliberalism and popular mobilization. Investment climate reforms open spaces for politics, but also make neoliberalism vulnerable to mobilization within and beyond these spaces.

The papers represent a multifaceted perspective on how the complex processes of globalization shape conditions for political practice (see Table 1.1). They start by looking at how time-space compression enabled practices of networking and rescaling of claims, and move on to how the traditional practices and claims of labor are constrained, before exploring interrelations between shifting political spaces, articulation and mobilization. For the most part I will leave the arguments and conclusions to the individual papers. But I will outline the principal arguments in the discussion, emphasizing how the complex processes of globalization shape spaces in ways that create differential effectiveness between political practices and claims. There I will argue that the predominant mechanisms of this are as follows:

- Relations of production become less central to political articulation
- Spaces are opened for articulation and rescaling of claims that resonate with hegemonic liberal discourses
- The new spaces for politics of scale are asymmetric.

Published in and submitted to international journals, the papers are written as self-contained. They have been written so that each can be read independently of the others, and each is directed toward specific debates in the literature. This means that there is also some overlap and repetition between them, but I have tried to keep this to a minimum. The title of the thesis is chosen to reflect the main focus and the core of the empirical work, although some of the discussion is broader in scope than what the title might suggest. This means that the title does not reflect the empirical background for paper #2 (Peru).

Table 1.1: Overview of the papers

Theme	Globalization and changing conditions for political practice					
	Paper #1	**Paper #2**	**Paper #3**	**Paper #4**	**Paper #5**	**Paper #6**
Globalization process in focus	Multiple, new forms of socio-spatial organization	Time-space compression, scalar restructuring	Liberal economic policy	New spaces for social movement politics	Economic liberalization, shifting regimes of work	Neoliberalization
Position of FDI/ FDI discourse	None/implied	Contested	Shaping political spaces	Shaping political spaces, nationalized	Shaping political spaces, contested	Shaping political spaces, contested, constrained
Key concepts	Collective political subjectivity, scale	Rescaling, empowerment	Labor dis-empowerment, disarticulation	Grassroots globalization, union marginalization	Labor geography, new unionism, rearticulation	Neoliberalism, popular mobilization
Empirical focus	None	Tambogrande case (Peru), NGOs, networks	Petrolero unions, IMF policy	Nationalization, unions, IMF policy	Labor movement renewal, IMF policy	IMF policy, decentralization reforms, popular mobilization

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Conceptualizing conditions for political practice

1. Introduction

In the introduction to this thesis it was held that the complex processes of globalization are associated with shifts in political practice and claims-making. Different perspectives have been offered on how and why this shift is taking place. Nancy Fraser points to some of the "usual suspects" when she writes:

> *The demise of communism, the surge of free-market ideology, the rise of "identity-politics" in both its fundamentalist and progressive forms – all these developments have conspired to decenter, if not to extinguish, claims for egalitarian redistribution (Fraser, 2003: 7-8).*

A host of interrelated debates have focused on various aspects of globalization processes and how they change the ways in which politics is practiced (Murray, 2006). For some, globalization is a cover concept for global capitalism, loss of local control, and the imposition of the logic of capital on ever-increasing regions of the world and spheres of life (Kellner, 2002, Mittelman, 2001). It has been argued that globalization and the political reality that it produces is equivalent to the enhancement of corporate power and the political priorities of big capital, and that globalization concentrates economic power in ways that marginalize entire countries and regions (Antonopoulou, 2000, Gill, 2000). These tendencies are often analyzed with reference to "neoliberalism", which is seen by many as an all-encompassing macroeconomic and state trans-formation that implements market logic in all spheres of life and in turn causes social and economic hardships (Green, 2003, Seoane, 2006). Globalized economic production schemes and neoliberal policy regimes are closely linked to the

weakening of union organization and workers' rights (Moody, 1997). There is increasing agreement that these tendencies are undermining or transforming industrial relations, trade unions and the "homogenous" working class (Waterman and Wills, 2001: 307).

At the same time, geographers and others have paid attention to political organizations, institutions and practices that have emerged at various levels alongside processes of globalization. The national state is challenged by economic globalization, transnational media, the global nature of environmental problems, and emerging international law, which have opened for debates on how governance at the local, regional and global levels is taking its place (Held, 2000, Swyngedouw, 1997). This does not necessarily mean that the state is weakened, but that there are new institutional relationships between local, national and international levels (Kiely, 2000). As Keohane (2006) argues, globalization and intergovernmental institutions offer an opportunity to hold states and other entities democratically accountable.

Processes of globalization are also interrelated with new forms of civil society politics. Geographers have increasingly moved away from state-centered analyses to consider the multiplicity of actors that influence the global political arena (Agnew, 1999, Bulkeley, 2005). These actors have created new trans-border solidarities and networks across scales (Castree et al., 2008, Olesen, 2005, Scholte, 1996, Staeheli, 1994). Transnational social movements and international NGOs spread transnational politically liberal norms, and promote human rights and environmental protection, but also contest the political-economic agendas of neoliberalism (Bakker, 2007, Fisher, 1997, Keck and Sikkink, 1998, Martin and Wilmer, 2008). They have been able to influence discourses on war, pollution, patriarchy, poverty and governance by lobbying governments and intergovernmental agencies (O'Brien et al., 2000). And the networks that these movements create have sparked debates on the "politics of scaling", stressing the potential for social movements to increase their political efficiency by operating at a range of scales simultaneously (Brenner, 2001, Smith, 1996).

All these developments are parts of what is seen to have challenged the centrality of the categories of *class* and *labor*, and opened for the proliferation of other political categories. This has led to a rethinking of class concepts (Gibson-Graham, 2005), and new conceptual frameworks with which to understand collective political subjectivity (Hardt and Negri, 2004, Laclau and Mouffe, 2001). It has also led some to argue for the necessity of and possibility for unions to shift their practices in the direction of "social movement unionism", in which they seek alliances with

social movements and press demands that are not restricted to those directly related to the workplace (Moody, 1997, Waterman, 2001). Herod's (2000, 2001, 2003) work on labor geography has attempted to show that workers and labor unions can still be active makers of political-economic landscapes. But, in general, globalization processes are seen to strengthen identity politics and recognition at the expense of traditional projects of redistribution (Fraser, 2000, 2003, Harvey, 1993, Sayer, 1997).

I will return to many of the above-mentioned debates in the papers of this thesis. First, however, it is necessary to discuss the perspective that underlies the arguments I will make in relation to them. I have argued that globalization should not primarily be seen as empowering particular actors. Instead, shifts in political practice should be seen as symptoms of more fundamental restructuring of discourses and relationships in time and space that change the conditions within which these practices take place. Political practices are enabled and constrained by the conditions in which they take place, which provide different types of resources for mobilizing around particular claims, articulating identities and forming networks. In order to explain broad shifts in practice, it is necessary to consider different aspects of these conditions. In my view, *material* processes of time-space compression and *discursive* shifts represent two interrelated but different aspects of the changing conditions for political practice. The purpose of separating these processes is not necessarily to analyze them in isolation, but to make visible different aspects of the complex processes of globalization and to take them both into account.

In this chapter I will discuss material and discursive perspectives on the conceptualization of structural conditions and how changing conditions influence shifts in political practice. This will serve as a theoretical backdrop for developing a framework for conceptualizing the complex processes and mechanisms by which changing structural conditions influence political practices.

2. The materialist approach to structural change and political practice

Materialism is the view that central aspects of social life can be explained by looking at arrangements of technology and social relations of economic production prevailing at a particular time (Kymlicka, 2002). It is primarily attributable to the historical materialism of Marx, who labeled one particular arrangement as a "mode of production". The fundamental aim of Marx's *Capital* (Marx, 1990) was to expose the laws of motion of the capitalist mode of production. This has often been interpreted

as meaning that political practices, and political institutions such as the state, have a necessary and dependent relationship to material processes, and that one should look to changes in material processes to understand political change.[1] Within this perspective, *class* is seen as the primary political subjectivity, since it represents the direct material interests of actors.

The historical materialism of David Harvey aims to ground changes in perceptions and representations of the world in changes in "objective qualities of space" (Harvey, 1989: 240). In *The Condition of Postmodernity*, he retraces the shift from a predominantly Fordist mode of economic production of modernity to a mode of flexible accumulation characteristic of post-modernity. A central trend is the speeding up of the pace at which economic transactions occur across space, or what he calls "time-space compression" (deliberately parallel to the "annihilation of space through time" of the *Communist Manifesto*). The origins of this lay in capitalist attempts to overcome the rigidities of Fordist modes of production, which had created a crisis for capital accumulation in the early 1970s. Overcoming rigidities in labor markets, the labor process, and products and patterns of consumption, entailed a new round of time-space compression (there had been others in the past). This did not change capitalism per se, but altered the modes by which capital was accumulated. Technological and regulatory renewal shrunk the time-horizons of both private and public decision-making, and declining transport costs made it easier to spread those decisions across space. The market expanded its role in economic regulation and planning, accompanied by individualization and sub-contracting in the labor process. Capital was increasingly accumulated through production of images, events and experiences and services, and accelerated rates of consumption.

Changes in modes of capital accumulation brought with them a host of changes in the way space and time is experienced and represented. Cultural expressions accentuated surface appearances, flexibility, heterogeneity and indeterminacy. Changes in political attitudes and consciousness, too, can be traced back to the shifts in labor control, unemployment, rationalizations and forced restructurings that came about as a response to the rigidities of Fordist production. The nature and composition of the global working class changed, and unionization and traditional left-wing politics became hard to sustain in the face of capital mobility, flexible labor relations, and new groups of workers. Class politics came instead to be seen to subordinate non-class symmetries of power, and to marginalize

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[1] The character of this relation is of course subject to tense debate. Poulantzas (1980), for example, famously argued for the *relative autonomy* of the state. I will not go further into this debate here.

other heterogeneities and differences such as ethnicity, gender, community and the like. Harvey sees a current tendency towards "militant particularism" and warns against the

> *increasing fragmentation of "progressive" politics around special issues and the rise of the so-called new social movements focusing on gender, race, ethnicity, ecology, multiculturalism, community and the like (Harvey, 1993: 47).*

This "fragmentation" has been accompanied by a downright hostility to class conceptions of politics, even though issues of class often cross-cut them all. There has been a rise of populist, charismatic politics and social-movement politics focused on multiple symmetries of difference, rejecting any association with class and trade unionism. Traditional communist parties and Marxism were associated with the structures of power from which the New Left struggled to liberate itself. New Left politics, social movements and politics of difference emerge as an effort to make sense of and find a political niche within the travails of time-space compression. These political projects have rejected grand narratives such as historical materialism, acknowledging instead multiple forms of otherness.

To Harvey, then, there is ultimately "some kind of necessary relation" between, on one hand, the "sea-change" of cultural and political-economic practices in the last decades of the twentieth century, and, on the other, flexible accumulation and the latest round of time-space compression (Harvey, 1989: vii).

A related, though less explicitly Marxist, form of explanation can be found in Castells' trilogy on the information age. Castells' entry point into explaining the emerging economy, society and culture is the recent revolution in technological innovation. The availability of new technologies, he writes, was the "fundamental basis" for a process of socio-economic restructuring starting in the 1980s. The rise of "network society" cannot be understood without the development of new information technologies and their interrelation with relations of power (Castells, 2000: 60-61). He stresses that technological change does not *determine* society, but puts most of the explanatory weight on new information technologies that have, in interaction with the global economy, materialized in new ways of producing, communicating, living and conducting politics (Castells, 2000: 5). The increasing social and economic organization around "flows" has led to the uprooting of the institutions of the nation state and disintegrated existing mechanisms of social control and political representation. New social movements make use of information technologies to unleash the power of networking, decentralized organizational structures and the media to construct charismatic messages and reinforce "resistance" identities. In turn,

these identities are as pervasive in the network society as is the dissolution of identities that used to constitute the civil society of the industrial era (Castells, 2004: 72-73, 421).

To take a final example, Lash and Urry (1987) outline what they see as "the end of organized capitalism" and the emergence of a disorganized form capitalism related to a post-modern social sensibility. This involves a destabilization of former predominant divisions between capital and labor and between "people" and the state, and a concomitant growth of political pluralism. This has presented the working class in disorganized capitalist societies with "enormous difficulties" in sustaining collective action at a national level.

The importance here is not whether these accounts are empirically accurate, but the mode of explanation they employ. They share the perspective that there is a necessary relation between material changes in terms of production and technology, on the one hand, and socio-political forms on the other. Shifts in political practice, subjectivities and claims-making are seen as closely interrelated with new technologies and modes of capitalist production. This does not necessarily imply material determinism, but the view that the primary basis for political practice is to be found in material phenomena or even the "objective" qualities of space.

3. The discursive approach to structural change and political practice

It would be difficult to deny that there are interrelations between production, technology and political practices. At the same time, however, there are intersubjective processes at the level of collective identity formation that cannot be reduced to these material dynamics. Political practice is always bound up with some sort of *collective identity*, a concept that has been central to the analysis of social movements (McDonald, 2004). Politics, Tilly (2002) argues, is to a large degree about constructing shared stories, or "narratives", about how the boundaries between "we" and "they" arise, what they separate, and what power relations keep them in place. Writings on collective identities tend to emphasize their *constructedness*, which in turn means that they are not based on fixed material interests but are created and recreated primarily in relation to structures of meaning.

In writings on social movements it is stressed that political identities are necessarily *relational*. To Polletta and Jasper (2001), political mobilization is about how actors "frame" issues in ways that foster unity and antagonisms. This means that

political identities arise from "we-they" boundaries (Tilly, 2002: 61), constructed delimitations of belonging and antagonisms. An individual engaging the identity of "worker", for example, establishes a "we-they" boundary where other workers are part of the "we", and bourgeois capitalists are part of the "they". In these accounts, political practices and identities arise from intersubjective relations as much as material interests. Discourses provide sets of resources and limitations that actors use, consciously and unconsciously, to shape political identities such as "worker", "citizen", "grassroots activist" and so on. When an individual associates herself with a particular political identity, this act is made possible by a given set of identities available, and limited by the differential availability of identities. These acts of identification take place at the level of the individual, but are inseparable from the "substance" for identity construction existing within an individual's surroundings (Burke, 1992: 304).

The point to make here is that there is a mode of explanation which understands the substance from which identities are forged as the available identities, discourses and narratives from which political actors construct political practices. Given that there seems to have been a broad shift in the general processes of political identity over time, there must also be some general structures of meaning, or *discourses*, which provide the substance from which identities are forged. It is these discourses that make some political identities more effective than others in a particular place and time. In short, while materialist explanations tend to root stability and change in modes of production, discourse theory roots stability and change in structures of meaning.

Discourse and articulation

What can be called the "discursive" position on structural change, building on the work of Michel Foucault, emphasizes not the objective qualities of spatio-temporal change but changing paradigms of meaning and knowledge. In a series of works, Foucault explored how practices derive from discourses, that is, fundamental structures of meaning and knowledge that define the limits of what is possible and therefore constitute the basis for action and thought. His work is an important basis for post-structural social science, which tends to claim that "material" reality and universal truth is beyond human intellectual capacity and therefore not subject to inquiry (Rabinow, 1984). Rather, our particular conceptions of reality and truth are discourses that change over time.

Foucault's different works trace discursive change in relation to different social institutions. In *Discipline and Punish* (1991a), for example, he investigates how modern conceptions of punishment have come into being. The shift from spectacular corporal punishment to confinement in prisons did not ultimately come about because society became more rational and humane, but because emerging power structures required a type of punishment that fostered rational and well adapted individuals. These power structures are not vested in a particular individual or institution, but saturate society as a form of knowledge. Modern individuality is thus inseparable from discursive techniques of power that shape practices and our conceptions of them. Foucault suggests that discourses of individual rationality are related to the development of capitalist society, but primarily he locates change in emerging forms of power and, in turn, in knowledge. Similarly, in *The Will to Knowledge* (1998), he traces the advent of modern sexuality to mechanisms of power, which created modern sexuality by encouraging particular knowledges about it. Practices are made possible by a complex interrelation of power and knowledge.

Foucault famously insisted that "where there is power there is resistance, multiple points of resistance" (1998: 9). But there is little room for conceptualizing political action within this framework. As Deleuze (1999) pointed out in his book on Foucault, even acts of transgression are linked to particular discourses. In other words, this perspective explains stability and long-term change in practices, but leaves little room for political action itself to instigate change.

Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe have drawn on Foucault to develop a theoretical perspective for identifying the discursive conditions for collective action and political claims-making. In contrast to Foucault, they try to find room for politics within a discursive framework. Their framework theorizes the ways in which discourses, through articulatory practices, are used by political actors to cultivate and provide grounds for their projects. Since several of their concepts are applied specifically in the papers, I will discuss them in some detail.

The point of departure for Laclau and Mouffe, in *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* (2001), is that discourses (or hegemonies) can never fully constitute social relations or completely fix coherent social orders. Discourses are mere attempts to arrest flows of difference, and neither total fixity nor absolute non-fixity is possible. Antagonisms will always exist to challenge attempts to constitute social orders, or attempts by hegemonic discourses to order social relations. Political practices and claims-making are thought of as practices of "articulation", or attempts to fix meaning partially around a set of principles. As they define it, articulation is "any

practice establishing a relation among elements such that their identity is modified as a result of the articulatory practice" (Laclau and Mouffe, 2001: 105). For example, political ideologies attempt to fix meaning around a set of basic propositions about justice and the common good by identifying a range of different elements through a particular understanding of these propositions.

As a result, political projects always work through what they term the *logic of equivalence* and *the logic of difference* (remember Tilly's "we-they" boundaries). Given that the political field is potentially infinitely complex, the logic of equivalence refers to the attempt, through articulation, to gather a number of elements around a singular pole ("we"). For example, class struggle has tended to gather subjects around the identity of "worker" and propositions for class justice. In contrast, the logic of difference multiplies political projects by reiterating divergences between subjects ("they"). Hegemony is achieved when a (political) discourse manages to fix meaning around a significant number of relations so that its propositions take a dominant (though never total) form. It can not take a total form because a necessary mechanism is the construction of its borders, of its outside, and of its adversaries (there is always a "they"). Political practices, they claim, are always about articulatory practices that aim to include certain elements by excluding others. This is the reason that hegemonies or the discourses they are made up of can never be complete or total, but always be both brought forth and challenged by what is outside of them.

This perspective has a number of implications for how they view collective identities. Grounded as they are in the discourse tradition of Foucault, it comes as no surprise that they critique perspectives that see collective identity formation as a result of rational choices made by individuals. First, Laclau and Mouffe reject the view of the subject as an agent both rational and transparent to itself. Political practices and collective identity formation are primarily embedded in processes external to individual rational capacity. Second, they reject the supposed unity and homogeneity of a subject's identifications. One individual is, in complex ways, part of multiple processes of identity formation. Third, they reject the view that the subject is the origin and basis of social relations. Instead, individuals are "subject positions" within a discursive structure, a view drawn directly from Foucault.

To Laclau and Mouffe, discourses are the substance from which identity is molded, and subjects are only partly conscious of the processes of identification. Subjects are necessarily divided in relation to identity, a single subject takes on multiple and possibly contradictory identities at the same time. Therefore they also reject classical Marxist analysis since that is often based on the unitary subject of "the

worker". Discourses provide a set of signifiers with which subjects can identify, and discursive hegemonies make some identifications more available than others. This means that one must look at discourses and discursive structures to understand properly processes of political identification and how certain political identifications become successful in certain contexts (Howarth, 2004: 258).

In turn, Laclau and Mouffe prefer the term "subjectivity" over "identity". The latter term is associated with the idea that constructions of the self take place at the level of the individual, while the former is associated with the idea that construction of the self is a result of a position ("subject position") in relation to discourses. *Subjectivity* emphasizes how these constructions mainly take place externally to the individual actor or conscious processes of action, through hegemonic discourses within which the individual (the subject) is positioned. For example, "woman" can be both a political identity and a political subjectivity. Using the term identity connects "womanhood" to more active processes of self-construction through political struggle, while using the term subjectivity connects "womanhood" to structural discursive constructions of what it means to be a "woman". (After all, there is such a thing as "identity politics" but no such thing as "subjectivity politics".)

In the view of Laclau and Mouffe, what has taken place since the Second World War is the emergence of a new discursive formation that has undermined the hegemony of the "worker" subject, and allowed for a proliferation of multiple political subjectivities through which relations of power can be contested. Therefore, they come to quite different conclusions from Harvey about the "new social movements" or politics of recognition. While Harvey laments the loss of class vision which he finds necessary to critique the fundamental relations of social oppression under capitalism, Laclau and Mouffe welcome the opening of new spaces for questioning multiple forms of oppression. To them, the rise of new social movements is then an extension of democratic progress, since discursive resources have become available for different forms of politics and struggles against different types of inequality.

The contrast with classical Marxist politics is noteworthy; while Marxism posited the unitary subject of the worker and redistributive politics as the *ground* for politics, Laclau and Mouffe reject that there is such a ground beyond discourse. Laclau and Mouffe consider the "egalitarian imaginary" as elementally flawed for being based on a single subjectivity, the worker, and therefore undemocratic. They reject the possibility of basing their political project on any particular notion of justice, because that would necessarily involve logics of exclusion. Instead, it is

discourse which is the ground for politics, and there are no *a priori* privileged subjects. Indeed, the political project of *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* is further extension of this democratic logic to more sets of social relations. Progressive politics should aim to open new lines of difference which may become bases for democratic projects and thereby distribute power along a range of social sites. All political projects have a partial character and can be articulated towards very different discourses, but ultimately, the overall goal of all progressive politics is the extension of the democratic logic in itself.

'Material' versus 'discursive' views on political practice

Two views on conditions for political practice can then be inferred. On the one hand, a materialist view sees political practices as conducted by actors that have some degree of fixed and objective interest and goals, defined prior to their engagement in political practice. On the other hand, a discursive view sees political practice as a process of constructing subjectivities, forms of injustice, antagonisms and legitimacy for particular goals. Interests and goals are not defined prior to political practice, but is an integral part of what such practice is about.

These characterizations are of course reductive caricatures, most would agree that there is some truth in both (Harvey (2005) for example, also stresses the hegemony of neoliberal discourses). The purpose here is simply to illustrate differences between these modes of explanation by looking at what they imply, in the last instance.

In looking at a broad shift in political practice, one runs into some immediate problems when using only the material perspective. Seeing subjects and their political interests as fixed by a structural class position, for example, makes it difficult to explain the shift towards a politics of recognition without resorting to a notion of "false consciousness". It would be assumed *a priori* that the class interests of subjects is their primary political interest, and if they engage in struggle for other types of political goals then they would be distancing themselves from the political goals that are in their proper interests and undermining their own class identity. The shift away from traditional class politics would then be understood as a massive epidemic of false consciousness. For a variety of reasons, I do not find this explanation satisfactory. Nor do most contemporary writers on class and class processes, who have rejected the idea of fixed interests and false consciousness and instead write in search of new subjectivities of class (see Gibson-Graham, 2006a, 2006b, Wills, 2006).

However, there are also some problems with an exclusively discursive approach. First, little consideration is given to the material basis that actors have for making political claims. Without accounting for the objective-like aspect of economic exploitation, for example, it becomes difficult to explain why workers' struggles have been a pervasive aspect of virtually all industrializing societies (see Mason, 2007). Second, the discursive position provides no basis for evaluating political and economic justice. The only such basis is democratic plurality and the proliferation of political subjectivities. The shift towards a political plurality is then welcomed as a democratic revolution, without a conceptual apparatus that would enable an inquiry into the material processes underlining this shift.

It becomes evident that changes in political practice are related to both material and discursive phenomena, and that these must be seen as interrelated in complex ways. The question of change in political practice is also inherently geographical, since contexts and spatial relationships play a role in shaping the conditions for political practice. Writing about the circumstances for class politics, Wills argues: "Geographers are ideally placed to explore the spatialised relationships between economic investment, the labour process, community cultures, discourse, identity and politics." Further, "we would need to connect the small scale to wider processes, and the particular to the general, in order to say more about the geographical conditions of work and the wider significance" (Wills, 2008: 26-29). In other words, geographical perspectives can account for multiple aspects of how the complex processes associated with globalization shape political practice.

4. Structural contexts, political spaces and scales

Underpinning the arguments in the papers is a conceptualization that tries to make sense of the complexities of these processes and operationalize them in particular cases. The way I see it, it is useful to think of the processes at hand as a changing *structural context* which is both material and discursive. This is similar to an argument made by Cerny (1995: 597) that "choices are always made within specific 'structured fields of action'", and that "structurally diverse fields elicit different strategies and tactics". Cerny asserts that globalization, by reshaping the structural context of rational choice itself, "transforms the ways that the basic rules of the game work in politics and international relations".

For my purposes, a structural context is constituted by the resources for and limitations on political practice in general.[2] Material resources and limitations are related to economic resources, available technology, spatial mobility, and relations of production, among other things. Discursive resources and limitations are related to available collective identities, hegemonic norms or discourses, public acceptance of rights, and common perceptions of social justice. The resources and limitations on a specific type of political practice can be called a *political space*.

In this argument, looking at how a structural context shapes conditions for particular types of political practices makes visible the *mechanisms* by which structural change affects general shifts in political practice. I have drawn inspiration here from the "microfoundations" debate (see Little, 1991). In this debate it is postulated that explanations at the macro-level of social phenomena must be supported by an account of the mechanisms at micro-levels through which the macro-level (structural) processes work. The concept of political space is an attempt to link structure and practice, by identifying the circumstances in which practice makes use of the channels, resources and discourses that are available in a particular context.

Using the phenomenon of FDI as an entry point into exploring how the complex processes of globalization shape political practice, it can be analyzed as affecting the resources and constraints on particular political practices. This is most explicitly developed in paper #3, where I focus on how political spaces for labor unions are shaped by the FDI policy discourse, and paper #5, where I look at how labor unions maneuver within these spaces. In this way it is possible to analyze the mechanisms by which broad structural processes influence practices.

Political space is generally used as a synonym for democratic discussion, civil society or the public sphere, and as a spatial metaphor for freedom and autonomy (Dalby, 2005). In political science, the term political space is often used to understand political opportunities within party systems. There are some accounts that I draw upon in thinking through a more specific usage. Engberg-Pedersen and Webster (2002) use the concept in a study of "the political space for poverty reduction". Their intention is to explore development "in context" and in terms of the social actors whose actions have shaped that context. They define the "political space for poverty reduction" as the types and possibilities present for pursuing poverty reduction by the poor or on behalf of the poor by local organizations. In their account, the political space for poverty reduction is constituted by (1) institutional channels through which

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[2] Depending on the particular focus of the paper I apply slightly different vocabularies, since the framework has been developed as I worked on the papers. In papers #1 and #2 I use the concept "contemporary political climate" in much the same way as "structural context" is used later.

policy formulation can be contested by the poor, (2) political discourses on poverty, and (3) the political practices of the poor themselves.

What is important to note here is that political spaces do not just enable or constrain the political practices of a given group, but also the potential for that group to constitute itself as a collective subject in the first place. To relate to the case of Engberg-Pedersen and Webster; "the poor" is hardly a collective political identity, so the question is how discourses bring forth possibilities for "the poor" to articulate themselves as a collective political identity. As Millstein, Oldfield and Stokke argue, political spaces enable and constrain possibilities for attempts to articulate claims and subjectivities:

> At the most general level it can be observed that we are now, in the context of neo-liberal globalisation, seeing a powerful global development discourse that emphasises various institutional reforms in favour of democratisation, human rights, decentralisation, good governance and civil society. Such discourses and their institutional manifestations, define political spaces for various individual and collective actors who claim to be the legitimate expressions of these good causes and "the people" (Millstein et al., 2003: 459).

In turn, a structural context will open political spaces for some articulations and narrow those of others. "The poor" might, within certain contexts, take advantage of political spaces for articulating themselves as a group whose cultural rights are not respected, or whose religious or political self-determination is under threat. Given different political spaces, "the poor" might articulate themselves as the working class exploited by capitalist relations. Elsewhere Ståle Holgersen and I have discussed how contemporary neoliberal discourses around planning have encouraged collective identification with "community" rather than "class" (Holgersen and Haarstad, 2009).

Note that the use of the concept of "space" here can be both metaphorical and in reference to geographical space. Geographical metaphors have gained ground in the social sciences, and talk is increasingly of boundaries, locations, positions and mapping (Drainville, 1995). Spatial metaphors are particularly common in discourse theory. Foucault's work is seen as an attempt to "spatialize" history (Philo, 1992), and as opening a way of looking at how political actors are provided with "a range of utterance possibilities within various discursive *sites*" (McKenna, 2004: 14, emphasis added). But these "sites" often remain metaphorical. Smith and Katz (1993) are critical of Foucault's use of spatial metaphors, claiming that he "fails to recognize how social agents produce space and socio-spatial relations" both within and against imposition of spaces produced by power. At the same time, the metaphorical uses of

spatial concepts can often imply geographical insights. For example, articulation is about attempts to unite locally based struggles and demands to transnational discourses and norms (Laclau, 2004). As Hart says of the concept of "articulation", it is

> *useful not only in clarifying diverse and interrelated trajectories of sociospatial change but also in suggesting how struggles in different sociospatial arenas and across spatial scales might link with one another (2002: 819).*

In this work I am particularly concerned with how *spatial scales* play into structural contexts and circumscribe political practice. Spatial scales are social constructions that "envelop" actions and processes and our understanding of them (Cox, 1998, Jonas, 2006, Marston, 2000). While scales do not in and of themselves have a material nature, the materialization of social constructions of scale is quite robust. This is particularly so with national state institutions, which have been (and still are) the primary locus of material resource distribution and political discourses.

Most accounts of globalization involve some type of claim about scale, whether they use the term or not. Scholte's (1996) conceptualization of globalization as supra-territorialization, for example, is uncontroversial. And as already mentioned, it is commonly stated that globalization is related to the decreasing centrality of the national state (Brenner, 1998, Peck and Tickell, 2003, Swyngedouw, 2004). As its roles and responsibilities are changing, so are the conditions for affecting interest mediation at the national scale.

New scalar arrangements have some important effects on political spaces. As Marden (1997: 41) argues, globalization is characterized by a set of "new political spaces outside the constructed boundaries of the state system", composed of economic, social and cultural networks (see also Fløysand, 1999). This indicates that new political spaces are opened for actors, practices and identities that can take advantage of these networks and new scalar arrangements. It also indicates that political spaces are narrowed for actors, practices and identities that are organized towards institutions at the national scale. In short, political spaces are produced and maneuvered at the intersection of material and discursive processes on a range of scales.

Study area, fieldwork and methodology

1. Introduction

In this chapter I will discuss the implications of the research agenda outlined above for the research process.[1] Moving from an abstract framework to research design, actual data collection and finally to analysis involves countless decisions, many of them made necessary by practical limitations (Bradshaw and Stratford, 2005). The purpose here is to show some of the decisions I have made and why, in order to provide transparency in the research process. The methodological choices have been guided by the need for a set of techniques to study how broad and abstract processes had effects in a particular context, in order to inform theory about these processes.

FDI and FDI discourse have provided an entry point, or a phenomenon that can be operationalized to investigate how the complex processes of globalization influence the conditions for political practice. For practical reasons, it was necessary to delimit this to a specific discourse. Looking at the FDI policy discourse of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) has enabled me to delimit this to a coherent discourse with a specific institutional grounding and a bounded set of data. This choice of focus came as a result of my contextual knowledge and preliminary readings on the role of the IMF in structural adjustment in the global South and in

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[1] I will not elaborate on the field work conducted for paper #2 here, since the papers on Bolivia constitute the empirical core of this project. For a discussion of the fieldwork in Peru, see Haarstad (2005).

Bolivia, to which I will return. Document material from the IMF Archives in Washington DC forms part of the empirical basis for this work.

Case studies are useful in connecting the abstract with the particular, since they allow a detailed examination of an example for the purpose of informing theoretical abstraction. Bolivia provides a case where the processes and mechanisms in question can be observed, as I will discuss in more detail below. I was interested in looking at a case where aspects of globalization were contested, since this could inform an analysis of the politics of globalization. Bolivia was subject to significant international media attention around 2003, and events there became paradigmatic examples of what has been understood as "anti-globalization" protests. The theoretical interest in structural conditions for practices, or the political spaces of specific groups of actors, meant that I had to go beyond the policy discourse, and collect data on these practices. Looking at organized labor in the gas sector in particular gave this data collection a strategic coherence, and made it possible to complement some of my findings from the case in Peru. I conducted fieldwork in La Paz, Santa Cruz and Cochabamba, using interviews, documents, newspaper articles and other secondary material.

This chapter proceeds as follows. First I will describe some relevant context and the data collection at the IMF Archives and in Bolivia. I will then briefly discuss case study methodology in general and the implications it has had for this particular research process. Finally I will discuss the analytical principles involved in the discourse approach, before describing the analysis of documents and interviews.

2. Study areas, data collection and fieldwork

The IMF and the Archives in Washington, DC

The IMF has had a central role in financing and designing structural adjustment programs (SAPs) in Latin America. The IMF was conceived in the 1940s primarily to help countries with balance of payment problems, but when implementing structural adjustment in Latin America it went beyond this limited function and designed budget operations, privatization and liberalization in detail. Peet (2003: 56) writes of the IMF that it is "probably the single most powerful non-state (governance) institution in the world". Voting rights in the IMF's Board of Governors is determined by quota, a formula which has given the US the power of veto over decisions. Yet the power of

the IMF is not solely attributable to formal mechanisms. As Popke (1994) argues, its influence is embedded in its particular role in geopolitics, ties to US geopolitical interests, and a "rational" discourse of modernization in which the institution has authoritative competence. In turn, its centrality in Bolivian restructuring is related both to the materiality and discursivity of politics. Dunkerley (2007) notes that recent Bolivian history can not be understood without taking the role of the IMF into account.

Visiting the IMF in Washington DC also yielded some, though perhaps limited, contextual knowledge on how the institution works. Its physical location, two blocks from the White House and across the street from the World Bank, the heavy security arrangements that surround it and the architectonic presence of the building, all say something about the position of this institution in international relations of power. It stands in sharp contrast to some other locations at which I collected data, for example the run down "offices" of the national labor federation the COB in La Paz, Bolivia. This seems a trivial and subjective observation but still somehow very significant for an inexperienced researcher of geography.

I visited the IMF Archives between November 13th and November 17th, 2006. The Archives give access to one researcher per month, and I applied several months in advance. The Archives keep digitalized records, so the work there simply consisted of downloading files of scanned documents. The IMF has a disclosure policy that releases Executive Board documents after five years and in some cases after 10 or 20 years. Executive Board documents usually include reports from staff on the situation of a particular country, recommendations for future policy from staff and appendices with relevant statistics and correspondence. Documents such as personnel files, legal files and files pertaining to individuals are exempt from public disclosure.[2] I accessed Executive Board Documents from 2001 and earlier, which can only be accessed in person at the Archives in Washington DC. Press releases, Stand-By Reviews and Article IV consultations are available through the IMF website, so I have also been able to access these documents for the period after 2001. I downloaded nearly all available documents on Bolivia, since this seemed faster than opening each one to decide whether it was relevant. In total, I downloaded 330 IMF documents concerning Bolivia. I also used the opportunity to interview a representative from the Bolivia Team of the IMF's Western Hemisphere Department.

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[2] The IMF Archives website, http://www.imf.org/external/np/arc/eng/archive.htm. Accessed October 31st, 2007.

The Bolivian context

Compared to most other South and Latin American countries, Bolivia has been a rural and poor country with an economic base in agriculture (see map, Figure 3.1). Natural resource extraction has constituted the main industrial activity since colonial times, when the silver mines of Potosi stimulated the economic development of Europe (for an impassioned account, see Galeano, 1973). Independence in 1825 did little to mend the class and ethnic inequality of the colonial era. Long after independence, large estate owners controlled the majority of the land, upon which indigenous *campesinos* were forced into bonded labor (Klein, 2003). On the eve of the national revolution in 1952, 72 % of the population was involved in agriculture and related activities, and the industrial sector only accounted for 4 % of the economically active population. The latter included some textile factories and food processing plants, and tin mining (1950 census, cited in Klein, 2003). Almost 66% of the Bolivian population above the age of 15 identify as indigenous (Molina and Albó, 2006), and they score consistently lower than the non-indigenous population on indicators of education, health and income (UDAPE, 2006).

In the mid 1980s, the IMF was given a mandate to restructure the Bolivian economy. Between 1980 and 1984, the government had responded to capital shortfalls by increasing the money supply, sparking hyperinflation with prices rises of 8170 % on a per annum basis in early 1985 (Klein, 2003). President Paz Estenssoro, who had led the 1952 revolution, was elected for his fourth term. He adopted economic liberalism, and implemented the so-called New Economic Plan (NEP) in 1985 to bring back economic stability. Around 30,000 miners lost their jobs in the following year (Jenkins, 1997). Successive reforms followed, financed by the IMF, which rationalized and privatized the mining and hydrocarbons industry. The state enterprise YPFB was largely privatized in the 1990s, in order to bring FDI into the sector. This reduced the contribution of the YPFB to the state treasury from 47.7 % in 1989 to nothing in the last half of the 1990s (Aguirre et al., 1991, Villegas, 2002), and brought in a wave of FDI during the following years. FDI inflows leveled off, however, once the initial investments in privatized companies had been made (Figure 3.2). Real GDP growth followed a similar trajectory, growing steadily during the last half of the 1990s, but decreasing between 1999 and 2003 (Figure 3.3). In 2008, the country ranked 111th on the Human Development Index (UNDP, 2008).
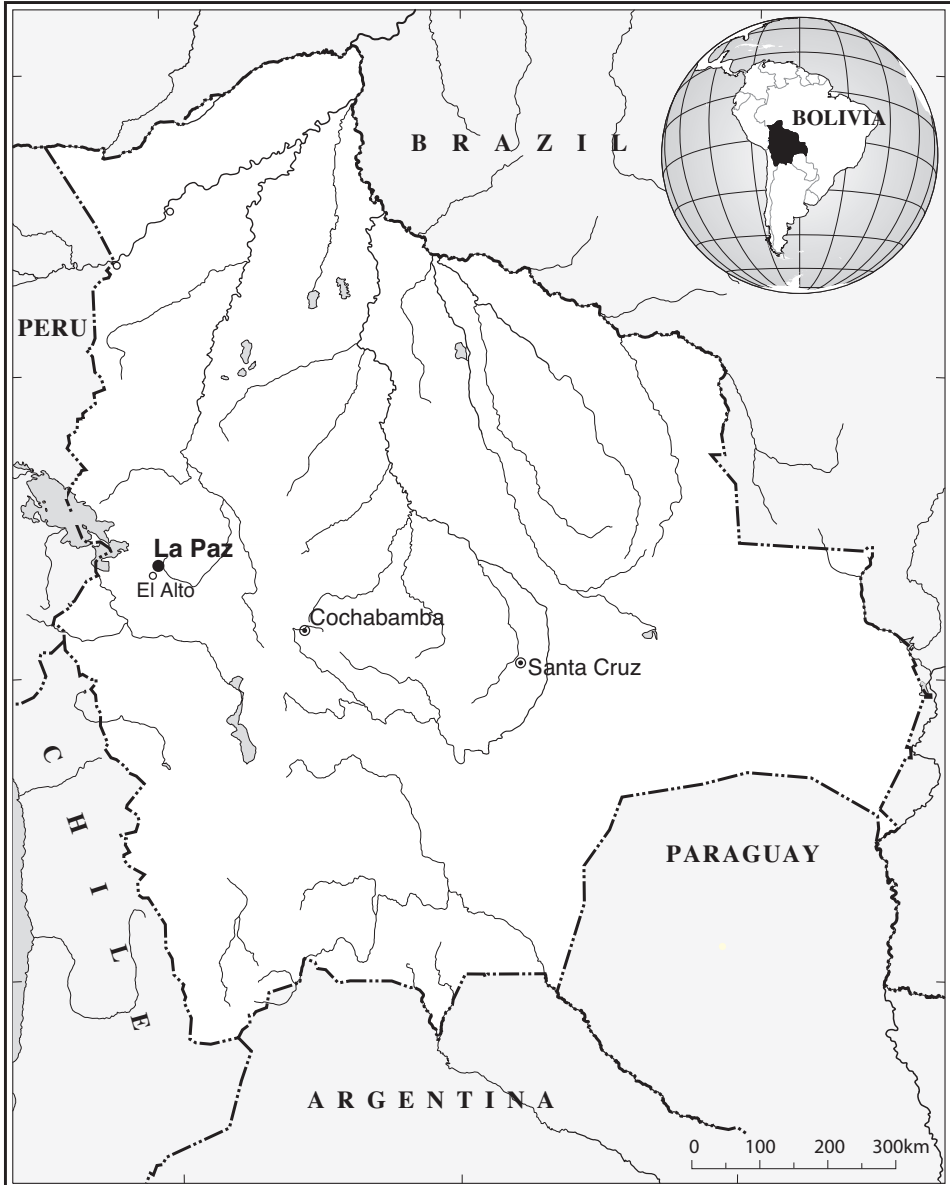
Figure 3.1: Map of Bolivia (produced by Kjell Helge Sjøstrøm)

The general public were unconvinced that structural reforms had afforded them the promised benefits, and from 1999 and on there was increasing mobilization and protest around issues of water and gas privatization (Kohl and Farthing, 2006). The party Movimiento Al Socialismo (MAS), headed by Evo Morales articulated much of the disapproval of "*neoliberalismo*" and the traditionally elitist party system. In 2005 Morales was elected as the first indigenous president of Bolivia. His subsequent nationalization of gas resources coincided with high energy prices, stimulating a return to 4 and 5 % economic growth (Figure 3.3) (Cerutti and Mansilla, 2008). The Morales presidency has nevertheless been contentious, as the autonomy movement in the eastern parts of the country has mobilized against his reforms, demanding greater self-determination.

Fieldwork in La Paz, Santa Cruz and Cochabamba

Fieldwork was conducted in Bolivia from September 25 to October 25, 2006, and from November 18, 2006 to February 8, 2007. I also visited Bolivia for a two-week stay at the Institute of Advanced Development Studies during the fall of 2007. For an observer with an interest in politics, Bolivia is a fascinating site for fieldwork. The high level of political consciousness and mobilization is perceptible in the streets and plazas (another subjective but still somehow significant observation of political geography). I arrived about ten months after Evo Morales had assumed the presidency and about five months after the nationalization of the gas sector. The turbulence that occurred immediately after those events had subsided, and new contracts between private companies and the government were under negotiation, a process that received a lot of attention in the media. The worst fears that Morales would throw the country into chaos and force out foreign investors had subsided (but were later to resurface). Nevertheless, the country was politically mobilized and polarized. I observed countless political rallies, from radical Trotskyist miners to the more rightwing Santa Cruz autonomy movement, and even tasted teargas.
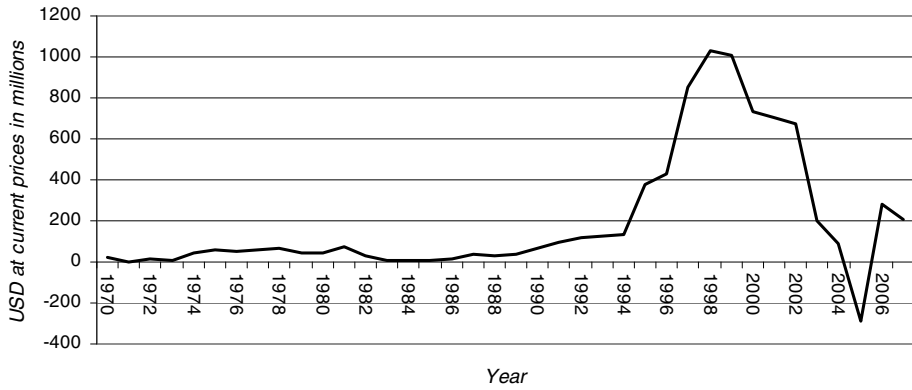
Figure 3.2: FDI Flows to Bolivia, 1970-2007
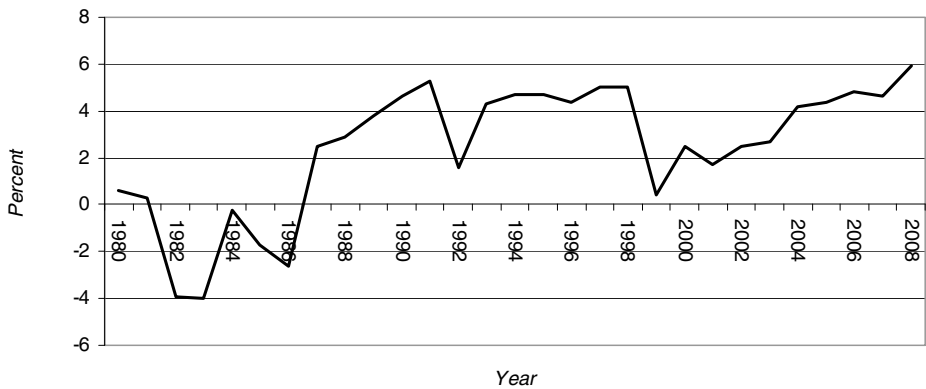Source: UNCTAD, World Investment Report 2008

Figure 3.3: Real GDP growth, Bolivia, 1980-2008.
Source: IMF, World Economic Outlook 2008

I did not have an explicit regional or local focus for the fieldwork, since I was primarily interested in collecting data on policy formation and its effects on the political environment at the national scale. La Paz, Santa Cruz and Cochabamba became the sites I visited because it was there I found the relevant institutions, companies and informants, but this was a process of discovery as well. I did not decide on these locations in advance, except for La Paz, but travelled to Santa Cruz and Cochabamba when it became evident that I could meet the relevant informants there. I also did a few interviews in El Alto. Most public institutions are in La Paz, so it was natural to conduct many interviews there. The private gas sector is mostly located in Santa Cruz, so most of those interviews were conducted there. Cochabamba can be seen as a center for political activism, and there I interviewed some labor union leaders. With El Alto, these are the four largest cities in Bolivia.

I conducted 46 interviews with 48 informants, including company representatives, labor organizers, public institution representatives, and political activists. A complete list of interviews can be found in the appendix.

Most interviews lasted between half an hour and two hours. I did not use a structured set of questions, but rather a list of the topics I wanted to cover. I tried to remain open to new topics that would arise, but also had to strive to maintain relevance in the conversations. The interviews can be described as semi-structured, according to Dunn's (2000) definition, with some predetermined order but also flexibility with regard to the position or timing of questions.

Some interviews were also conducted by telephone, when it was necessary for practical reasons. This was the case with some labor union leaders in Santa Cruz and Cochabamba, who were not available for interviews when I was there and with World Bank representatives who were not in Washington when I visited (I interviewed them as part of improving my knowledge on structural adjustment in Bolivia). Two representatives of larger companies, Transredes and Repsol, insisted on being interviewed by email. I assume this was because they needed to have their answers authorized by company management. Having to interview by email reduced the dynamism of the interviews, since follow-up questions went unanswered. On the other hand the answers were thorough and there was no chance of transcription errors.

I used a translator for most of the interviews with Spanish speakers. My Spanish at the start of the fieldwork was good enough so that I could introduce myself, describe what I was working on and ask some questions, but I was not confident enough to conduct interviews with non-English speakers without an

interpreter. I was able to understand what was said, however, and often to calibrate translations. Towards the end of the fieldwork my Spanish skills had improved, and I conducted a few interviews in Spanish without a translator. I often had the impression that bringing a translator along made me seem more "professional" and in fact helped me to gain access. For most interviews I used a tape recorder, and for Spanish interviews I went through the tapes after the interviews with the interpreter to make sure the transcripts were correct.

I strove to conduct interviews with a broad range of relevant subjects. The goal was less to achieve statistical accuracy, more to represent a reasonable scope of voices from significant institutions. The most important issue in field work like this is not necessarily the number of informants, but rather that I talked to the "right" informants and came across the "right" stories (Bradshaw and Stratford, 2005). To achieve this, I relied on a combination of approaches for sampling interviewees. Most of it was *purposeful*, in that I aimed to talk to representatives of the relevant institutions and organizations. Some of these were given from the start, for example the IMF, the Ministry of Labor, the central labor federation the COB and the *petrolero* (petroleum and gas) unions. I also used a *snowball* approach to a limited extent, in that some interviewees would refer me to others, or when, through the research process, I discovered persons that it would be relevant to interview.

It was important also to interview subjects in positions that could enable me to allow that subject to speak "for" the institution or give insights into how an institution worked. In labor unions, this was usually not a problem. I was also able to interview the Bolivian Minister of Finance and the IMF's country representative. In the larger companies of the private sector it was more difficult, and in these I was usually referred a Public Relations office which gave standard responses. These proved useful as well, because they articulate publically accepted speech and can give important information about the discursive boundaries of such speech (which I will discuss below).

All informants were interviewed in their formal and public function, so I identify them by their full name and position when relevant. None asked to be anonymous, and it was implied by the setting that their statements and names would be on public record. This is important for data collection and analysis, because the social and institutional position of each informant is essential when analyzing the implication of their statements. For example, the statements of the Minister of Finance would be close to irrelevant if they could not be identified as being made by

the Minister of Finance. Most of my interviews were across a desk in an office, and I gave less importance to the "informal field conversations" that many field researchers find so valuable (Wadel, 1991). Informal conversations gave me some contextual knowledge which I used to guide the more formal analysis of the collected data, but it is difficult to evaluate what difference it made.

I also collected data at the newspaper archives of CEDIB (Centro de Documentacion e Informacion Bolivia) in Cochabamba. CEDIB maintains an archive of newspaper clippings of twelve Bolivian newspapers, going back to the 1970s, organized thematically, including "*Organisaciones sindicales*", or labor unions. Since 2003 the articles have been published in monthly and annual CDs. I obtained the CDs from 2003, 2004, 2005 and 2006. For the years 2000, 1996, 1990 and 1985 I manually searched the folders with the newspaper articles and made photocopies of articles related to labor union organization, mobilization and ideology. The years were selected strategically to provide a sufficient range and at the same time prioritize the years when significant reforms were implemented (1985 and 1996). CEDIB also publishes analyses and reports on various social issues, and I obtained a number of them on the hydrocarbons issue. I also collected data, statistics and reports from the Ministry of Labor, the National Statistics Institute (INE), and CEDLA (Centro de Estudios para el Desarollo Laboral y Agrario). Nationalization contracts were obtained from the YPFB, the state hydrocarbon enterprise.

The issue of gas resources, particularly who should control them and how the income should be distributed, is highly contentious in Bolivia. For the process of field work, this can have different types of consequences. The issues I was interested in were high on the agenda for public debate and political organizations were actively trying to influence policy on the issue. Hence it was relatively easy to find material, and informants were eager to share their perspective. The larger companies seemed less willing to make statements that could be politically sensitive, such as criticism of the government.

I was mostly interested in the longer-term processes underlying conflicts on the surface, but it was easy during discussions and interviews to become caught up in provincial and personal disagreements. This was particularly the case with the labor movement in Santa Cruz, which was divided on the issues of autonomy and the gas income distribution. It was often tempting for me to choose sides, and I probably did so with and without conscious awareness. It was usually assumed that I supported the perspective of the informant I was talking to, whether I was talking to the resident

representative of the IMF or a labor union leader. During interview situations, however, I tried to find a balance between sympathizing with the perspective of the informant and asking critical questions that could yield a more nuanced perspective. It is difficult to evaluate the overall effects of the political contention on the process of data collection. On the one hand, more material was available and access to informants was probably easier than it otherwise would have been. One the other hand, too often discussions led into personal conflicts that were less relevant for my research.

Combining data sources

The social sciences tend to consider interviews and talk as the primary medium through which social interaction takes place (Silverman, 2003). As Hodder (2003: 156) writes, Western social science privileges the spoken word over the written, as "it is assumed that [spoken] words get us closer to minds". In a fieldwork-based discipline like geography high value is put on getting "backstage" (Goffman, 1992) revealing the "the hidden transcript" (Scott, 1990), and "hearing the unheard voices" (Attanapola, 2005). This may be relevant for a range of different research topics, but there is a danger of assuming that this type of data is generally more significant or "real" than "on stage" or "public transcript" data. When working with documents and discourses, one is also interested in the "public transcript" itself. This says something important about the contours of publically accepted speech. For example, when I asked PR representatives of private gas companies about labor unions, they instead wanted to talk about their "community engagements" and their work with NGOs. This "spin" indicates that they are concerned about image, but deem it publicly acceptable to orient civil society relations towards charity work rather than to recognize labor organization. Assuming that they are correct that this is publicly acceptable, the "spin" in turn reveals something about the conditions for labor organization in public discourse.

While interviews can be important sources of data, I had also become somewhat disillusioned with relying mostly on interviews during the research for my Master's thesis. When research subjects are positioned in a political conflict, there is a tendency for them to use interview situations to argue their case and that their answers are highly strategic. That can be interesting in itself, but it can also obscure things. For example, when I asked social movement organizations about the

cooperation with the labor unions in political agitation, it was in their interest to downplay the role of unions because they, to some degree, struggle with unions for the position as the "vanguard" of civil society. Despite these weaknesses, interviews yielded information on the perspectives of actual participants in political organizations, companies and institutions, often pointed me in the direction of insights, and could validate analyses based on other sources.

Although document material is "strategic" as well, it can be considered as the product of longer-term processes that, after they have been produced, do not change in form. They are of course read differently depending on the position of the researcher, but their semi-permanent form enables researchers to compare documents and policy over time with a degree of relative accuracy. In analyzing the IMF documents I could identify phases within which the intentions, strategies and logics of policies differed from other phases. In turn, they were "strategic" in different ways at different times, and arguably reveal better historical insights than interviews can.

To a limited degree I have also used the newspaper articles from the CEDIB archive in analysis. Admittedly this can be risky, since it is difficult to assess inherent bias in the way newspapers portray situations. I attempted to solve this by only using newspaper articles as documentation of events, meetings and public statements made. At a different level, however, newspaper articles also indicate something about public discourse. For example, when several newspapers report on the "labor crisis" this indicates that there is indeed a public perception that organized labor is in crisis.

Ultimately, of course, the question of whether to use interviews or documents relies on what *type* of data is necessary to shed light on a particular research problem. Interviews give information on an informant's perspective and experience, while policy documents are formal expressions of institutional action and process. From the start of this project I thought of these as complementary and aimed to use both types and to understand the interaction between them.

Case study methodology and generalization

The value of case studies is subject to debate, particularly over the issue of generalizability. Flyvbjerg argues that case studies may have significant value even in instances where the case chosen is not representative of the broader picture. In particular, "atypical or extreme cases often reveal more information because they activate more actors and more basic *mechanisms* in the situation studied" (Flyvbjerg,

2004: 425, emphasis added). These atypical cases can be important in clarifying the deeper causes behind a given problem, instead of describing the symptoms of the problem and how frequently they occur (ibid.).

Generalizing on the basis of a country level case study can be problematic, since there are always particularities involved. Bolivia stands out from most other Latin American countries, for example, in having a large indigenous population. But this type of generalization is not really what I am attempting here. The purpose of this case study is to reveal mechanisms involved in specific processes that are shared between countries. Writing about the structural adjustment processes of Bolivia, Kohl argues that the Bolivian case is of general interest because "innovations in Bolivia have been widely cited as a model for other developing and transition economies" (2003: 337). As such, this is not a case study of Bolivia *per se*, but rather a case study of how globalization processes influence political practices.

Methodologically, mechanisms can be understood as conceptual instruments for identifying underlying causes that yield particular outcomes given certain circumstances. They point to outcomes of a particular process that can, contextual particularities aside, likely be observed across cases where similar processes are involved. The processes and mechanisms I discuss in the papers may have somewhat different manifestations in different contexts, but are nevertheless thought to represent general tendencies that take place across other contexts. In turn, the purpose here is to arrive at mechanisms that can be expected to be common to many of these contexts, although they may be manifested differently. For example, paper #5 discusses how economic liberalization and informalization of work influence the internal composition and ideological outlook of a labor movement. Arguably, this is informative of what happens under related circumstances in different contexts.

Bolivia provides a good case to examine these mechanisms. The country has operated under IMF arrangements continuously (except for a short period of 8 months) from 1985 to 2006 (Weisbrot and Sandoval, 2006). During this time, these programs evolved from classical macroeconomic structural adjustment to more detailed governance reforms aiming to improve the climate for investments, so the country has been part of the shifting "fashions" of structural adjustment. Natural resource sectors, particularly gas, have generated a considerable share of the state's budget, so restructurings have had fundamental effects on resource generation and distribution. As an inherently instable country with high social inequality, these reforms have generated unrest and protest. As the site for a case study, it opens the

way for exploring fundamental restructuring with deep-seated effects on political practice. Barton writes of structural adjustment in Latin America that "Bolivia's example is extreme, but one that has been mirrored throughout the continent" (1997: 115).

3. Analyzing the data

Discourse methodology

The purpose of a discourse approach in methodology is to discover the assumptions and constructions "behind" statements, and how these assumptions create circumstances for action (Ball, 1993). Critical discourse analysis is focused on how social constructions are imbued with unequal power relations, and aims to "deconstruct" these in order to make power relations visible (Ainsworth and Hardy, 2004). This approach is often, but not always, based on textual analyses of documents (Alvesson and Karreman, 2000). In many studies, "discourse" has been operationalized as textual readings of the policies or political strategies of elites or centralized institutions, and failed to contextualize discourses to see how they shape practice or are interrelated with materiality (Mamadouh and Dijkink, 2006, Müller, 2008, Neumann, 2002, Paasi, 2006, Smith, 2000).

In a debate on what was termed "geopolitical remote sensing" in discourse studies, Moisio and Harle (2006: 209) warned against the methodological implications of an emphasis on texts in analysis and against the emergence of "a new critical armchair geography" (for a defence of "geopolitical remote sensing", see Antonsich, 2006). Discourse approaches have also been criticized for lacking formal methodological foundation (Denzin, 2003, Kendall and Wickham, 2004, Milliken, 1999).

Part of the problem is that Foucault's discourse concept has been interpreted as knowledge imposed through a static dominance relation, which leaves little room for methodologies to take into account either materiality or practice. Within the post-development debate, examples of such interpretations are Escobar (1984, 1995), DuBois (1991) and Ferguson (1997), who tend to describe the power relations of development interventions as monolithically imposing its forms upon Third World subjects through uniform knowledge apparatuses. In his later works, Foucault became more interested in how practices shape discourses, exploring the relation between

individual capacity for self-control and political rule and exploitation (Foucault, 1991b, Gordon, 1991, Lemke, 2002).

Discursive perspectives, even of the remote sensing variety, can contribute to the geographical debate by providing insights into the institutional production of power relations and particular knowledges in space and uncovering the way particular social relationships are scripted through powerful knowledges. However, greater sensitivity to practices and contexts, or "bringing the geography back in" (Mitchell, 1997) would make it clearer how these knowledges are both embedded within contexts and constituted by those contexts, or how politics are both discursive and material (Dalby, 1991, Müller, 2008).

My conceptual and analytical approach is an attempt to respond to some of these concerns. First, I have held that discourses are only part of what constitutes the structural context for political practices. The discourses in question are interrelated with material processes, in the sense that they provide legitimation to particular economic models. For example, IMF policy is analyzed as a discourse with embedded assumptions about "rational" macroeconomics. This discourse has effects on state spending and FDI, and therefore the material realities of employment. Employment has effects on the possibilities for labor organization and other political practices, which in turn affect possibilities for mobilizations that seek to contest the policy discourse.

Second, I use the concept of political space to attempt to pin down *how* a general discourse has effects on practices in a particular context. Instead of conceptualizing discourses as monolithically imposing power relations, I analyze from the perspective that a particular discourse has no trans-spatial "reach" beyond the ways in which it affects the resources and constraints on political practice (Allen, 2003, Jessop, 2007). This data cannot be found within the discourse itself, but in more contextual sources such as interviews.

Third, a point of departure has been the material relations that vest the discourse with power. In the case of the IMF, this is related to its position in geopolitical and international relations, and the significant financial resources that are attached to its evaluations. In the Bolivian case, the IMF was given the mandate to restructure its economy when the country was in macroeconomic crisis and in dire need of refinancing in order to stay afloat. This is an important aspect of the material context of the discursive power of IMF policy documents.

Fourth, I have taken into account how discourses are contested. My use of the discourse approach draws less on Foucault and more on Laclau and Mouffe, which leaves more room for political practices. Looking at a specific institutional policy discourse and how this discourse shapes spaces for practice opens the way for analyzing how these practices can take advantage of discourses in unintended ways and even contest them (papers #2, #5 and 6).

In short, in these papers, I have attempted to avoid contributing to the "new critical armchair geography" and instead to contribute to understanding the complex ways in which discourses are embedded in contexts and materiality.

Analyzing IMF policy documents

Analyzing the IMF documents entailed a process of starting from a large body of mostly unorganized material and arriving at a set of coherent arguments. In this process I went through a series of steps, inspired by suggestions from literature on analysis procedure. Several authors have outlined possible sequences for discourse and document analysis, including Neumann, Fairclough, and Aase and Fossåskaret. Neumann's three steps for discourse analysis are delimitation, representations and division (2001). Fairclough (2001) distinguishes between the stages of description, interpretation and explanation. Aase and Fossåskaret (2007) recommend first identifying social context, then the social position of the speaker, and finally identifying the connotations of statement. These are broadly similar, in that they all recommend starting with the bigger picture, then delimiting and looking at the more specific properties of the text, before combining these in explanation. What distinguishes the social science perspective of Neumann from the linguistics of Fairclough, for example, is a stronger focus on how discourses are rooted in institutional structures and the socio-political fields which give meaning to text (Manning and Cullum-Swam, 1994, Palan, 2000). That means that, for a social scientist, the text is just part of what goes into explanation.

It can be useful to *identify phases* of a particular discourse in time, as for example Guthman (1997) does with regard to development discourses in Nepal. Often such phases can be identified and characterized by finding *monumental texts* (Neumann, 2001), documents that signal a shift in the way a phenomenon is described within a discourse. Identifying these monumental texts helps the researcher to see the discursive breaks between periods and may also point towards external

events that may have brought about a shift in discourse. My approach to analyzing the policy documents has been drawn from these suggestions. The way I proceeded towards arriving at arguments about the IMF document material is as follows.

First, I started from contextual knowledge about the importance of IMF programs in Bolivia and the general influence of that institution in development and economic politics in the South. It was this contextual knowledge and preliminary readings that indicated to me the importance of the IMF programs early in the process, and later informed the research design and theoretical choices.

Second, it was necessary to delimit the collected material, in other words, establishing some procedure for eliminating what is not relevant. IMF policy documents are usually lengthy, and contain detailed analyses of various sectors of the economy. There are different types of IMF policy documents relating to Bolivia, although they have similar structures. Every year an "Article IV Consultation" is published, named after the article in the IMF charter that stipulates that the institution shall conduct annual evaluations of the economic situation and policies of member country. In addition there are documents that review current programs and stand-by arrangements (short-term programs), and make recommendations on future programs. I wanted to focus on the bigger picture, and paid particular attention to summaries and policy recommendations. I decided in advance to limit relevance to FDI, state models discussed in relation to FDI, and organized labor. I read documents from 1980, but analyzed more rigorously the documents from 1984, when structural adjustment programs started being discussed. The programs ended in 2006, when the Morales administration decided not to continue seeking budget support from the IMF. In reading the documents I started with the earliest documents, and took notes on statements related to the relevant topics. This was developed into a chronology of statements and policies regarding the FDI, state models and labor. Given the discursive perspective, I was interested not just in the actual policies, but also the statements that gave them legitimacy.

Third, I focused on finding patterns in the statements and policies. I found it useful to compare statements within a topic made at different points in time, using monumental texts. For example, the connotations of "FDI" changed radically over time, from the start of the structural adjustment program when FDI did not have a prominent position, to the later phases of the IMF programs, when the success of Bolivian development basically became measured in terms of levels of FDI. The policy discourse could be divided into three phases (1984-1989, 1989-1997, 1997-

present) within which constructions of FDI and other relevant topics were relatively similar. I wrote a working paper to systematize the periods of the discourse, which was later used as a baseline document for further analysis using complementary data.

Although the primary focus in analysis was these broader periodic shifts in the discourse, I also looked at constructions within particular statements. As an illustration, consider this example from paper #3. In the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper from 2001 it is stated that growth and poverty reduction will be achieved by "reaching out to excluded groups, and increasing the effectiveness and efficiency of institutions in the public sector".

From the broader discussion in the document it is made clear that what is meant by "efficiency" here is the ability of state institutions to provide the proper infrastructure for private economic activity. On the surface, "efficiency" refers to the universally accepted norm that state institutions should not waste resources. When looking at the measures proposed to increase "efficiency", however, it becomes apparent that in this statement it refers to a particular and controversial model of public management, the "investment climate" model where the main task of the state is to facilitate private economic activity. The sentence level analysis attempts in this way to uncover the assumptions and values behind central concepts in monumental texts.

Analyzing interviews

Analyzing policy documents requires a separate period of focused reading. When using interviews, however, fieldwork and analysis become part of an interrelated process of discovery. The interviews served the two-fold purpose of, first, orientating myself in the field, and second, discovering the narratives of the interview subjects that grounded their practices. After the fieldwork period I read through the transcripts several times, organized them into groups, took notes on them and picked out statements relevant for the paper ideas I had. In conducting and analyzing interviews, I find it helpful to try to understand the narrative of the interview subject. By this I mean the ways in which interview subjects emphasize certain elements of reality and put them together with other elements to create a storyline of causes and effects. Interview subjects rarely use exactly the same words and labels, but I find that similarly positioned subjects tend to have similar narratives. These are helpful in trying to understand reality from their position and why they view it the way they do.

As Lægran (2004) notes, writing an article-based thesis undermines attempts to make interview analysis a coherent and step-by-step process. In writing and rewriting the papers, I repeatedly went back to the interview material and focused on different aspects. Each of the papers makes use of interview material in different ways and to different degrees, depending on focus and perspective. As I worked on the interview material, some "narratives" emerged. One common narrative among unionists was first describing the COB as an influential organization, then neoliberalism came (through "21060" as they also call it, referring to the number of the decree that instated flexible contracts), the workers lost power, new social movements emerged, and Morales came to power as a result of these social movements. Unionists also liked to claim that they were instrumental within these movements. For company representatives, the narrative of recent history was not very different, except that their portrayal tended to stress how the country had been "liberated" from disruptive unions.

In analyzing interviews (and also documents), there is a danger of picking out statements that confirm assumptions one already has. This is a problematic issue because, on one hand, one is dependent on using the statements that best illustrate the point one is trying to make, and on the other, one is making false generalizations if that particular statement diverges too much from statements made on the same topic by other comparable interview subjects. This problem can be mediated by explaining the positionality of each "speaker", but then again there is not much room for that in articles. The principle I have followed here has been simply to proceed carefully in each instance, and avoid generalizing too broadly upon unique statements. This was not too much of a problem. Within the groups I identify, private sector businesses or labor unions, many of the same narratives and perspectives were shared. That made it easier to use single statements to illustrate the perspective of a group.

Application in the papers

The papers combine the data material and analyses in different ways. Paper #3 is where the analysis of the FDI policy discourse in the IMF documents is elaborated in the most detail. It looks at shifts in this discourse, and uses interviews and secondary material to analyze the effects the discursive shifts have had on political spaces. The purpose here was to develop the discursive side of the broader argument so that the subsequent papers can build on its analyses. Paper #4 briefly summarizes these

analyses, and uses interviews, nationalization contracts and secondary sources to bring the argument into a discussion of gas nationalization. Paper #5 draws on interviews, newspaper material and secondary sources to discuss the shifting practices of the labor movement as a whole. It then returns to the IMF document material to analyze how contestation sparked shifts in the policy discourse. Paper #6 is co-authored by an anthropologist, and parts of the analyses draw on her research on participation and citizenship in rural Bolivia. The paper summarizes some the analysis developed in paper #3, but primarily uses recent IMF documents to analyze the interrelations between policy and mobilization.

Discussion

Initially I posed the question; What are the mechanisms and processes by which globalization influences shifts in political practice? The papers relate to this question from different angles, and I do not intend to repeat their respective conclusions here. Instead I want to reconcile some of the conclusions in the papers and point to some of the theoretical implications of them. It has been shown throughout that the complex processes associated with globalization shape political spaces in ways that create *differential* effectiveness between practices and claims. In light of the theoretical and empirical discussions in the papers, the predominant mechanisms can be outlined as follows:

- **Relations of production become less central to political articulation**

Economic liberalization and liberal FDI policy undermine, in significant ways, relations of production as a source of collective identity and organizational coherence. Transforming the state from economic actor to facilitator for private economic activity weakens a historically important channel for negotiating these relations. This narrows political spaces for collective organization around work and labor (papers #1, #3, #4 and #5). For the Bolivian *petroleros*, FDI policy discourse affected the resources for effective workplace politics by reducing employment, introducing flexible contracts and fragmenting sources of collective identity (paper #3). Privatization also increased informal work, which dislocates direct antagonistic relationships between workers and employers and weakens proletarian sectors within the labor movement (paper #5).

- **Spaces are opened for articulation and rescaling of claims that resonate with hegemonic liberal discourses**

With the dislocation of the centrality of relations of production in processes of collective organization and identity formation, political spaces are opened for subjectivities and identities that were previously on the margin. Informal sectors of the labor movement are differently positioned within asymmetries of power, and bring with them class visions, claims and collective identities that are broader in scope and are shared with social movements. These visions are given legitimacy by resonating with hegemonic discourses of neoliberal citizenship, participatory development or democracy (papers #2, #5 and #6).

- **The new spaces for politics of scale are asymmetric**

The increased potential for communication and mobility is of course a cliché in characterizing globalization. The point to make here is that some political claims are more "mobile" than others. Information- and solidarity politics work when they resonate with hegemonic discourses in other localities. This resonance enables networking and articulation across scale (papers #1 and #2). In contrast, there are few discursive resources available at the international scale for reasserting an effective workplace politics. The notion that the class- and workplace politics have been weakened is a self-fulfilling prophecy, in a way, because it lends less discursive legitimacy to projects of reasserting it effectively.

Changing conditions for political practice

The perspective held throughout the papers is that globalization should not primarily be understood as empowering particular actors, such as multinational corporations, but rather as representing a fundamental restructuring in the conditions for political practice. Focusing on the changing conditions for political practice opens the way for more nuanced analyses of relationships between neoliberalism, internationalization of capital, labor unions, social movements and oppositional politics. Material processes of time-space compression through technological innovation and internationalization of production, and discursive shifts in terms of diffusing economically and politically liberal norms, change structural contexts for practices. This means that actors have to maneuver in new political spaces, and political effectiveness or power is dependent on the degree to which actors manage to build coalitions and articulate narratives, collective subjectivities and claims in ways that resonate with hegemonic discourses.

As an entry point into understanding these processes, FDI discourse has pointed to some underlying material and discursive changes that shape new political spaces. I have shown how FDI is more than a simple capital transaction, it involves changing work regimes as FDI is attracted to replace direct state economic activity. This is in turn embedded in discourses which rationalize particular development models and governance reforms.

In the papers I have used the perspective of the conditions for political practice as a corrective to the respective debates in the literature. It has been argued that the centrality of the collective subjectivity of *class* has been challenged in the contemporary political climate, while new attempts to conceptualize such subjectivity fail to account for scalar complexity (paper #1). I have showed that rescaling involves something more than simply participating in new arenas; it also involves rearticulating claims in ways that resonate with hegemonic discourses on larger scales (paper #2). Labor union disempowerment is not simply related to lean production, but a qualitatively different shaping of political spaces (paper #3). Globalization creates new possibilities for social and grassroots movements, but work place politics are marginalized within these spaces (paper #4). Labor union renewal is more than strategic coalition-building, as new work regimes shift internal compositions of labor movements and bring forth rearticulations of claims and class visions (paper #5). Neoliberal reform and popular mobilization are not simply antagonistic forces, there are important continuities and mutual constraints between them (paper #6).

In a more general sense, debates in and around the discipline of geography have focused on how the processes of globalization have opened new spaces and possibilities for transcending local and militant particularisms, extending transnational solidarity, forming networks across scale and using the media as a new arena for pressing claims. It has been pointed out that even labor unions may engage in practices that take advantage of these possibilities and spaces. That may be so, but when looking at the structural context of these new spaces it becomes clear that they are skewed in particular ways. New forms of political practice are intricately interrelated with processes and discourses of power, which shape conditions enabling particular practices and constraining others. The "tangled arrangements of power" (Allen, 2003) are multidirectional; practices are channeled in particular ways but they are also provided with grounds for contestation. That is why I have argued against simple divisions such as that between "neoliberalism" and "alternatives", for example; they constitute one another in important ways. I do not mean to suggest that

"there are no alternatives", but to point out that when the tangled arrangements of power operate by shaping the conditions for political practices they also provide resources for contestation.

Particular interests are served when relations of production become less central to political articulation, when the most effective claims are those that resonate with economically and politically liberal hegemonic discourses or when some claims are more "mobile" than others. Relations of production are externalized from the realm of politics, largely out of reach of political questioning and contestation. This makes it more difficult to challenge fundamental relations in political economy, and channels political articulation towards hegemonic liberal norms and discourses. Traditional class- and workplace-based contestation has few legitimizing discourses and norms to appeal to at larger scales and is significantly constrained when attempting to go beyond localized militant particularism.

However, the hegemony of politically liberal discourses and norms also enables various groups to engage with these discourses to empower a variety of claims. Actors can enlarge the spaces for their practices by rearticulating claims in ways that resonate with hegemonic discourses. This includes articulations that "spill over" the intended boundaries of hegemonic discourses and use discursive resources in unintended ways. NGOs and social movements have proved to be effective in establishing new antagonistic relations and mobilizing narratives to empower their claims by appealing to the norms of liberal discourses. Unions have clearly been less effective in this, but have in some instances also been able to enlarge their political spaces by rearticulating traditional claims and appealing to similar discourses.

The liberal discourses of governance and "investment climate" reforms are particularly dependent on socio-political integration and public "ownership", on the one hand, and political/economic stability on the other. Political spaces are enlarged when mobilization and contestation can make apparent the contradiction between these in particular contexts. Contestation is enabled by the norms within the discourses themselves, but these are used in unintended ways to undermine their implementation. This contestation may take advantage of networks across scales, but local/national antagonisms may also provide instruments for effective action. Political practices are most effective when they are able to mobilize material and discursive resources at a variety of scales to articulate claims around commonly perceived injustices.

Redistribution and recognition in future Bolivian politics

In the introduction, I noted the common assumption that the complex processes of globalization have brought about a general shift from a politics of redistribution to a politics of recognition. I will end by returning to these concepts to see how this tendency plays out in the Bolivian context. These concepts have been useful at an abstract level because they denote a general tendency in how globalization seems to encourage a shift in political practices and claims making. As argued at length, the complex processes of globalization have narrowed spaces for the historically central redistributive project in Bolivia, that of the labor movement.

However, this conceptual pair is problematic as well. At a philosophical level, the idea of this shift has been challenged by some who argue that redistribution and recognition cannot meaningfully be separated, because a struggle for redistribution always presupposes a struggle for recognition and vice versa (Tully, 2000, Young, 1997). And as seen from a contextual perspective, as geographers tend to prefer, it becomes clear that what is taking place is not exactly that struggles for redistribution are "extinguished" (Fraser, 2003). Struggles for redistribution are not limited to labor movements, but are parts of the varied political projects against what I have referred to as multiple asymmetries of power.

In Latin America, the political primacy of unions has been eroded, but new forms of popular mobilization still involve *both* the classical demands for social equality *and* demands for the respect of cultural difference (Barrett et al., 2008). The popular demand for gas nationalization in Bolivia is an example of this. On the one hand it represents the recognition-claim that "the people" (*el pueblo*) and particularly indigenous peoples have been wrongfully excluded from structures of representation, that they have the legitimate right to decide how this natural resource should be managed, and that they should be recognized as the proper owners of this resource. On the other hand, it represents the redistribution-claim that the surplus of gas production has wrongfully benefited elites and multinational companies, and should to a greater degree benefit popular sectors. Land reform is another example of an inherently redistributive struggle primarily fought by indigenous *campesinos*. The indigenous *campesinos* and informal workers of Bolivia are more aware than anyone of the economic aspects of their marginalization, and how economic marginalization and socio-cultural exclusion are intricately interlinked. There also seems to be a growing acknowledgement within the leadership of the labor movement that marginalization must be counteracted in close cooperation with forces and sectors

outside of the traditional proletariat. In contemporary Bolivia, redistribution and recognition are simply two prongs of social struggle and political practice.

However, the mechanisms I have outlined above indicate that the *traditional* project and practices of the politics of redistribution have been weakened. Social movements have to some degree filled the void of labor unions in the redistributive project, but it can be questioned how transformative the redistributive struggles in Bolivia can be without an effective politics of the workplace. There are aspects of the redistributive project that cannot be achieved at the ballot box or in the streets. The core function of labor unions is to negotiate for proper wages and working conditions within and from the workplace, and social movements are not in a position to replace unions in this respect. If the economic development aspirations of the Morales administration come to fruition, there will be more, not less, FDI in the Bolivian economy. This means that an effective labor movement and effective workplace politics within private companies will be central to the redistributive project as a whole.

Sociologist and current vice-president of Bolivia, Álvaro García Linera, has written that, at the end of the twentieth century, the only political vision of the labor movement was a reversal of history (García, 2004). While this seems less true today, it is still correct in the sense that labor seems to conceive the recovery of its political spaces as akin to a return to the old-school redistributive agenda, rather than accepting the impossibility of this in the context of globalization. For the Bolivian labor movement and labor movements in the South, future political spaces seem to lie in shaping the course of history more than reversing it.

This is necessarily a *scalar* undertaking on the part of labor and social movements. At the local scale, unions will be dependent on achieving effective workplace organization in foreign companies. Given the nature of international capital, however, it is also necessary to up-scale of practices and claims. Monitoring and enforcement of labor regulations is a task for the national state, which is subject to pressures from all levels and scales. In the present structural context, the national state is perhaps particularly vulnerable to pressures, norms and discourses of multilateral and transnational institutions and movements. It is necessary to reassert *legitimacy* for workplace politics in these discourses, which would in turn correct some of the asymmetry in the spaces for politics of scale. The aim should not be to restore the unresponsive unions of the past, but to create a more level field for transformative politics of recognition *and* politics of redistribution.

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Appendix: List of interviews

- Carlos Molliendo, Economist, International Finance Corporation, World Bank Group. La Paz, October 6th, 2006
- Juan Gonzalo Flores, International Finance Corporation Nicaragua, World Bank Group, formerly IFC Bolivia. Phone (to Nicaragua), October 9th, 2006
- Victor Hugo Sainz, Former Superintendent of Hydrocarbons. Cochabamba, October 9th and 10th, 2006
- Gretchen Gordon, Research associate, The Democracy Centre. Cochabamba, October 11th, 2006
- Osvaldo Guachalla and Pablo Poveda, researchers, Centro de estudios para el desarollo laboral y agrario (CEDLA). La Paz, October 17th, 2006
- Mario Bustamente, Central Obrera Boliviana. La Paz, October 18th and 19th, 2006
- Marcial Vargas Franco, Secretary of Education, Fejuve El Alto. El Alto, October 19th, 2006
- German Velasquez, Press Director, Yacimientos Petrolíferos Fiscales Bolivianos. La Paz, October 23rd, 2006
- Toribio Hinojosa Lopez, former COB organizer, now President, Fejuve La Paz. La Paz, October 23rd, 2006
- Esteban R. Vesperoni, Bolivia Resident Representative, International Monetary Fund. La Paz, October 24th, 2006
- Mario Mansilla, Western Hemisphere Department, Bolivia Team, International Monetary Fund. Washington DC, November 15th, 2006
- Yussef Akly, Director of Strategy, Camara Boliviana de Hidrocarburos. Santa Cruz, November 27th, 2006
- Veronica Paz Suarez, Coordinator of Media Communication, Chaco. Santa Cruz, November 29th, 2006
- Jose A. Ruiz, Regional Representative in Santa Cruz, Superintendencia de Hidrocarburos. Santa Cruz, November 30th, 2006
- Luis Rojas, Director of Sales, Intergas. Santa Cruz, December 7th, 2006
- Raul Cabezas, Director of quality, Farsur. Santa Cruz, December 8th, 2006
- Rodrigo Solis, Field Engineer, Baker Atlas. Santa Cruz, December 8th, 2006
- Augusto Ibarra, Coordinador de Prensa y Publicaciones, Petrobras. Santa Cruz, December 8th, 2006
- Eduardo Alba, General Director, Equipetrol. Santa Cruz, December 8th, 2006
- Erika Patzi Pelaez, Accountant, Prodimsa S.A. Santa Cruz, December 11th, 2006
- Patricia Arnez, Institutional Relations, Transredes SA. Email interview, received December 11th, 2006
- Ivan Uribe, Commercial Director, Chevron Global Lubricants. Santa Cruz, December 12th, 2006
- Patricia Unzueta, Contact administrator, Halliburton. Santa Cruz, December 12th, 2006
- Berardo Arteaga, General Secretary, Federacion Departemental Fabriles de Santa Cruz. Santa Cruz, December 13th, 2006
- Enrique Coscio, Owner and Manager, Canadian Energy Enterprise. Santa Cruz, December 13th, 2006

- Mario Moscoso and Samuel Monasterio, Sindicato Trabajadores Petroleros Santa Cruz. Santa Cruz, December 14th, 2006
- Juan Tarqui, Member of Executive Committee of COD and General Secretary of Federacion Departemental de Trabajadores del Comercio Minorista. Santa Cruz, December 14th, 2006
- Edwin Fernandez, Executive Secretary, Central Obrera Departemental Santa Cruz. Santa Cruz, December 14th, 2006
- Miguel Cirbian, Director of External Relations, Repsol YPF Bolivia SA. Email interview, received December 18th, 2006
- Freddy Hidalgo, Spokesperson, Central Obrera Departemental Cochabamba. Cochabamba, December 18th, 2006
- Tomás Lopez, General Secretary, Sindicato de Trabajadores Petroleros de La Paz. La Paz, December 27th, 2006
- David Reynoso, Secretary of National Relations, Federacion Sindical de Trabajadores Petroleros de Bolivia. La Paz, December 28th, 2006
- Hector Machaca, Secretary of Relations, COR El Alto. El Alto, December 28th, 2006
- Rolando Borda, General Secretary, Sindicato Transredes. Phone (to Santa Cruz), December 29th, 2006
- Salustino Mayta, Executive Secretary, Central Obrera Departemental La Paz. La Paz, December 29th, 2006
- Genaro Torrico, Specialist in Syndicalist Matters, Ministerio de Trabajo. La Paz, December 29th, 2006
- Freddy Ponce, General Secretary, Sindicato de Trabajadores Petroleros Cochabamba. Phone (to Cochabamba), January 3rd, 2007
- Rafael Martinez, Director of relational agreements and international coordination, Ministerio de Hidrocarburos. La Paz, January 3rd, 2007
- Germán Calderón, Director of commercialization, Superintendencia de Hidrocarburos. La Paz, January 4th, 2007
- Jorge Téllez, Former international representative, Yacimientos Petrolíferos Fiscales Bolivianos. La Paz, January 5th, 2007
- Oscar Morales, Secretary of relations, Sindicato de Trabajadores Petroleros de la Refineria Gualberto Villarroel, Petrobras Cochabamba. Phone (to Cochabamba), January 5th, 2007
- Ramiro Delgado, Unity Chief, Viceministerio de coordinacion con movimientos sociales y sociedad civil. La Paz, January 8th, 2007
- Eleodoro Mayorga, Task Manager, Environmental Management Capacity Building Project of the Hydrocarbon Sector, World Bank. Phone (to Washington DC), January 10th, 2007
- Luis Arce, Minister of Finance. La Paz, January 12th, 2007
- Edwin Perez, Amateur labor movement historian. Cochabamba, January 22nd, 2007
- Luisa Liachi, (New) Press Director, YPFB. La Paz, February 6th, 2007