

Bolivian Food Sovereignty in Policy & Practice

An assessment through the lens of Authoritarian Populism



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Current paper

- How can we make sense of the current 'authoritarian populist' moment, with a focus on rural areas? (Scoones et al. 2018)
- Food Sovereignty politics in Bolivia
- Government of Evo Morales and García Linera (2005) incorporated 'food sovereignty' in Constitution and policy directives
- Yet, extractivist legacy continues

EXTRACTIVISM

“Those activities which remove large quantities of natural resources that are not processed (or processed only to a limited degree), especially for export.

Extractivism is not limited to minerals or oil. Extractivism is also present in farming, forestry and even fishing’

(Acosta 2013: 62).

‘FOOD SOVEREIGNTY’

‘Food Sovereignty: the right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through **ecologically sound and sustainable** methods, and their right to define their own food and agriculture systems’

(La Vía Campesina)

Bolivia: Official Food Sovereignty Discourse

- 2006 Constitution (product of social movement input and years of action)
- National Development Plans
- Agrarian reform law
- Directives by the Ministry of Dev't and Land

TITLE III: COMPREHENSIVE SUSTAINABLE RURAL DEVELOPMENT

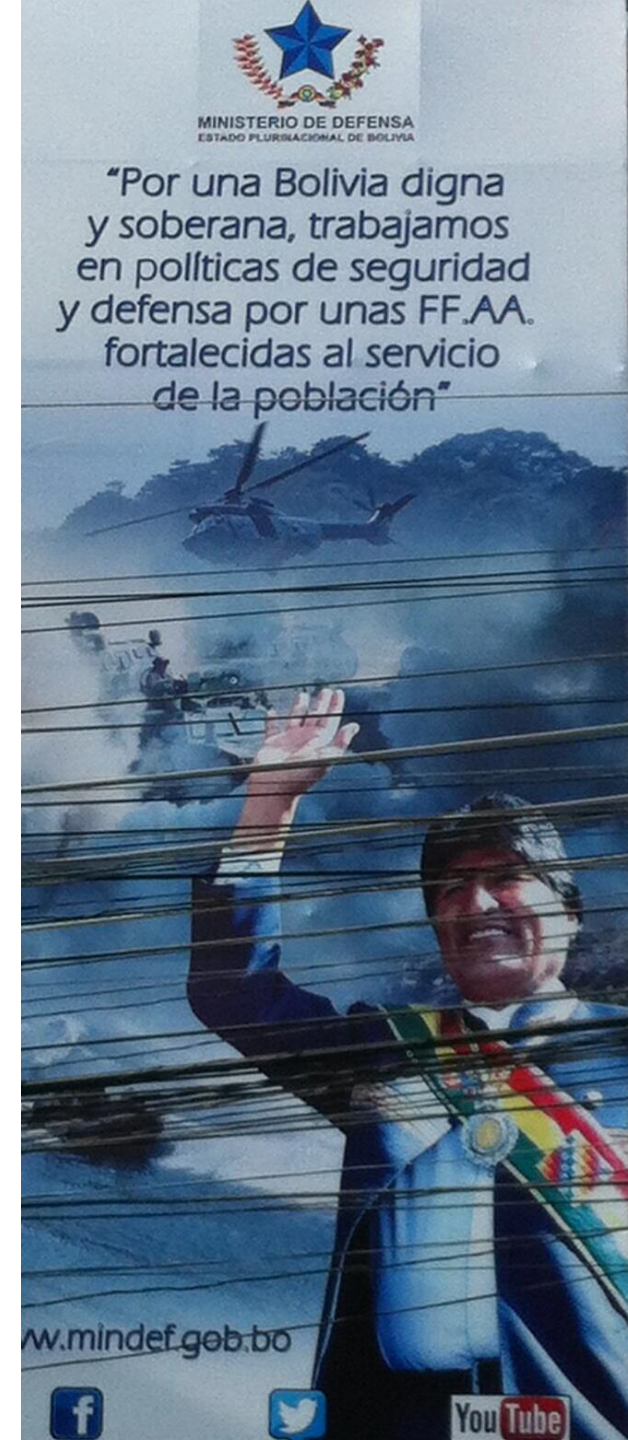
Article 405

Comprehensive, sustainable rural development is a fundamental part of the economic policies of the State, which shall prioritize its actions to encourage all communitarian economic undertakings and those of the group of rural actors, placing emphasis on food security and sovereignty, by means of the following:

1. The sustained and sustainable increase of agricultural, livestock, manufacturing, agro-industrial, and tourist industry productivity, as well as their commercial capacity.
2. The articulation and internal complementary form of the structures of agricultural, livestock and agro-industrial production.
3. Achievement of better conditions for economic exchange of the rural productive sector in relations to the rest of the Bolivian economy.
4. The importance and respect of the rural native indigenous communities in all dimensions of their life.
5. The strengthening of the economy of the small agricultural and livestock producers and of the family and communitarian economy.]

"They lied': Bolivia's untouchable Amazon lands at risk once more

- TIPNIS (territorio indígena y parcque nacional Isiboro Sécure)
- Protected area (1965) Indigenous territory (1990)
- Plans for construction motorway (Morales Gov't, 2011)
- TIPNIS declared intangible zone, following protest march (Law 180, 2011)
- August 2017, Law 180 repealed through Law 266.



Three explanations for the contradiction between policy and practice

- Theoretical work on food sovereignty:
the weaknesses of a relational interpretation

(Hospes 2011; Carolan 2014; Jarosz 2014)

- Context-dependent
 - Process-oriented / practice
 - Food Sovereignty for whom?
 - Food Sovereignty at what level?
- Weaknesses of the food sovereignty frame have been exploited
(See Tilzey 2018)

The compensatory state – *el estado compensador*

‘A compensatory state is a state in which the balance between extractivism, controlling and managing it, and redistributing the profits is constantly in flux and responded to’

(paraphrased from Gudynas 2012).

- Compensation not only understood in terms of welfare distribution, but in terms of maintaining a balance between different forces.

Authoritarian Rural Populism

‘A movement towards a dominative and authoritarian form of class politics – paradoxically rooted in in the ‘transformism’ of popular discontent’.

‘A change in the modalities of political and ideological relationships between the ruling bloc, the state and the dominated classes’.

Such strategic shifts in the balance of forces often involve representations in which ‘the people’ are pitted against a racialized or otherwise advantaged ‘Other’.

(Scoones et al 2018 paraphrasing Hall 1985, p.2).

Processes of de-democratisation

El TCP da luz verde a la repostulación de Evo Morales y Álvaro García

La Razón Digital / José Luis Columba / [Comente](#) ♥

El fallo, según explicó el magistrado Macario Lahor Cortez, implica la aplicación preferente de la convención interamericana sobre Derechos Humanos por ser una norma más favorable sobre derechos políticos.

- + El MAS da su primer paso legal en busca de la repostulación de Evo Morales
- + García Linera da por hecho repostulación de Evo y llama a pensar en preparar la campaña electoral



Evo Morales en un acto de campaña. Atrás aparece Álvaro García Linera. Foto: Archivo.

Morales: 'It is not the power of Evo, it is the power of the people'



Defensive food sovereignty & rural authoritarianism

- Defensive localism (Winter 2003)
- New inequalities (McKay and Colque 2015)
- The theme of rural populism is an invitation to face these 'darker' connections head-on and explore the link between food sovereignty and authoritarianism.

‘Differentiations of labour, power, gender, and race do not disappear when tied to local places’ Feldman and Welsh 1995).

‘Valorisation of the “local” may be less about the radical affirmation of an ethic of care, and more to do with the production of less positive parochialism and nationalism’ (Holloway and Kneafsey (2000).

Feminist Methodologies & Authoritarian Populism

- Link between gender and populism under-explored (Mudde and Kaltwasser)
- Link between populism and pluralism under-explored (Padoan 2017)
- The feminist 'tool kit':
 - Intersectionality: class/race/gender and more
 - Existing Latin American feminist critique of extractivism

References

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