

Pluralizing Paradigms: Rights of Mother Earth in the Plurinational State of Bolivia

Lex Shapiro // ENVS 400 // Spring 2017

Research Questions

What does it mean for 'nature' to have rights?
Who can, does, and should speak for 'nature'?

How and why were constitutional and legislative rights given to *Madre Tierra* in Bolivia, and in what ways have they been realized?

Theories & Frameworks

- Drawn from post-colonial and political ecology disciplines
- Both nature and society are subject to social constructions and therefore continue to be reconceptualized and redefined
- Understand how colonial legacies are continuing to influence modern day ecologies, politics, and paradigms



Binaries

- Colonizer / Colonized
 - Spanish / Indian
- Developed / Underdeveloped
 - Human / Nature

Hegemony

- Why and how ruling classes are so successful in promoting their own interests in a society
- Exercised through coercion and consent
- Often promise economic growth, social progress and political stability

Counter-Hegemonic Resistance & Social Change

- Anti; colonial, imperial, neoliberal
- Tired of oppression, injustice, exploitation, exclusion, etc...

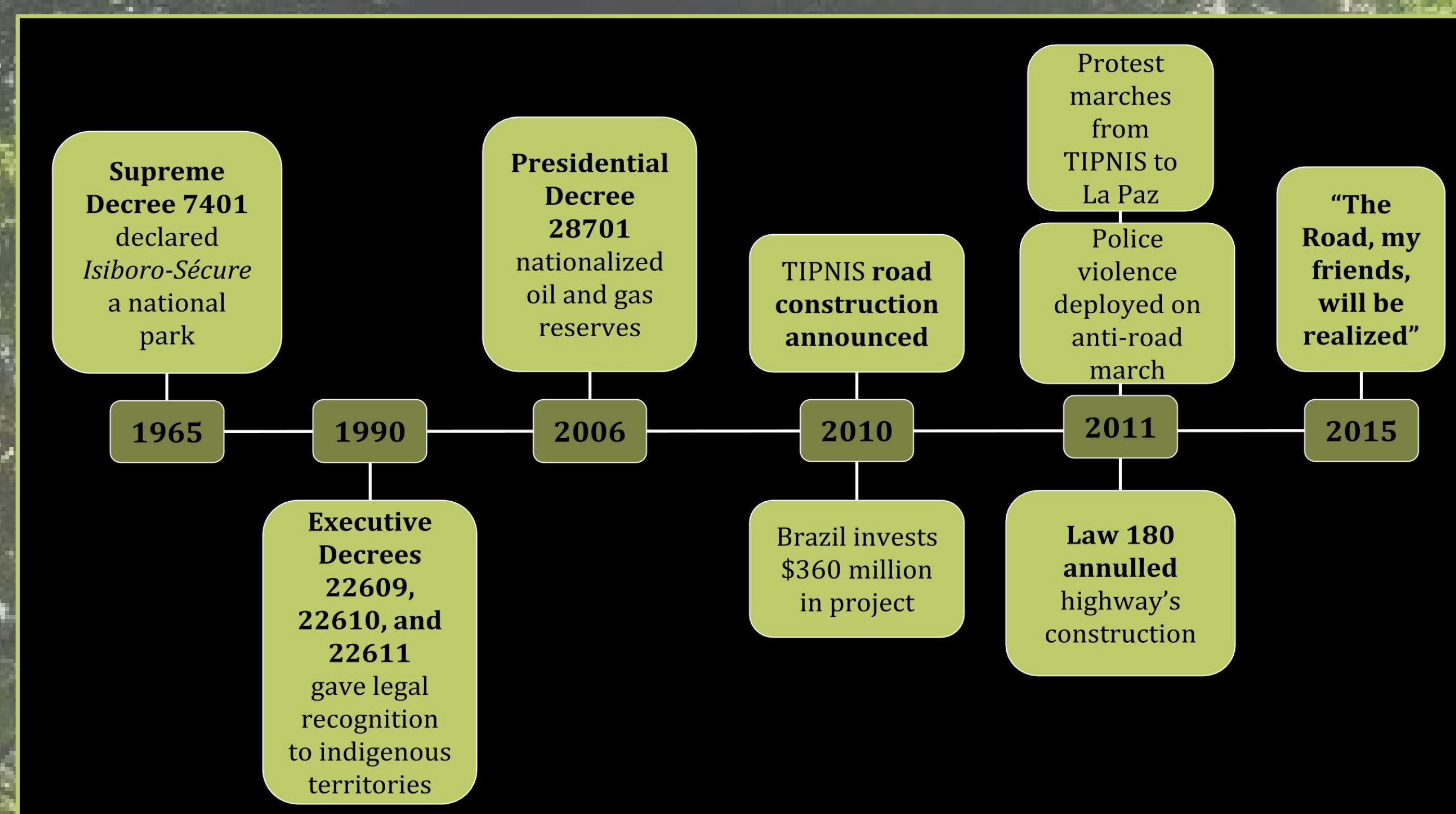
A 'Refounded' Bolivia

- Nationalization of natural resources
- Constituent assembly
- Formation of MAS and election of Evo Morales and Álvaro García Linera

Constitutional & Legislative Changes

- 2009 New constitution ratified
- 2010 Law of the Rights of Mother Earth (071)
- 2012 Framework Law of Mother Earth and Integral Development to Live Well (300)

TIPNIS Case Study



Analysis & Implications

'Nature' as Power

Political programs designed to protect or exploit nature can only ever be justified in human terms.

Weak Laws, Cheap Talk, and Promises Not Kept

Symbolic laws, powerful discourse, and sweeping declarations.

Environmental Pragmatism

Leaders are able to justify specific and highly unequal patterns of human use of the environment in terms of 'the greater social good.'

Beyond

- Binaries
- Development
- Capitalism
- Teleological and linear progress

Towards

- Pluralism
- 'Rights of Nature'
- Decolonization
- Alternatives
- Interdisciplinarity

"Our Task is to develop new proposals and visions, challenging the thinking that still longs to join a life of boundless consumerism, and breaking its hegemony. The task is to initiate new debates about what concepts as vital as happiness and quality of life might mean from another perspective, and to transform another world into something imaginable."

Selected References

Ashcroft, Bill. 2009. *Post-Colonial Studies: The Key Concepts*. 2nd ed. Routledge Key Guides. London ; New York: Routledge. // Bailey, Sinead, and Raymond Bryant. 1997. *Third World Political Ecology: An Introduction*. 1st Ed. edition. London ; New York: Routledge. // Castree, Noel, and Bruce Braun. 2001. *Social Nature: Theory, Practice, and Politics*. Malden, Mass.: Blackwell Publishers. // Gudynas, Eduardo. 2011. "Buen Vivir: Today's Tomorrow." *Development* 54 (4): 441-47. // Kohl, Benjamin, and Linda C. Farthing. 2006. *Impasse in Bolivia: Neoliberal Hegemony and Popular Resistance*. Zed Books. // Lang, Miriam, and Dunia Mokranj, eds. 2013. *Beyond Development: Alternative Visions from Latin America*. Transnational Institute. // Webber, Jeffery R. 2012. "Revolution Against 'progress': The TIPNIS Struggle and Class Contradictions in Bolivia." *International Socialism* 133 (Spring): 147-72.

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