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RESEARCH ARTICLE

ANTI-NEOLIBERAL STRUGGLES IN THE 21ST CENTURY

Gramsci revised

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ABSTRACT: The dominance of neoliberalism in the past three decades suggests the capacity of capitalism to adapt and restructure itself in periods of crisis and to curb progressive movements that threaten its hegemony. Yet social movements that challenge neoliberalism continue to emerge, sending hopeful signs of its potential demise by ushering in progressive governments that often appear to fall short of expectations. Building off the growing body of research that utilizes Gramscian theory to categorize neoliberalism as a passive revolution, I examine the concept of anti-passive revolution with empirical data to propose a theory of resistance against neoliberalism. The empirical data comes from two movements against neoliberalism: the coalition that challenged the privatization of water in Cochabamba, Bolivia in 2000; and, the movement that challenged the results of the Mexican presidential election in 2006. By examining the trajectories of these movements over a timespan of several years, I identify the empirical conditions for a theory of anti-passive revolution, and the potential for such processes to challenge the hegemony of the passive revolution represented by neoliberalism.

KEYWORDS: Neoliberalism, Hegemony, Passive revolution, Anti-passive revolution, Gramsci, Latin America, Bolivia, Mexico

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1. Introduction

2011 will be remembered as the year of discontent. Social upheaval swept through countries devastated by economic and political crisis in Europe and the Arab world, where protestors expressed grievances against neoliberal symbols and policies and repudiated the – often dictatorial – political class that espoused and promoted the establishment of neoliberalism. For scholars of Latin America, these events felt like *déjà vu*. The previous decade witnessed similar crisis in the region, where countries that had followed neoliberal prescriptions to the letter were left in economic ruin. Likewise, the protests against the lack of democracy, the ruling of corporate and neoliberal political classes, and the abandonment of principles of equality and redistribution that engulfed the Arab world, Europe and the United States in recent years were a replay of those that took place in Latin America over the past thirteen years. Social movements in the region unseated governments, appropriated factories, sought autonomy and self-determination, engaged in electoral struggles to bring about change, and shared broad demands for social justice. The wave of protests in the past 10-15 years ushered in what was undoubtedly a series of progressive governments.

This article examines the establishment of neoliberalism as a process of passive revolution in Mexico and Bolivia, and the trajectories of two social movements that challenged it. These are the Coalition for Water and Life (*Coordinadora*) that in 2000 successfully challenged the privatization of water in Cochabamba, Bolivia, and the Movement for National Regeneration (MORENA) that unsuccessfully challenged the results of the 2006 controversial presidential election in Mexico. By examining these movements over a time span of several years I identify their potential as anti-passive revolutions that offer a counter strategy to and challenge the hegemony of the neoliberal passive revolution in modern times. To do so I draw on theoretical concepts from the tradition originating in Antonio Gramsci's work. First, I examine Gramsci's argument about state transition and passive revolution, and other scholars' work on neoliberalism as passive revolution. Second, I lay out a theory of anti-passive revolution to counter the passive revolution in the 21st century. Third, I illustrate the theory by utilizing empirical data from the two cases, explaining the direction that these movements followed and the challenge that they posed to the neoliberal system in their respective countries, including their participation in partisan and electoral politics, and the positive and negative aspects of this participation. And finally, I briefly examine the claim that the various progressive Latin American governments, particularly Brazil, represent cases of passive revolutions.

2. Methods

My methodological approach combines the comparative historical method, ethnography and case study. I utilized the comparative historical method to identify and understand the social forces and events that shaped the patterns of collective action and mobilization in modern Mexico and Bolivia and the emergence of my two cases. I conducted participant observation at specific sites and events, such as study circles in Mexico, and workshops organized by the Federation of Manufacturing Workers in Bolivia; I also attended rallies and demonstrations. I conducted semi-structured interviews with members of the rank and file, mid-level leadership, and politicians and intellectuals who are sympathizers and detractors of both movements. Fieldwork in Mexico was largely conducted in Mexico City, the place of emergence and bastion of MORENA, and to a lesser extent, the cities of Puebla and Monterrey, where the movement has a considerable membership. Fieldwork amounted to a combined total of six months in 2009, 2011, and 2012. In Bolivia, most fieldwork took place in Cochabamba, where the *coordinadora* emerged and remained active. Interviews with members of President Morales' cabinet took place in La Paz. Fieldwork took place in 2004, 2005 and 2009-2010, for a total of five months.

My choice of sites, participants and events was guided by the principle of "purposeful selection," also known as "purposeful sampling" and "criterion-based selection," a strategy of qualitative research in which "settings, persons, or activities are selected deliberately in order to provide information that can't be gotten as well from other sources" (Maxwell 2005, 88). Interviews were fully transcribed and analyzed for categories that emerged from participants' responses to key themes such as neoliberalism, political parties, electoral politics, the role of the state, and goals of and motivations to remain involved in social movements.

3. Theoretical underpinnings: passive revolution, anti-passive revolution and radical democracy

Gramsci's concept of passive revolution

Passive revolution is a key concept in Gramsci's examination of historical developments in Italy in the 19th and early 20th centuries. Gramsci borrowed the concept from Vincenzo Cuoco (Buci-Glucksmann 1980, 314; Thomas 2011, 146); initially it was used to describe events corresponding to the first period of the Italian Risorgimento, specifi-

cally to the struggle for the unification of Italy led by the Count of Cavour and Giuseppe Mazzini. Cavour represented the war of position, or revolution from above, while Mazzini represented the war of maneuver, or the popular initiative¹. They were both engaged in a dialectical position representing the thesis and the antithesis respectively². Gramsci emphasizes that the antithesis has to “be itself totally, and throw into the struggle all the political and moral resources it possessed, since only in that way can it achieve a genuine dialectical transcendence of its opponent” (Gramsci 1971, 109). When the antithesis fails to do this, only the thesis develops its potential to the fullest, absorbing “even the representatives of the antithesis.” This, Gramsci argued, was what the passive revolution or restoration consisted of (ibid., 110).

Crucial to achieving such dialectical transcendence is the awareness of one’s role in the historical task which one is engaged in. Gramsci attributes such awareness to Cavour, who was aware of his own as well as Mazzini’s historical role. Mazzini and his radical forces lacked such awareness, which prevented them “from weighing in the final balance of forces in proportion to their effective power of intervention... from determining a more advanced result, on more progressive and modern lines” (Gramsci 1971, 113). Cavour’s revolution from above absorbed the popular initiative without being transcended by it, resulting in an unbalanced equilibrium that favored his political project. Had Mazzini been aware of his role and the antithesis had developed fully, “the equilibrium resulting from the convergence of the two men’s activities would have been different, more favorable to Mazzini... [and] the Italian State would have been constituted on a less retrograde and more modern basis” (ibid. p. 108). In this sense, the passive revolution is a “revolution restoration” and the expression of a “blocked dialectic” (Buci-Glucksmann 1980, 315). A graphic representation of Gramsci’s state transition and passive revolution as he described for the Risorgimento would look like the following figure 1.

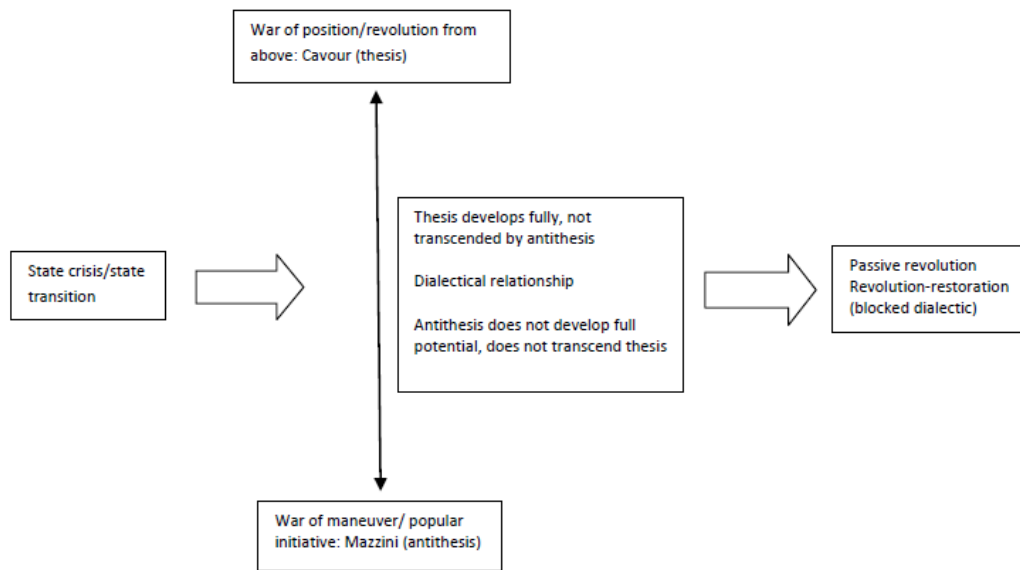
It follows that the dialectical aspect of the relationship between struggling forces, and the need for “a vigorous antithesis which can present intransigently all its potential for development” (Gramsci 1971, 114) are of paramount importance during state crises

¹ Gramsci described the war of position as a war of attrition or revolution from above that involved no weaponry, in contrast to the war of maneuver which referred to a frontal attack carried out by the popular element (Gramsci 1971, 108-109). War of position in its “most restricted sense means a tactic of informal penetration required when open warfare or ‘war of maneuver’ is impossible” (Adamson 1980, 10).

² We understand the thesis as the existing social structure institutionalized within historical material processes, and the antithesis as the newly emergent historical form created by subaltern social forces and in at least partial confrontation with the thesis. Cavour and the Moderates were the existing social structure; Cavour realized that change was inevitable and that reforms were needed if a revolution was to be avoided. Mazzini and the Partito d’Azione were the subaltern forces seeking revolutionary change.

and transitions, if the desired result is a progressive state. We can also appreciate the dynamic nature of the passive revolution, the fact that it is both a process and a product, and the key role that the antithesis plays in both.

Figure 1: Graphic representation of Gramsci's state transition and passive revolution



The concept of passive revolution may also be applied to “molecular changes” that gradually modify the pre-existing composition of forces and become the matrix of new changes. In the Risorgimento, the incorporation of individual political figures from the democratic opposition parties to the conservative-moderate political class simultaneously strengthened Cavourism and impoverished the Mazzinian movement, progressively modifying “the composition of moderate forces” (Gramsci 1971, 109). This was the initial phase of “transformism,”

A term used from the 1880s onwards to describe the process by which the so-called ‘historic Left and Right which emerged from the Risorgimento tended to converge in terms of program during the years which followed, until there ceased any substantive difference between them (ibid., 58).

Another expression of passive revolution during the restoration-revolution period consisted on the satisfaction of demands in “small doses, legally, in a reformist manner,” in such a way that it performed two important functions: it preserved the privile-

ges of the old traditional classes, and it prevented the popular masses from experiencing political awareness (Gramsci 1971, 119) that presumably could lead to mobilization. Such schema preserves the privileges of the old traditional classes and “reinforces the hegemonic system and the forces of the military and civil coercion” at their disposal (ibid. p. 120). Conceptualizing the passive revolution in this fashion allowed Gramsci to relate it to the early development of fascism, arguing that the State had introduced, through legislation and corporative organization, elements that modified the country’s economic structure, accentuating the aspects of production without affecting the appropriation of profits (ibid., 120). Perhaps the strategy of passive revolution can be most succinctly summarized as the capacity of the bourgeoisie to conserve power and to maintain the working classes in subaltern conditions, even after it has ceased to be a revolutionary class. It does so by preventing the emergence of competing perspectives rather than by consolidating its own project (Thomas 2009, 147, 150).

A related concept in the development of fascism is “Caesarism,” which “expresses a situation in which the [reactionary and progressive] forces in conflict balance each other in a catastrophic manner.” The result may be progressive or reactionary depending on which force is favored by the Caesarist intervention (Gramsci 1971, 219). Gramsci believed that fascism is “born in a situation of a catastrophic balance of forces... where the historical alternative takes an acute form: revolution or reaction” (Buci-Glucksmann 1980, 311). He also was convinced that fascism was not merely another form of bourgeoisie rule, and that attempting to defeat it through isolated struggles was a mistake. Only the united front or historical bloc, “a unity of structure and superstructure (politico-economic), of opposites and of distincts” (Gramsci 1957, 17, 137, 168) where “the relationship between intellectuals and people-nation, the leaders and the led... is provided by an organic cohesion” (ibid. p. 418) could defeat fascism.

Gramsci was greatly concerned with the sphere of civil society and the concept of hegemony (Gramsci 1971, 207). Hegemony is exercised throughout civil society. In its most common usage hegemony refers to a “spontaneous consent” given by the great masses “to the general direction imposed on social life by the dominant group, historically caused by the prestige and confidence” enjoyed by the latter due to its “position and function in the world of production.” In the absence of consent, the state exercises coercive power, legally enforcing discipline “on those groups who do not consent whether actively or passively” (ibid. p. 12). A more nuanced examination of Gramsci’s notes, however, reveals that the concept goes beyond merely obtaining the great masses’ consent. Hegemony implies the ability of a class “to carry the whole society forward” with a universalistic rather than arbitrary aim (Buci-Glucksmann 1980, 57-58). Hegemony is an ongoing process of construction. It is constructed by exercising leadership

among allied groups before taking power, and domination over adversaries once power is achieved (ibid., 61-62).

The passive revolution increasingly became an attractive alternative for a regime in power that lacked hegemony and was threatened by a progressive movement. Curbing the movement without resorting to violence or without a protracted struggle was the passive revolution path, and it was achieved by “launching a minimally progressive political campaign designed to undercut the truly progressive classes” (Adamson 1980, 186) in the reformist manner described above. It was largely in this fashion that neoliberalism was established in many countries.

4. Neoliberalism as passive revolution

Various authors have applied the concept of passive revolution to contemporary developments (Morton 2003; Soederberg 2001; Xing and Hersh 2002). Xing and Hersh (2002) described the development of liberal democracy as a passive revolution that took the form of a reformist effort involving a “reciprocal and dialectical reform process of compromises and negotiations aiming at producing social control with less coercive measures while depoliticizing social relations and contending forces” (ibid., 195). Morton (2003) and Soederberg (2001) focused on the development of neoliberalism as a process of passive revolution in Mexico.

Generally, the notion of passive revolution as an historical concept highlights the capacity of capitalist production for “internal adaptation to the developments of the forces of production, a certain plasticity to ‘restructure’ in periods of crisis” (Buci-Glucksmann 1979, 209). It is a theory of how capitalism survives and reorganizes itself through periods of crisis, preserving its core aspects by reproducing them in new forms (Morton 2003, 632). Morton argued that Mexico had endured a passive revolution with the rise of neoliberalism during a period of structural change from the 1970s, leading to changes in relations of production that did not fundamentally challenge the established order and did not involve the rollback of the state. The state engaged in a strategy of realignment of forces, which brought the government closer to the business sector while alienating it from the working class, a reversal of the situation in place since the Mexican Revolution. As the 1980s financial crisis deepened, independent labor and other groups increasingly challenged the hegemony of the ruling party PRI, and the party began to rely more on coercive measures to preserve its privileges. This shift signaled “a state of crisis and the disintegrative elements of catastrophic equilibrium” (ibid., 643) Thus, throughout the 1980s the PRI began to exhibit the traits of passive

revolution “as a counterpart to the neoliberal accumulation strategy” imposed since the early 1980s (*ibid.*, 643).

The neoliberal passive revolution deepened under president Carlos Salinas (1988-1994). PRONASOL (National Program of Solidarity), the most important component of Salinas’ social policy, was crucial to the transformation of neoliberalism into a hegemonic project (Soederberg 2011). The economic component – privatization of state owned enterprises and the new privileges of the private sector – ensured the reproduction of capitalism and the ideological acceptance of the superior rationality of the market over the state. The social component created hope among the impoverished beneficiaries and aided the project’s political dimension by preventing the development of revolutionary potential. Soederberg further argued that PRONASOL alone was the expression of a passive revolution that underscored the neoliberal state’s efforts to show that neoliberalism provided for those inevitably excluded by the market system. PRONASOL’s manifest intent may have been to serve as a safety net to correct socio-economic injustices of the market, but it was simultaneously a pre-emptive response of the dominant classes to the potential risk of the population’s discontent. It was also “a disciplinary mechanism to instill values and goals similar to those of the ruling classes in civil society” (*ibid.* p. 116), aimed at preserving the hegemony of the latter while excluding the majorities “from participating in the formulation of state policies” (*ibid.* p. 104).

PRONASOL appropriated language utilized by grass roots organizations and encouraged poor people’s involvement in anti-poverty projects sponsored by domestic and international NGOs largely financed by international financial institutions. An example is the US \$350 million World Bank loan to PRONASOL to improve rural services provision and to support health and nutrition projects. In such fashion PRONASOL provided the political conditions to sustain the neoliberal accumulation strategy through “modernization of traditional clientelistic and corporatist forms of co-optation” (Morton 2003, 644). It provided a “sense of inclusion” among the poorest people, denying “the existence of class antagonisms while at the same time claiming to transcend class differences” (*ibid.* p. 644). It was largely responsible for the PRI’s ability to maintain a certain degree of hegemony, which nevertheless slowly weakened to the point that the party had to rely more on coercion throughout the late 1980s and 1990s (*ibid.*, 644). The crisis of hegemony worsened during this period, and the ruling class had to rely more on dominance and coercive force alone (*ibid.* p. 645).

The development of neoliberalism in Bolivia is strikingly similar to the Mexican case. As in Mexico, neoliberalism in Bolivia was first implemented in 1985 at a time of acute social, economic, and political conflict. Food shortages, work stoppages, runaway infla-

tion and the paralysis of the most important economic activities had eroded the legitimacy of the coalition that enabled the transition from military to democratic rule only three years earlier (Klein 2007; Kohol and Farthing 2006; Sanabria 1999, 2000). The COB (*Central Obrera Boliviana*), instrumental in this transition, had partially lost the trust of the population due to its confrontational politics; these were perceived as legitimate under military rule but became increasingly problematic during the democratic transition. The perception that the COB privileged their labor interests at a time of acute and widespread suffering might have contributed to this loss of legitimacy and increased the political costs of confrontation (Kohl and Farthing 2006). This was indeed a period of state crisis, and the response was the establishment of neoliberalism in a similar fashion to Mexico, with elements to instill values and goals concomitant with the neoliberal ideology, and similar social components to limit the negative social impacts of the new policies³. Likewise, there was a second wave of neoliberal policies in the 1990s in Bolivia, seeking to create “a neoliberal citizen” who would not see the state as provider of social benefits but as facilitator of citizen’s participation in the market (ibid., 100).

It is important to underscore that the dominant classes in both countries in fact did seek to win the consent of the masses for their neoliberal project, and that state institutions were deployed to achieve this purpose. The strategies described above were concerted efforts to persuade citizens about the virtues of a system that emphasized the superiority of the market. Nations where the state had for decades played a strong role in socio economic life began carefully crafting efforts to re-educate citizens in a more individualistic fashion. In this sense, the dominant classes did engage in a war of position to win the masses consent and establish the hegemony of neoliberalism, a point that will be explored in the next section.

The establishment of neoliberalism in both Mexico and Bolivia are textbook examples of passive revolutions. They were imposed during periods of crisis when the system was threatened by social upheaval and the dominant hegemony was fading; they consisted of profound social, political and economic reforms engineered by elites, and had the effect of curbing progressive forces. However, in both cases neoliberal hegemony soon began to decline, and the state began to use coercion to sustain a façade of hegemony now based more on domination than consent. In the decades that followed

³ The neoliberal ideology seeks to assert “the superiority of the market over the state” (Soederberg 2001, 114). It implies the abandonment of Keynesian policies and the return to austerity, fiscal discipline, deregulation, privatization, and the dismantling of the welfare State (Guillén Romo 1997, 13). Readers in the United States and England may associate the term with the economic policies promoted by Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher that came to be known as Reaganomics and Thatcherism.

the establishment of neoliberalism, social movements in both countries failed to present a strong, unified bloc against these passive revolutions. Even the powerful labor movement in Bolivia was unable to resist the encroachment of neoliberal measures. It had been greatly weakened by the loss of tens of thousands of jobs, a trademark of neoliberalism whereby union membership had shrunk dramatically. The miners, which had formed the most organized, militant and combative labor union had been disarticulated and geographically displaced by the closing of state enterprises and relocation programs embodied in Decree 21060 in 1986.

Having established the development of neoliberalism as a process of passive revolution, I now turn to exploring potential counter processes. In the following section I propose a tentative theory of resistance as a process of anti-passive revolution.

5. A theory of anti-passive revolution

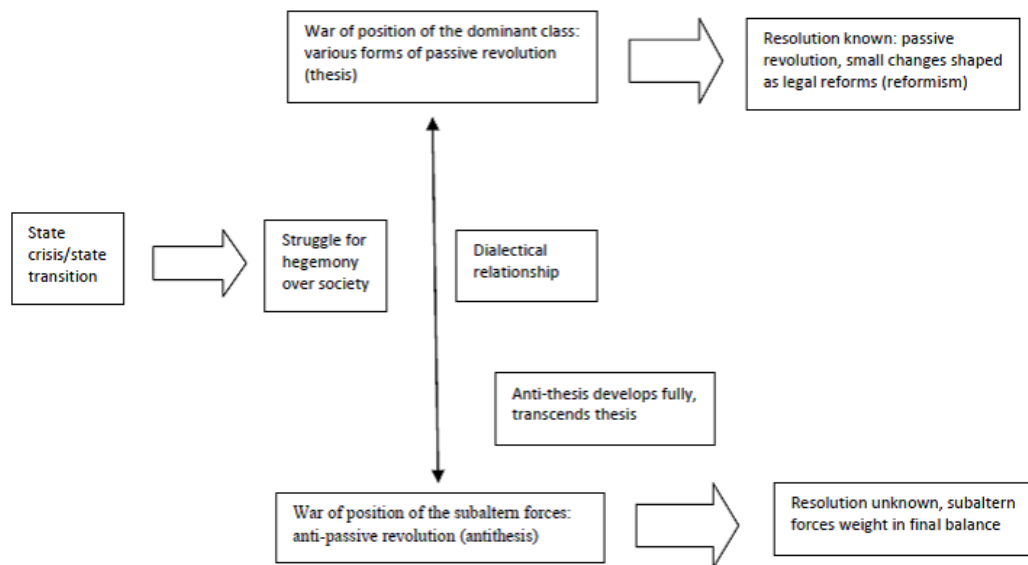
Is the passive revolution inevitable? Figure 1 does not suggest so; in fact the passive revolution need not be the pre-determined outcome of a state crisis. Gramsci's argument for a vigorous anti-thesis that can fully develop, transcends the thesis, and contributes accordingly to the final balance of forces is in fact an argument against the inevitability of the passive revolution.

Re-examining Gramsci's theory of state transition, Buci-Glucksmann (1979) argues that, rather than the war of position of the elites and the war of maneuver of the popular classes, what takes place are in fact two wars of position: "the war of the dominant class in its various forms of passive revolutions and the asymmetrical war of the subaltern classes in their struggle for hegemony and political leadership over society" (ibid., 210)⁴. They both take the form of war of position, but their hegemony differs in content; they play a different role. While the war of position of the dominant classes – the passive revolution – engenders small changes shaped as legal reforms, the war of position of the subaltern classes plays a "determinant role in a 'socialization of politics' that can activate a mass cultural revolution (leading to changed institutions, styles of life, behavior, consumption) and can transform class relations and the equilibrium of power within society and the state" (ibid., 211).

⁴ Gramsci utilizes the term "subaltern" in various forms. The one that applies to this case refers to social groups that, having been excluded from political participation, have nonetheless achieved an advanced level of political awareness and organization that allows them to go beyond a process of counter-hegemony and pose a real challenge to the dominant hegemony (Liguori 2013, 94).

Buci-Glucksmann underscores the complex dialectic in Gramsci’s theory of state transition, and suggests that it must be explored in both its negative and positive aspects/results (1979, 211). Figure 1 shows that the passive revolution is facilitated by a dialectical relationship in which the antithesis does not fully develop and as a consequence, does not transcend the thesis. If we take this to be the negative outcome, should we not conclude then that the positive outcome entails the opposite – a vigorous antithesis that develops fully and transcends the thesis? Indeed, “the usefulness of the concept of passive revolution” resides in its potential to think of an anti-passive revolution (Voza 2009, 72). Buci-Glucksmann (1979) correctly argues that, if the struggle to socialism – or presumably, to any other stage that is pertinent to the epoch – is based, as Gramsci suggested, on “democratic strategies necessarily consisting in mass democratic revolutions that forge new links between representative democracy and democracy of the base,” then the struggle must be “primarily an anti-passive revolution” (ibid., 211). A graphic representation of such process suggesting both negative and positive outcomes would look like the following:

Figure 2: Graphic representation of Buci-Glucksmann’s theory of state transition and anti-passive revolution



The war of position of the subaltern classes, thus, is by necessity an anti-passive revolution, and it will always be in permanent conflict – a dialectical relationship – with the war of position of the dominant classes – the passive revolution – and the reform-

ism that it engenders (Buci-Glucksmann 1979, 229). Gramsci outlines a number of points that must be included in such anti-passive revolution strategy: 1) institutional pluralism; 2) development of a mass party, with emphasis on its mass character; and, 3) rejection of any form of bureaucratic centralism in favor of a democratic centralism that can unite the political leadership to the movement of the base (ibid., 232). The resolution of the anti-passive revolution in Figure 2 is indicated as unknown because, according to Buci-Glucksmann, Gramsci does not provide any such resolution (ibid., 233). Instead, our task today is to utilize certain instruments provided by Gramsci's work to resolve,

in what are different historical conditions... the theoretical and political problem that is presented by the simultaneous development on the one hand of a certain form of passive revolution (that includes new features deriving from the present crisis of capitalism), and on the other, of a new type of democratic, pluralist, transitional state which can no longer be understood in terms of the classic state of parliamentary right with its eternal formal separation between political society and civil society... an anti-passive democratic transition must be based on non-bureaucratic expansion of the forms of political life within the totality of structures encompassed by the 'enlarged state', from the base to the various hegemonic apparatuses (Buci-Glucksmann 1979, 233).

Writing in 1970s, Buci-Glucksmann argued that the working class operated in "a terrain of democracy as a form of class struggle and transition" (Buci-Glucksmann 1979, 232), which was different from that examined by Gramsci. However, the confrontation between the war of position of the dominant classes and that of the subaltern classes still existed, for which it was necessary ...

to define the form of a transitional state that is capable of offering, in opposition to the various passive revolutions immanent to the crisis, a new political dialectic between representative democracy and democracy of the base which is central to Gramscian thought. This is a dialectic, not a frontal opposition between the two that destroys the power of both or absorbs the one into the other as a result of some new reformist policy that would identify the transition simply with a change of government (Buci-Glucksmann 1979, 233-234).

The way to understand the term "dialectic" in the above quote is to understand representative democracy as the thesis within the dialectic: Representative democracy is the existing social structure, institutionalized within historical material processes. "Democracy of the base" would then be the antithesis, the newly emergent historical form created by subaltern social forces and in at least partial confrontation with representa-

tive democratic forms (the thesis). The dialectic lies in the tension, interplay, and struggle between these two historical forms. The question/s then becomes: What are the empirical conditions that allow for the development of a vigorous antithesis that will resist absorption from the thesis and resist the path of passive revolution? And, what would the outcome look like when the antithesis develops fully and transcend the thesis? Part of the contribution of my two cases is that they provide the opportunity to explore the process of such anti-passive transition, and to glimpse at how the synthesis might look like.

Some authors have examined social movements as anti-passive revolutions. Sylvester's analysis of the various revolutions in Zimbabwe identified the March 11 Movement, the Nhari and the ZIPA as social movements that involved "anti-passive activities" (Sylvester 1990, 467). Sylvester linked the failure of these movements to gain "vanguard leverage" to the isolation that the nationalist passive revolution forced them into, and argued "perhaps their fatal weakness was the lack of links with Zimbabwe's fundamental classes" (ibid., 470). Morton (2007) argued that the EZLN in Mexico articulated an anti-passive struggle by adopting various novel features: activation of national and international civil society, appealing to collective interests beyond ethnic identities, campaign to wider democratization, and constant innovation through new forms of governance within the communities (ibid., 191). Morton also highlighted the Zapatistas' contributions to promote transparency of elections and the importance of electoral monitoring and civil participation (ibid., 194), while underscoring their "ultimate failure to influence the outcome of national elections" in 1994 (ibid., 191). While the EZLN may or may not have wished to influence the 1994 elections, in the past six years they have remained separated from electoral politics and have refused to build bridges with or support the Movement for National Regeneration (*Movimiento de Regeneración Nacional*, MORENA).

An examination of these movements is beyond this study, and it is not my intention to discredit their potential as anti-passive revolutions. However, the examination of my cases over a period of time offers a unique contribution, providing the opportunity to explore the dynamics of the dialectical relationship between representative democracy and democracy of the base, which is crucial to determine the potential and limits of anti-passive revolutions.

6. Radical democracy, hegemony, and historical bloc

There are two puzzling aspects of the neoliberal passive revolution: 1) the little or no resistance that it encountered from political parties of the Left, and, 2) the inability of specific sectors – particularly the workers – to articulate a common, united front. The work of Laclau and Mouffe (2001) sheds light on these puzzles. Laclau and Mouffe trace back the lack of resistance from political parties on the left to the effects that the collapse of the Soviet Union had on the Left. The failure of communism discredited the very idea of socialism, instead of allowing for the renovation of democratic socialist parties (ibid., xiv). While the processes that followed these events encouraged pluralism and democratization, they also discouraged any attempt to transform the capitalist hegemonic order (ibid., xv). The uncritical adoption of the liberal ideology, where democracy is a “competition among interests taking place in a neutral terrain,” meant that the struggles against the capitalist hegemony were eradicated from the democratic process (ibid., xvi). The establishment of neoliberalism and its pervasive hegemony created an identity crisis of the Left; many social democratic parties came to redefine themselves as “center-left” parties and engaged in “politics of the radical center.” This identity crisis had the effect of blurring antagonisms between the Left and Right, producing the illusion that ideological adversaries had disappeared (ibid., xiv). As a result many left wing parties became lost and disoriented, unable to “even begin to imagine the possibility” of constructing an alternative hegemony to neoliberalism (ibid. p. xvi). This occurred at a time when thinking “in terms of hegemonic relations” was necessary to challenge the dogmas of the neoliberal order. That “global markets would not permit any deviation from neo-liberal orthodoxy” was one of such dogmas, often employed to discourage political actors from suggesting or adopting policies of social and economic redistribution (ibid., xvi).

Without a hegemonic challenge from the Left and legitimated by the radical center, neoliberalism appeared as the natural order. Yet as Laclau and Mouffe correctly argue, we must think in terms of hegemony to realize that the current order is neither natural nor the only possible societal order. Instead, it is

the expression of a certain configuration of power relations. It is the result of hegemonic moves on the part of specific social forces which have been able to implement a profound transformation in the relations between capitalist corporations and the nation-states (Laclau and Mouffe 2001, xvi).

This hegemony can be challenged by “elaborating a credible alternative to the neoliberal order,” something that the Left could have done instead of “simply trying to

manage it in a more humane way” (ibid., xvi). Doing so, however, requires the presence of an adversary and clearly defined frontiers between adversaries and challengers, things that cannot materialize within neutral terrain (ibid., xvii, xix). We can appreciate the fact that, deliberately or not, the move of left wing parties toward the radical center successfully prevented the emergence of a hegemonic challenge.

In regards to the second puzzle, several factors contributed to the inability of the working class to articulate a common united front. Laclau and Mouffe underscore the point that social agents do not necessarily have a particular class character a priori; rather, their identity is something they adopt as a result of the struggle (2001, 41-42). This is done through articulation, a key concept in Laclau and Mouffe’s work. Articulation accepts the “structural diversity of the relations in which social agents are immersed,” and the unity that it creates is the “result of political construction and struggle” rather than the “expression of a common underlying essence” (ibid., 65). Because social identity is not fixed a priori, the direction of the workers’ struggle is not uniformly progressive; it depends upon its forms of articulation within a given hegemonic context. Consequently, the political meaning of the new struggle is not given from the start. It depends upon its hegemonic articulation – an articulation with other social agents, each with their own particular struggles and demands, within a hegemonic context (ibid., 86-87).

Laclau and Mouffe do not rule out that the proletariat can become the leading class, as long as they can create a system of alliances capable of mobilizing “the majority of the working populations against capitalism and the bourgeoisie state” (2001, 66). But the precondition for this leading role is for the working class to take up the interests of other sectors rather than confining themselves to the “narrow defense of their own corporatist interests” (ibid., 66). In Mexico and Bolivia the imposition of neoliberalism represented an immediate blow to the working class, and its further entrenchment underscored the failure of workers to produce a unified front based on hegemonic articulations. Conversely, the success of the two cases in this paper is better understood by the capacity of these social movements to create such articulations, taking up the interests of various sectors and traversing a number of class struggles.

Examining the obstacles that the Left has faced and reasons leading to its decline, Laclau and Mouffe argue that the emergence of “a hegemonic struggle of the Left” is only possible through the “expansion of the democratic terrain... of the field of democratic struggles” (2001, 176). For this to happen, however, it is necessary to make some radical changes. First, one must reject the establishment of a priori of essentialist identities; and second, one should discourage any attempt to “fix the meaning of any event independent of any articulatory practice” (ibid., 177). This means that we must reject

“fixities” such as classism, statism, economism, and “the classic concept of revolution cast in the Jacobin mold.” Doing otherwise risks failure to understand the “themes or nodal points” that constitute a historical bloc (ibid., 177), which Gramsci identified as the only articulation capable of standing up to fascism.

Consequently, the struggle for democracy cannot be simply a workers’ struggle for labor rights, claims, or demands. Laclau and Mouffe agree that the project for radical democracy has a socialist dimension, as it is necessary to end capitalist relations of production because they are at the root of many relations of subordination. But even a project for “socialization of the means of production” in the context of radical democracy cannot simply mean workers’ self-management, because at stake is true participation by all subjects in decisions about what to produce, and how to produce and distribute it (2001, 178). The core of the authors’ message is that radical democracy is the project of an entire society, and it can only be done under the following conditions: rejection of the unitary subject and fixed identities, clarification of antagonisms, acceptance of plurality and contingency, and the establishment of hegemonic articulations.

Analyzing struggles against neoliberalism in Latin America, Hidalgo (2000) reminds us that fascism was an ultra-reactionary economic doctrine, and that the historical bloc originated as a strategy of struggle against it. Hidalgo’s concept of *bloque popular* – clearly the equivalent of historical bloc – allows us to appreciate

the constitution of various social subjects, [the concept of historical bloc] marks the horizon of unity between social and political forces, it breaks with sectarianisms and fragmentations, it demands an integral project of transformation both in the structure and the superstructure, and it articulates all the sectors interested in standing up to neoliberalism (Hidalgo 2000, 33, my translation)

The similarities between fascism and neoliberalism, Hidalgo points out, consist in the fact that neoliberalism is also a powerful economic doctrine promoted in the interests of dominant economic elites, and as such, it is impossible that a specific social sector or class alone can stand up to it. Recent struggles have proved this point. The movements against privatization of water in Bolivia in 2000, and against privatization of health care in El Salvador in 1999-2003 were the result of successful articulation of various social sectors standing up to neoliberalism (Jasso-Aguilar and Waitzin 2011). Hidalgo also identified various levels of articulation in social movements against neoliberalism in Ecuador, Brazil, Argentina and Colombia. Common to these movements is the fact that workers have not been the leading class; also, it would be hard to argue that these struggles had a single, unitary identity. These struggles represent the multiple antagonisms and the articulations that took place among a variety of subjects.

A hegemonic project of radical democracy, besides being based on a democratic logic, also must have a “strategy of construction of a new order.” This means that it cannot consist solely of negative demands; it must also include a real attempt to initiate a “positive reconstruction of the social fabric” through the establishment of a historical bloc (Laclau and Mouffe 2001, 189). It is also crucial to identify and avoid “utopianisms” that ignore the structural limits imposed by, for instance, the logic of the state apparatuses, the economy, and so on, that may paralyze the hegemonic project. But it is equally important to avoid accepting only those changes that appear possible at the moment. Every radical democratic project “should avoid the two extremes of the Ideal City and the positivist pragmatism of reformists without a project” (ibid., 190). As I show later in this article, the two cases in this study underscore the important role that a hegemonic project of radical democracy plays in the trajectories of social movements.

This article does not use the terms revolution/revolutionary necessarily in the Marxist sense of overthrowing capitalism for the establishment of socialism. Instead, the meaning of these concepts refers to a transformation of the system, or the construction of a new order, as contemplated in the hegemonic project of particular struggles. Such transformations or new orders may or may not be equivalent to socialism, or may represent different versions of socialism, but the important point is that they stand in contrast with small changes or reforms that deviate from the hegemonic project and are carried out unilaterally by representative democracy. While such reforms may be proposed and executed in good faith, under the circumstances of struggle and state transition they may appear as falling short, or as having no potential for further development toward the hegemonic project. In such fashion, they risk being perceived by democracy of the base as a failure or even a betrayal on the part of representative democracy, and are likely to set the struggle on the path of passive revolution. Decisions about the hegemonic project and its implementation must result from the dialectical relationship between democracy of the base and representative democracy, if the anti-passive revolution strategy is to be successful.

7. The empirical cases

Bolivia: The Coordinadora

The Coalition for Water and Life (*Coordinadora para la Defensa del Agua y la Vida*, or *Coordinadora*) emerged in late 1999 to lead the struggle against the privatization of

water in Cochabamba, Bolivia, which was part of the second wave of neoliberal policies imposed by President Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada. The *coordinadora* – a coalition of social movements, neighborhood associations, peasants, and professional groups – halted the privatization process and was instrumental in expelling the privatizing company, American giant Bechtel. It was the first victory against the neoliberal hegemony, and it was achieved by an articulation of subaltern forces that were not related to political parties. The lack of ties to and independence from political parties was a theme often highlighted in participants' discourse. Several interviewees underscored the participation of Evo Morales and the *cocaleros* and the fact that the political party MAS (*Movimiento al Socialismo*) had not tried to appropriate the movement. Interviewees underscored this theme along two other important aspects that made this struggle novel and unique: the absence of class divisions and the lack of leaders; instead, spokespeople took the place of the latter.

The end of the water war in April 2000 was followed by “a period of effervescence and creativity” in Cochabamba (Gutiérrez Aguilar 2009, 86). The *Coordinadora* did not dissolve with this victory but remained engaged in local issues and matters of national importance. The success of the water struggle meant that the municipal water company, SEMAPA (*Servicio Municipal de Agua Potable y Alcantarillado*, or Municipal Service of Potable Water and Sewer), would remain public, and the *Coordinadora* was responsible for changing the structure of the company's board of directors to include members from the community and from SEMAPA's labor union. These changes were part and parcel of the social re-appropriation of SEMAPA, or its transformation into a public company under “*control social*,” meaning control exercised by the community (ibid., 89).

During 2001-2003 the *Coordinadora* became “an intermittent articulator” of the various and multiple struggles taking place in Bolivia (Gutiérrez Aguilar 2009, 92). The following is a selection of correspondence to and from the *Coordinadora* that shows the whole gamut of issues (water, housing, labor, health, education, natural resources, the environment) and activities (seminars, conferences, workshops, meetings, public statements, press releases) in which the *Coordinadora* was engaged during 2001-2003.

I argue that the water war represented the early stage of an anti-passive revolution which continued to develop throughout the social upheaval of 2000-2005, a period in which the subaltern forces engaged in a struggle against the dominant political and economic elites that continued pushing for a neoliberal agenda. The struggles in this period may be characterized by the subaltern forces' demands to socialize issues confined to the realm of political elites. At the heart of this social upheaval were citizens'

demands to have a voice in the political process that dictated national policies on water, oil and gas, fiscal revenue, and so on.

Table 1: Selected correspondence to and from the *Coordinadora* during 2001-2003

Letter to the Executive President of ENFE regarding the housing conditions of former workers of ENFE-Cochabamba, dated February 5, 2001.

Letter to various politicians regarding a document presented to the government containing the citizens' demand to review the cost of electricity provided by ELFEC, dated March 7, 2001.

Letter of invitation to a discussion-seminar on topics related to education, health, and the new fiscal policy as a factor for financing these services. This event was organized jointly with the teachers' union, health workers, and the central labor union of Cochabamba, dated June 8, 2001.

Letter to the secretary general of the *Asociación de Inquilinos sin Tierra ni Techo "El Porvenir"* (an association of renters) welcoming them to the *Coordinadora* and expressing a desire to work together to find a solution to their housing problems, dated August 10, 2001.

November 14, 2001 Letter to Llavini community informing that the *Coordinadora* has secured some resources for their school, November 14, 2001.

Letter from the Chamber of Commerce expressing preoccupation for the problems surrounding the national gas industry, asking Oscar Olivera and the *Federación de Fabriles* to make a public statement on the issue, dated May 27, 2002.

Letter of invitation to the press to a national meeting to discuss the *Asamblea Constituyente* with participation of all sectors of the population, dated June 3, 2002.

Invitation from the *Centro Integral de Desarrollo Económico Social* (Integral Center of Economic and Social Development) to a seminar-workshop on multicultural autonomy, dated September 30, 2002.

Letter from the *Coordinadora Departamental Defensa de Juntas Vecinales Peri-Urbanas* in Oruro (Association for the Defense of Neighborhood Councils in the Urban Periphery in the Department of Oruro), thanking Oscar Olivera and the *Coordinadora* for their moral, material, economic, and human resources support in the formation of their own *Coordinadora* and *Escuela Sindical* (labor school), dated October 2, 2002.

Letter from the *Pro-Cooperativa de Aguas OTB* (Territorial Base Organization, a grass roots organization) announce the conclusion of some water works and thanking the *Coordinadora* for its solidarity and support in the struggles of poor and marginalized neighborhoods, dated October 16, 2002.

Letter from the *Centro de Investigaciones de Sociología* (Center for Research in Sociology) inviting Oscar Olivera to participate in the analysis-seminar *Visión de la Sociedad Civil Sobre la Acción Gubernamental* (Visions of Civil Society on Governmental Action), dated December 6, 2002.

Invitation to Oscar Olivera to participate in the World Social Forum in India, dated December 17, 2002.

Letter to various individuals inviting them to a gathering for discussion and exchange of ideas for the creation of a space for alternative proposals leading to democracy and community control, dated January 9, 2003.

Letter to the Executive Secretary of the *Federación de Trabajadores de Salud y Compañeros de Base* (Federation of Health Workers), expressing solidarity with their movement, February 28, 2003.

Letter to the mayor of Villa Tunari denouncing the illegal actions of unauthorized developers to urbanize sections of Machia Park, asking his support in protecting marginalized communities and the environment, dated April 27, 2003.

Invitation to various intellectuals to a meeting for analysis and discussion of the socio economic situation of the country, the situation of the *Coordinadora*, and the organization of the *Fundación Abril*, May 22, 2003.

Invitation to the Great Concentration and National Mobilization for the Defense and Recovering of Gas, dated August 22, 2003

Source: *Fundación Abril's* archival files and dossiers.

During the Gas War of October 2003, the subaltern classes forced the resignation of President Sánchez de Lozada, an event followed by a period of acute crisis. The October Agenda, which emerged from the collective voices of the social movements, called for the nationalization of hydrocarbons and the gas industry. However, the three main social organizations involved in the struggle – CSUTCB (*Central de Sindicatos Unicos de Trabajadores Campesinos de Bolivia*, Bolivia's largest peasant organization), the *Cocaleros* (coca leaf growers of Cochabamba, to which Evo Morales belonged) and the *Coordinadora* – could not reach a consensus on how to carry out the nationalization of gas, which was perhaps the main item in the agenda. They all had different visions of what the process to achieve it should be, and different understandings of what nationalization should look like (Gutiérrez Aguilar 2009). Vice president Carlos Meza, who had replaced Sánchez de Lozada under such political turmoil, skillfully maneuvered to call a national referendum in 2005 to decide on a national policy for hydrocarbon resources. This action, which in appearance aimed to incorporate citizens' input to the decision making process, further underscored the differences among the main groups. The CSUTCB and the *Coordinadora* denounced the referendum as misleading and distracting, asking Bolivians not to take part in it. The *Cocaleros* partially supported the referendum, agreeing with some of the questions while warning about others; nevertheless they fully promoted it among the citizenry, and made it an important selling point among middle classes in Evo Morales' 2005 presidential bid.

The referendum illustrates one key aspect of the passive revolution: the success of the dominant classes to neutralize or absorb the subaltern forces by carrying on small reforms that satisfy some of their demands. At the time of these events, vice president Meza was the head of a severely weakened representative democracy; that he was still able to take advantage of the disagreements among the subaltern forces to establish his preferred alternative is a testimony to the resilience of the passive revolution. It also illustrates the tensions and confrontations that take place among democracy of the base, further underscoring the need for a historical bloc with a hegemonic project.

The *Coordinadora's* project had always underscored worker autonomy and self-management. Toward this end it had emphasized political education and worker empowerment through ongoing workshops and union organizing among non-traditional workers. It had done so through a permanent school of political education, the *escuela del pueblo*, which held the motto *sin partidos, sin patrones, sin caudillos* (without parties, without bosses, without strongmen). The *Coordinadora* never advocated the overthrow of government or discouraged people from voting, but it remained largely uninvolved in electoral politics. However, when Evo Morales and his political party MAS made a bid for the presidency in 2005, the *Coordinadora* was persuaded to provide its support. The *Coordinadora* had some misgivings about participating in electoral politics, a sentiment that other social organizations shared. But Alvaro García Linera, Morales' running mate, made some very persuasive arguments as he traveled the country to gather support. While highlighting the enormous gains made through mobilization, García Linera argued that the next most pressing issues in the social movements' agendas were the nationalization of gas and the reform of the Constitution, demands that "could only be won by having the power of the state. And there are two ways that you can get the power of the state: you can either buy guns or you can win an election" (Jim Schult, interview January 2010).

The *Coordinadora* supported Morales' bid in exchange for his commitment to create a new cabinet position: the Ministry of Water. The new position was meant to deal with pressing issues detected through the recent water struggles, and it also was supposed to introduce a new way for people to participate within government; the *Coordinadora* thoroughly supported these two items. To carry them out, the Ministry of Water included a social-technical commission formed by social movements, organizations and academicians involved in water issues. The commission's role was to discuss, reach consensus, and approve any projects, plans and programs of the ministry; it was meant to be a "strong form of social control, a form of co-management between the government and civil society⁵." The commission originally had discussion and voting rights on any project, plan or program proposed by the Ministry. The Morales administration fulfilled its commitment and created the Ministry, but the social commission did not function as expected. Its role was very limited from the beginning, and it became more constrained under the argument that decisions made by others could not be above the decisions of the Minister.

⁵ Social control, or *control social* in Spanish, means control exercised by civil society over the government. It implies a civil society that has a stronger role in matters usually handled entirely by the government or the private sector. The quote is from an interview with Rocío Bustos (January 2010), see Appendix for list of interviewees.

This behavior underscores the inherent tension in the dialectical relationship between representative democracy, even a progressive one, and subaltern forces. It also underscores what appears to be the inevitable separation between the two that is set in motion once formal political power is achieved. In the following years many leaders of social movements and social organizations were incorporated into the political bureaucracy of the MAS party, which further illustrates the risk of representative democracy absorbing democracy of the base. It should be noted, however, that this absorption was the result of both the government actively seeking to incorporate the leadership and the leadership's willingness to be incorporated, which calls into question the independence of many social organizations from the MAS. Furthermore, these developments beg the question of whether or not, and to what degree, democracy of the base transcended representative democracy and weighed in the final balance of forces in the Bolivian state transition.

It should also be noted, however, that the political dialectic between the MAS party and the *Coordinadora* was not a frontal opposition. Neither of the two tried to destroy the other – although the behavior of the MAS may seem a deliberate attempt to neutralize social movements. This case suggests a struggle between a representative democracy that portrays itself as a revolutionary government, and independent social movements that perceive the policies of the MAS as cosmetic changes and small reforms that do not fully address the political demands put forward in the October Agenda of 2003 – nationalization of hydrocarbons, ending neoliberal policies, and so on.

Oscar Olivera, the main spokesperson of the *Coordinadora*, sees the job of social movements as forcing president Evo Morales to fulfill this agenda, or to be straightforward about the reasons why it has not yet been fulfilled:

We simply ask that the government tell the truth about what it is doing, what are the limitations of a globalized world, what are the limitations of the state structure it inherited... We don't want him to say there has been a nationalization [of gas] here [in Bolivia], or that there is a revolutionary and anti-imperialist process [going on] here, because that is not true (Oscar Olivera, interview January 2010).

Yet despite the critical position expressed in this quote Olivera was not writing off the Morales administration. When I suggested a scenario where the government had an honest conversation with the social movements about the pressures that it was subjected to and the limitations it had to work within, and asked him if this approach or conversation would facilitate a supportive collaboration of independent social movements, his response was quick and emphatic:

But of course! In addition this [honest conversation] would allow us [social movements] to establish strategies that would allow us to break those chains of domination, and also to break up altogether with other governments.

Olivera's response illuminates what the process of anti-passive revolution could look like in Bolivia, and suggests his willingness to go down this road. He sees a path to this process that perhaps could materialize if a new relationship between representative democracy and democracy of the base was forged. His response also suggests the likelihood that some of the reforms and changes that took place in Bolivia were made in a unilateral fashion by representative democracy, causing disappointment among democracy of the base.

Throughout its trajectory, the *Coordinadora* pursued struggles that were quite revolutionary in the sense that they implied profound, radical transformations. Demands such as expelling the transnational Bechtel and the social re-appropriation of natural resources, public services, and social processes usually left to political elites required much more than small reforms or cosmetic changes. Furthermore, these demands were accompanied by proposals to execute them, underscoring the proactive nature of the *Coordinadora*. Its discourse was and has remained unabashedly anti-neoliberal, in favor of autonomy and worker self-management, and in favor of a "diluted/watered down state." By this it is meant a responsive government that stands in solidarity with and provides support to these processes, rather than a government that fully intervenes in these processes and attempts to direct or co-opt them. Oscar Olivera commented that this also used to be the discourse and project of current vice president Alvaro García Linares. Since achieving political power, however, the Morales administration has been pursuing projects and policies that resemble those preferred by the old Left of the 70s-80s, and which mainly consist of industrialization and development based on the indiscriminate extraction and exploitation of natural resources.

Oscar Olivera, progressive intellectuals, and independent social movements are highly critical of such projects. This level of critical opposition locates the *Coordinadora* and other independent social movements in a category that Aymara sociologist Pablo Mamani calls *afuera-afuera*, or outside-outside (interview January 2010). This category refers to those groups that remain independent from and outside of the government, and maintain a critical discourse. In a way they become the moral and political vanguard that will struggle to bring the Morales' administration to the right path if and when necessary, or to defend it if it comes under attack by the right wing oligarchy. In 2010 Olivera expressed the following critique:

What this and other governments are doing is simply applying neoliberal recipes in small doses, if in the past neoliberalism was applied in a brutal fashion, today they are using discourse, images, and a whole series of things. But in the end they are applying neoliberal economic and political models, and all of us who have lived through the dictatorships, the neoliberal times, the times of struggle, and the times [in which we perceived] the capacity of people to change things and formulate our own agenda, we fully realize this. I mean, all the supposedly progressive governments are very nice but they are not revolutionaries, and we have to underscore that (interview January 2010).

Once again Olivera underscores what he sees as the reformist nature of the Morales government in spite of its revolutionary discourse. Olivera's critique also illustrates Mamani's theory of social movements exercising their moral authority to stir the government in the appropriate direction. It illustrates, once again, the resilience of the passive revolution and its capacity to absorb valuable elements of the subaltern forces, leading them in the direction of reformist projects and away from original, more radical goals. Finally, it illustrates the tense dialectics between democracy of the base and representative democracy. Democracy of the base, represented by the *Coordinadora* and other social movements in the last few years, not only has resisted the attempts of representative democracy to absorb it; it actually has confronted and pushed representative democracy in a certain direction without attempting to destroy it.

The argument can be made that the Morales' administration is economically strapped and subjected to both domestic and international pressures that may force it to deviate from the goals and policies that it espoused before it became government. For instance, it is no small matter that eighty percent of the budget required for water needs nationwide comes from international – mostly European – aid (Rocío Bustos, interview January 2010). Not surprisingly, Morales' first trip as president was to Europe. A cash strapped government that is largely dependent on the forces of the international capitalist system – which resembles the nation state subordination to the transnational state (Robinson 2004, 2008) – may be more vulnerable to the process of passive revolution. Under such circumstances, strong independent social movements are often the only leverage that progressive governments have; in theory, it would be rational for them to cultivate and promote such movements. Yet the Morales' administration has, on the surface, deliberately contributed to weaken them.

To explain the above, Pablo Mamani notes that President Morales appears to have decided to consolidate his administration with the support of social movements categorized as *adentro-adentro* (inside-inside), which are largely subordinated in practice and discourse, because he may feel that this facilitates the functioning of his government. But Mamani also notes that this path is rather risky: the three categories of so-

cial movements, *afuera-afuera*, *adentro-adentro*, and the combination *adentro-afuera*, were necessary for the government to carry out the process of change that people came to expect. Under these circumstances the process of anti-passive revolution is either not possible or becomes increasingly difficult, because the political dialectic between representative democracy and democracy of the base is resolving itself toward absorption and neutralization of the latter.

Nevertheless, independent social movements like the *Coordinadora* continue to resist absorption, articulate with other struggles, and pursue a project of radical democracy, seeking to hold President Morales' administration accountable and to resolve this dialectic in creative and productive ways.

Mexico: MORENA

The *lopezobradorista* movement – which became the Movement of National Regeneration (*Movimiento Regeneración Nacional*, MORENA) in 2010 – has been characterized from its emergence as the joint struggle of a mobilized civil society and a handful of leftists/progressive politicians and intellectuals, among which Andrés Manuel López Obrador is the most visible leader. I argue that this movement may be framed as the early stage of an anti-passive revolution process where the movement represents democracy of the base engaged in a struggle for hegemony that has led to a confrontation with the ruling powers in Mexico: the overwhelming majority of the political class, the business community, and the Church. The latter are committed to continuing the passive revolution, preserving and furthering the neoliberal hegemony of the status quo.

The emergence of the movement can be traced back to the spring of 2005. López Obrador, the mayor of Mexico City since 2000, was impeached by the conservative political class. The aim was to end his political career and his bid for the presidency of Mexico in the 2006 elections, where he was perceived as the clear favorite and a threat to the economic system and the Mexican ruling elite. Hundreds of thousands of residents of Mexico City mobilized to deactivate the plan, outraged at this attempt to deny them their right to elect the candidate of their choice. López Obrador ran for president in a bitterly contested campaign plagued by inconsistencies and abundant evidence of electoral fraud (Díaz-Polanco 2012). The official results favored Felipe Calderón of the conservative party PAN (*Partido Acción Nacional*, or National Action Party) by 0.53 percent. Hundreds of thousands of outraged citizens coalesced around a mass movement to demand a recount of every vote in every precinct – *voto por voto, casilla por casilla*

– and to clean up the election. They exercised pressure by holding large demonstrations and a seven-week campout on the main streets of Mexico City. However the highest federal electoral tribunal, the *Tribunal Electoral del Poder Judicial de la Federación* (TEPJF) upheld the difference, qualified the election, and handed Calderón the presidency.

After this decision, the movement made it clear that the struggle went beyond an electoral victory; López Obrador announced that this was a movement for national transformation. Instead of disappearing, during 2006-2012 the movement engaged in massive affiliation and political education campaigns, and actively participated in political events that set the national agenda, much to the chagrin of the political class. What follows is a summary of the most important struggles and achievements of the movement during the period.

On September 16, 2006, the anniversary of the Mexican Independence Day, a crowd of over one million people gathered at the Zócalo Plaza in Mexico City and voted to name López Obrador the Legitimate President of Mexico, and for the movement to become the Legitimate Government. During 2006-2009, a nation-wide affiliation campaign recruited about 2.5 million members of the Legitimate Government; by the summer of 2012, when the presidential election came around, the membership had grown to four million. These recruits organized committees, carried out political education workshops, and engaged in grass roots efforts to promote the goals and mission of the movement and López Obrador's political platform, A National Alternative Project. The committees became the corner stone of his 2012 presidential campaign. It should be noted that these affiliations and organization efforts were unrelated to the political parties of the coalition that nominated López Obrador to the presidency. Members of the Legitimate Government were not affiliated to any political party, nor was the movement promoting such affiliation. However, militants of these parties were not turned away or denied membership in the movement, nor were they stigmatized for their party affiliation. López Obrador and other visible members of the upper echelons of the movement were in fact members of the coalition parties, mostly to the main leftist party PRD (*Partido de la Revolución Democrática*, or Party of the Democratic Revolution), something that was a source of tension and uneasiness among members of the movement who preferred a separation from political parties.

The mainstream media either ignored the movement or tried to delegitimize and demonize it. In response, participants created alternative means to counter the lack of news and misinformation about the movement. They created internet radio stations and a newspaper, as well as weekly study circles and other permanent spaces that became tools to promote citizens' participation, political education, and consciousness

raising. The handful of politicians that belonged to the movement remained in contact with the rank and file through regular appearances in these spaces, strengthening the bond between representative democracy and democracy of the base. A large number of intellectuals, many of them members of the Mexican intellectual elite, also were committed to these spaces; they made frequent appearances and maintained regular contact with the rank and file.

These efforts paid off in the spring/summer of 2008. The fast track approval of president Calderón's energy reform – in which the final goal was the privatization of the national oil company *Petróleos Mexicanos*, PEMEX – was stopped by coordinated action of democracy of the base and representative democracy. The rank and file engaged in a national campaign to organize brigades to defend PEMEX (*brigadas por la defensa del petróleo*). The new legislation was scheduled to be approved during April 10-25; on April 10, thirty eight thousand female and male *brigadistas* from all over the country gathered in Mexico City to blockade streets and accesses to Congress and the Senate buildings. Simultaneously, senators and representatives that belonged to the movement engaged in actions to obstruct the approval and force a debate. This coordinated action led to a summer long debate, open to the public and televised for large crowds of concerned citizens that gathered at the *Zócalo Plaza* to follow it. The reform that was finally approved still contained language and loopholes that potentially allowed for privatization; but it was not the option that Calderón and domestic and international economic elites seeking to privatize PEMEX originally preferred. In that sense, it was a victory for the movement.

This may be seen as a pivotal moment in the anti-passive revolution strategy of MORENA, when the subaltern forces avoided the path of passive revolution: democracy of the base forced political representatives of the movement to reject the amendments to the reform offered to pacify and gain the approval of MORENA. Journalist Pedro Miguel of *La Jornada* argued that:

Stopping a presidential initiative of legal reforms has no precedent in the history of the country... that mobilization in the streets stopped a presidential decree, that it forced elected politicians to act indeed as representatives of the people's will as opposed to individuals serving their own interests [has no precedent]. Concretely, we told the leftist parties "you people make a lot of money representing us, it is our money, you are our employees, and you are going to do what we, the people, want you to do, and we want you to occupy the tribune and do everything in your power to stop the fast track approval of that energy reform"... and they had to do it, and we imposed the agenda... Never before had a social movement, from the streets, forced the Senate to adopt an agenda (interview November 2009).

Equally important, the movement was successful at publicizing the issue, which had been exclusively intended for the political elites' discussion, underscoring the role that subaltern forces can play in the socialization of politics.

Increasing solidarity and trust between the rank and file and political representatives of the movement further paid off in the mid-term election of 2009, when a handful of candidates closely associated with the movement were elected to Congress. These candidates, known as *candidatos del movimiento ciudadano*, had very limited economic resources. Shut out of the mainstream media, their campaigns were largely carried out by the rank and file of the movement – most of them members of the study circles – and based on direct interaction with voters in public places. Against all odds, seven of such candidates won in Iztapalapa, the bastion of the leftist party PRD in Mexico City, and they did so by defeating PRD candidates in their own territory. Nationwide the movement was able to win 21 positions, which meant 21 voices presenting and defending the movement's initiatives and projects in Congress.

Once in office, these candidates largely fulfilled the expectations of the movement. They elevated the quality of the debate in Congress, unapologetically questioned budgets and challenged reforms, presented strong counter proposals, unwaveringly defended the positions of the movement, and engaged in obstructionist practices when necessary. They also made sure that Congressional hearings were no picnic for members of Calderon's cabinet being called for questioning. They were the only real, and very vocal, opposition to the congressional majority belonging to the PRI and PAN parties. The change in Congress' dynamics brought on by these *diputados* also became publicly known, since the debates transmitted by the Congress channel were recorded and made virtually available through *youtube*, Facebook, and other social media. Members of the movement and public in general widely shared and commented on these materials, further underscoring the importance of the movement in the socialization of politics.

During 2009-2012 MORENA made efforts to articulate with other struggles, building bridges with and actively supporting other social movements and organizations such as the electrical workers union (*Sindicato Mexicano de Electricistas*, SME). The electrical workers had all been fired and the company, *Luz y Fuerza del Centro*, abolished by presidential decree in October 2009. MORENA was a visible and permanent presence in marches, demonstrations and events called by the SME. It organized numerous fundraisers to provide economic support, and it helped to publicize the SME's cause through Internet radio programs in *radioamlo*. The unwavering solidarity that MORENA showed with the plight of the SME was a key factor to "shake off the stigma of being perceived merely as an electoral movement... our solidarity with the SME struggle de-

monstrated that we are not a movement that merely seeks to gain votes and win elections” (Jacobino, interview June 2012). The importance of ridding itself of such label cannot be underestimated, since being classified as “an electoral movement” and “not leftist enough” are the two main reasons why prominent social movements like the EZLN (also known as *Zapatistas*) and the *Movimiento por la Paz con Justicia y Dignidad* (Movement for Peace with Justice and Dignity, MPJD) will not join forces with nor support MORENA.

The period of 2009-2012 also involved the transformation from a movement of resistance to a proactive movement. The bimonthly newspaper *Regeneración* was created as a tool for information and political education. Having decided to participate in the 2012 presidential election, the movement engaged in intense organizing nationwide, increasing its recruiting efforts and making political education workshops a priority nationwide.

The national project that became the movement’s political platform in 2006 and 2012 had originated in López Obrador’s 2004 book, *Un Proyecto Alternativo de Nación* (A National Alternative Project). It had evolved with input collected in hundreds of assemblies, workshops and forums held nationwide throughout the years. During 2009-2012 MORENA held national assemblies and carried out national dialogues to discuss and debate the project, and to zero in on the ten points and fifty actions that became López Obrador’s political platform for the presidential election. Juanjo, one of the founders of the study circles, recalled that:

In the *Círculo de Estudios Central* we held large forums to analyze the project, we invited intellectuals with expertise in each one of the themes, then we held working tables to collect participants’ input, and all the ideas and proposals were sent [to MORENA’s headquarters], and they were taken into account for the final document... and the same process took place in the territorial committees (interview July 2012)

There was also intense preparation toward the presidential election. The new recruiting strategy built on the existing membership and committees: 2.5 million *representantes del gobierno legítimo* (members of the movement identified as representatives of the legitimate government) recruited during 2006-2009 became four million participants registered as *protagonistas del cambio verdadero* (protagonists of real change) in 2012. The nationwide organizational structure consisted, from the bottom up, of sections, neighborhoods, towns, districts, states and regions, each one of them staffed with committees and coordinators. The section committees, consisting of 4-10 members, were in charge of the grassroots effort, which was seen as the most important work: they held meetings, recruited participants, knocked on doors, delivered *Regeneración*, and so on. This impressive organizing effort, however, had a drawback: all re-

sources and efforts were directed at the electoral strategy at the expense of other more localized issues that were arguably equally important. The electoral strategy would be thoroughly discussed and analyzed among members of the rank and file after the election, and would cause many of them to continue their struggle apart from MORENA.

The 2012 presidential campaign was a replay of the 2006 election, in the sense that it was again a clear struggle between two very different projects. One attempted to maintain the neoliberal hegemony and it was supported by the main political parties PRI, PAN, their satellite parties PVEM (the Green Party) and PANAL (the New Alliance Party), the corporate and business class, and the church. The other represented a counterhegemonic project; supported by a strong social movement allied with the main leftist party PRD and the small progressive parties PT (Workers Party) and *Movimiento Ciudadano*, it posed a real challenge to the status quo. Enrique Peña Nieto, the candidate of the PRI (Revolutionary Institutional Party) became president in a process that once again was plagued by numerous controversies. Because the PRI had access to abundant resources, was thoroughly supported by the mainstream media, and had the electoral institutions on its side, the election was supposed to be a landslide victory. Indeed, all the polls taken during the months prior to the election predicted Peña Nieto's victory by a difference of 10-20 points, situating López Obrador in a remote third place behind the candidate of the conservative party PAN. Yet the official final results indicated that Peña Nieto and López Obrador had come in first and second place, each obtaining 38 and 31 percent of the vote. Numerous instances of illegal activities such as the disbursing of cash and gift cards in exchange for votes for Peña Nieto were carefully documented in the weeks following the election. Pedro Miguel explained that

the organization and strength of MORENA forced the PRI to commit one of the most absurd frauds ever. They [the PRI] had to go to such extremes in order to steal the presidency... it was blatant, and everybody saw it, and it will never go away, and they will have to govern through coercion rather than through hegemony, because this is how they obtained the presidency (interview July 2012).

Repression against social movements and protests were an early mark of this government. Peña Nieto began his administration with a labor reform that further eroded workers' rights and security. Throughout 2013 he aggressively promoted education, energy and fiscal reforms. The education reform was so damaging to teachers' labor rights that it resulted in ongoing protest throughout the country that lasted several months; the energy reform sought to achieve everything that Calderón's 2008 reform

could not. MORENA mobilized to stop a fiscal reform that originally intended to increase the value added tax to medicine and food, an attack on the most vulnerable people. MORENA's strategy was to socialize the issues at stake in the fiscal reform; aware of the discontent that such tax would generate among an informed population, the PRI chose to target the middle classes instead. The fiscal reform unveiled in September of 2012 taxed items such as school tuition and mortgage loans, and MORENA tried to reach out to disgruntled middle class citizens to organize them around this issue.

In the fall of 2013, however, the most intense organizing and consciousness raising efforts were dedicated to stopping the privatization of PEMEX, which was perceived as the ultimate goal of the energy reform, but also economic suicide for Mexico. Despite MORENA's efforts the reform was approved, a decision that was lauded as groundbreaking and modernizing by political and economic interests in the United States and by international financial institutions. The reach and implications of the 2013 reform as well as the manner in which it was approved underscored the importance for social movements to have political representation and participation in state power. In the 2008 struggle against President Calderon's energy reform MORENA forced the political class to back down from the original reform thanks to intense coordinated pressure on the streets and in formal political spaces. In 2013 the pressure on the streets was strong albeit comparatively smaller, but without sufficient representation of the movement in congress and the senate, pressure in these spaces was virtually non-existent.

In the fall of 2012 MORENA engaged in a new phase. It started the legal process to become a political party while continuing the struggle against the neoliberal project promoted by the political and economic elites. The decision stems largely from the conviction that state power is necessary to achieve change, and from the perception that the leftist/progressive parties that formed the movement's electoral coalition in the past often have followed the party logic rather than the movement's, creating tensions and contradictions that cannot be resolved. MORENA is attempting to become a social movement-slash-political party: to preserve the characteristics of a social movement, and to remain close to its democratic base, while being able to compete in electoral politics, especially presidential elections. The main motivation is that participation in presidential elections is only allowed through a political party, and MORENA cannot afford to depend on parties that do not necessarily have the interests of the movement at heart. This decision was not made lightly or unilaterally by the higher echelons of the movement; it was the product of discussion and debates held nationwide, and it was decided at a national assembly in the fall of 2012 where the option of becoming a party won by a small margin.

Members of MORENA are aware of the risks involved in this decision: the danger of oligarchization and cooptation that Robert Michels described as inherent in large bureaucratic organizations, such as political parties (Michels 1966). This is a valid concern, and in fact MORENA has included provisions to minimize this risk in the movement's foundational statute. However, the transformation of MORENA into a political party responds more to Gramsci's analysis, which offers the idea of a political party "as an organic and dialectical relationship between masses, intellectuals and leaders," in opposition to Michels' "static equilibrium... [where] the oligarchic trends tend to prevail" (De Nardis and Caruso 2011, 19). For Michels, De Nardis and Caruso argue, "the spontaneity of the masses is the only form of political rationality" and their incompetence is the basis where the power of the leaders rests (ibid. p. 19). MORENA does not fit this profile: the political competence of the rank and file became evident to this author during months of participant observation and interviews conducted throughout the years of fieldwork. The convergence of interests and national goals between the rank and file, intellectuals, and the leadership of the movement are palpable, and there is a shared sense of the historical task at hand and the role they play in it. This does not preclude a push from the rank and file and mid-level leadership for more deliberation and debate around local problems. Such political maturity is expressed, for example, in the preoccupation "to start planting the seeds of political deliberation as an instrument and as a road to democratize MORENA" (Jacobino, interview June 2012).

Critics of the movement from both the left and the right of the ideological spectrum have expressed skepticism that MORENA will be any different from other political parties. In line with the issues explored in this article, the challenge for MORENA is whether it will be able to maintain the dialectical relationship between the rank and file and the leadership, and to become hegemonic. The challenge also will be the movement's ability to develop and sustain a vigorous antithesis that will resist absorption and cooptation and transcend the process of passive revolution, if and when it achieves the presidency or sizable numbers in Congress or the Senate.

8. Discussion and conclusions

The trajectories of the *coordinadora* in Bolivia and MORENA in Mexico show that both movements constitute ongoing processes of anti-passive revolutions at different stages, each one facing its own particular set of obstacles and challenges.

The Bolivian case represents a more advanced stage where the presidential victory of Evo Morales by most accounts would represent the triumph of the subaltern forces

over the passive revolution. However, the resilience of the passive revolution is once again demonstrated in the challenges that a progressive government, even one propelled by strong social movements, encounters when faced with the actual tasks of governing a country. The perception among independent social movements was that President Morales' initiatives had fallen short of fulfilling the October Agenda and amounted to cosmetic changes and small reforms. For instance his first presidential trip to the European Union, immediately after taking power, may be interpreted as an effort to dispel misgivings among ally and donor countries⁶. The trip may have been appreciated by foreign governments and international aid agencies as a sign that his administration would not significantly alter the status quo. Yet these actors were part and parcel of the ongoing passive revolution that, as Buci-Glucksmann (1979) and Morton (2003) have suggested, would seek to reorganize neoliberalism in what was clearly a period of crisis.

While for observers outside Bolivia the changes brought on by the Morales administration may seem revolutionary, this is not the general perception among independent social movement who fought the battles of the 2000-2005 and who knew what the goals and expectations were. Some interviewees believed that Evo Morales did not have a hegemonic project when he began his administration; another possibility is that he might have had one but not a strategy to execute it. These shortcomings, combined with the political tensions and compromises inherent in actually governing a country and a relentless attack from the right wing, may have been responsible for stifling a more profound transformation. Under these circumstances, it is more likely that members of a progressive government will find themselves in a situation where they must accept, or resign themselves to, unilaterally carrying out only the changes that seem possible at the moment. This is what Laclau and Mouffe call "the positivist pragmatism of reformists without a project" (2001, 190). It potentially would locate Bolivia closer to what Robinson refers to as the "pink tide governments" in Latin America that are pursuing reform rather than more radical-oriented outcomes (Robinson 2008, 294), pre-

⁶ In 2004-2005 the conflict in El Alto over water services provided by Aguas del Illimany S.A. (AISA), a company belonging to French corporation Suez-Lyonnaise Des Eaux, caused tension with France. The neighborhood association FEJUVE of El Alto sought to expel AISA, in a similar fashion to the events in Cochabamba's water struggle. The conflict was the event that forced the resignation of vice president Carlos Mesa in 2005. During 2005-2006 an audit ordered by the Bolivian government provided evidence that AISA had not complied with the licensing contract, enough evidence to expel the company without compensation. However, the European Union pressured President Morales into not allowing a replay of Cochabamba's events. AISA's contract was terminated but the company was compensated and the Bolivian government took responsibility for the company's debts (Carlos Crespo, interview December 2009).

sumably against the preferences of at least a sizable percentage of democracy of the base.

One worrisome aspect of developments in Bolivia is the neutralizing effect that the government has had on social movements. By encouraging movements to channel their demands through government agencies or offices, the government has rendered independent collective action unnecessary or even obsolete, and has set the conditions for paternalistic and clientelistic relationships. The absence of road blockades, strikes, and other instances of contentious collective action that have been a staple of Bolivian social movement surely facilitate the act of governing for President Morales, and it may be the reason behind his efforts to channel their demands through institutional means. Even if this is the case, however, social movements' demobilization should not be attributed exclusively to these actions. Exhaustion caused by the ongoing struggles of 2000-2005 took a considerable toll on social movements. But equally important, the presidential victory of Evo Morales brought an undeniable sense of accomplishment, the feeling that it represented a real and long awaited goal; both elements also were largely responsible for demobilization (Raúl Prada, interview February 2010).

Regardless of the causes, deactivation of democracy of the base deprives representative democracy of its most important leverage, its most powerful tool to carry out change. It affects the dialectical relationship between representative democracy and democracy of the base, tipping it toward the negative outcome where the antithesis does not develop fully and, hence, does not transcend the thesis. As a result, the resolution of the state crisis resembles more the small changes and reforms characteristic of the passive revolution than the hegemonic project that potentially could have resulted had the subaltern forces remained active and weighted in appropriately in the final balance of forces. That what appeared to be a vigorous antithesis in the Bolivian case could be weakened in this fashion is again a testimony to the resilience of the passive revolution.

MORENA has yet to have the opportunity to prove what it could do once it achieves executive power or a more sizeable presence in the legislative branch of the government, and whether pragmatism will direct it to small reforms within the limits of what is possible at the moment rather than the pursuit of a long term hegemonic project. To its credit MORENA does have such a project and a strategy to pursue it. It is a project with a clear anti-neoliberal direction that seeks, among other things, to strengthen the State and to re-direct its role towards a project of social justice, to utilize energy, industrial and agrarian policies as engines for national development and self-sufficiency, to strengthen the social safety net, to end corruption and to abolish the fiscal privileges of the oligarchy (Ramírez Cuevas 2011; Bartra 2012). It was built through hundreds of

workshops and assemblies held by the rank and file and the leadership, and socialized through ongoing political education and grassroots efforts nationwide throughout the years. This process resembles what Gramsci refers to as the construction of hegemony on the part of the subaltern forces, and which is necessary to develop before achieving, and in order to achieve and maintain, state power (Gramsci 1971, 53). The fight for citizens' vote in the 2012 presidential election was a struggle for hegemony between the subaltern forces represented by MORENA and Andrés Manuel López Obrador, and the passive revolution of the ruling elites represented by Enrique Peña Nieto and his PRI party. The latter imposed its hegemony through material coercion and intimidation.

In addition, the movement has already proved its commitment to lay the ground for such project. One example was the leadership's refusal to negotiate important political positions after the defeat in the 2006 and 2012 presidential elections and their refusal to legitimate these controversial victories. The leftist party PRD (Party of the Democratic Revolution) advocated and eventually followed this route in 2012, resulting in the gradual accommodation of PRD politicians to the PRI's programs and goals in a manner akin to Gramsci's concept of "transformism" (Gramsci 1971, 109). The 2008 struggle for the defense of PEMEX was another example. The reform approved by the Senate was hailed by the main faction of the PRD as a satisfactory reform that had, in their opinion, incorporated all the changes suggested by the Left. Yet MORENA's leadership and 15,000 members of the brigades voted against the approval of the final document and for remaining in a state of alert, arguing that it still contained language and loopholes that would allow privatization to be carried out surreptitiously. Such stand gave the movement the moral authority to engage in collective action again should the need arise, which it did in Peña Nieto's aggressive energy reform described before. After the approval of the reform in late 2013, MORENA started a nationwide campaign to collect signatures necessary for a referendum to revoke the reform, to be called in the mid-term election of 2015⁷.

MORENA's leadership and rank and file are very clear that this struggle is a life-long commitment, and that it will not end with the achievement of formal political power. Critics and detractors of the movement often point out that all the actions of MORENA have aimed deliberately and solely at winning the presidency. The leadership and the rank and file of the movement have never shied away from their electoral goal, but they also have prioritized the intermediate step and long term goal of building an or-

⁷ As of September 2014 MORENA had collected 2.7 million signatures. Source: newspaper *La Jornada*, "Hoy entrega MORENA rúbricas al senado; tenemos 2.7 millones: AMLO." Retrieved September 10, 2014 (<http://www.jornada.unam.mx/2014/09/10/politica/015n2pol>).

ganized civil society and constructing hegemony. They are aware of the fact that winning the presidency is not enough to bring about change. They know that a progressive president without the support of a strong, organized and mobilized civil society sooner or later will be overpowered by the neoliberal status quo.

As a final note I want to put in comparative perspective the trajectories of progressive Latin American governments in recent times. Modonesi (2013a) argues that, notwithstanding important differences among the recent governments of Brazil, Venezuela, Uruguay, Bolivia, Ecuador, Argentina, Nicaragua, El Salvador, Paraguay and Peru, there may be common elements that suggest that these cases “may be read” as instances of passive revolution-caesarism, where a progressive Caesar tips the balance of forces toward progressivism (ibid., 220). To his credit, Modonesi also argues that there are “significant and particularly interesting variations” among these cases, especially variations in the type of critical support that social coalitions provide to these progressive governments. Unfortunately, and Modonesi rightly notes, these elements have received little or no scholarly attention (ibid., 220). As I have argued in this article, it is the interaction between governments and social movements that determines whether the state transition will follow the path of passive revolution or whether the subaltern forces will be able to transcend. Categorizing the actions of these governments as completed processes of passive revolutions while ignoring the actions and behaviors of social movements, and the causes and motivations behind them, tells only a partial story.

Brazil is an emblematic case in light of the June 2013 massive protests that puzzled many scholars of social movements. An analysis by Modonesi published in the Mexican newspaper *La Jornada* referred to these protests as “the end of the passive revolution” in Brazil. It argued that they signaled the exhaustion of a model where progressive change was carried out through a top-down process that excluded the masses and only partially incorporated their demands (Modonesi 2013b). However, a previous analysis of the protests had underscored the fact that President Lula da Silva had achieved executive power under circumstances of receding popular mobilization (Guerra Cabrera 2013). A more nuanced analysis would underscore both the absence of independent mass mobilizations from below and the subordination of powerful organizations like the landless movement (MST), who demobilized during the early years of Lula’s administration in the hopes that the new government would represent its interests (Robinson 2008, 346). Guerra Cabrera concludes that the absence of strong social movements that supported and promoted his social agenda had forced President Lula to form alliances with bourgeois parties and sectors of the population that allowed him only small margins of movement. Robinson argues that during this mobilization hiatus the

government became “deeply exposed to and co-opted by transnational capital” (ibid.). Under these circumstances, Lula’s turn to what appeared to be a path of passive revolution would be almost inevitable: unsavory alliances and co-optation become more likely when independent social movements deprive progressive governments of their leverage.

Examining Brazil in the last decade under the framework developed in this article would identify this case as a state transition in which the passive revolution appears to have absorbed the subaltern forces in what is still an unfinished process. As an ongoing process, however, the emergence of large protests in the summer of 2013 was a hopeful sign that a vigorous antithesis may develop and tip the balance away from the reformist path that the country appeared to be on. Any progressive government would welcome such developments. How President Dilma Rousseff deals with the protestors and addresses their demands, whether a dialectical relationship develops between representative democracy and the social movements, and the level of mobilization that they are able to sustain in the long run will indicate whether the Brazilian state transition continues, as Modonesi (2013b) suggests, the path of passive revolution or whether the conditions have emerged for the subaltern forces to weigh in substantially in the final balance of forces.

In this day and age of worldwide struggle against neoliberalism, the autonomy of social movements from electoral politics and their support for progressive governments and parties are debated with strong arguments on both sides. As debates around this issue and mass mobilizations continue to take place worldwide, the question of what follows after mass mobilizations becomes crucial. What’s the future for these social movements? How can they remain independent, sustain the energy displaced on the streets, and translate it into advancing their goals and objectives? In Gramsci’s terms: How can they transcend? As we try to answer these questions let us remember Frances Fox Piven’s argument about the important role of electoral politics in creating the environment in which movements arise, and the “false dilemma” that choosing between electoral politics and social movements implies (Piven 2012, 20). Let us also be reminded that dismissing political organizations and the state because of their potential threat to become “instruments of hierarchy, control and oppression... undermines the ability of social movements to transform institutions of power” (Robinson 2008, 344). Ignoring or dismissing social movements that have electoral objectives as part of their goals denies the agency of individuals who have chosen to follow this path, aware of its risks but refusing to accept such determinism.

In the current context of struggles against neoliberalism, Gramsci’s theory and the tradition that originated with his work have become more relevant than ever. The con-

cept of anti-passive revolution as a counter strategy to the neoliberal passive revolution offers a fruitful theoretical tool to examine the processes by which social movements can develop relationships with representative democracy and fully develop their potential to transcend.

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Appendix: List of interviewees

Interviewees in Bolivia

- Carlos Crespo: professor and researcher at the Universidad Mayor de San Simón; he specializes in water issues and has been advisor to the *Regantes*. Interviewed December 30, 2009.
- Jim Schultz: director of the Democracy Center, and NGO based in San Francisco and Bolivia. Interviewed January 12, 2010.
- Oscar Olivera: ex-Secretary General of the *Federación de Fabriles*, main spokesperson for the *coordinadora*, and founder of the *Fundación Abril*. Interviewed January 21, 2010.

Pablo Mamani: Aymara scholar, sociologist, professor and researcher at the *Universidad Mayor de San Andrés* (UMSA, La Paz) and the *Universidad Pública y Autónoma de El Alto* (El Alto), and recurrent presenter at the *coordinadora's* workshops. Interviewed January 26, 2010.

Raúl Prada: professor and researcher at the *Universidad Mayor de San Andrés* (UMSA) in La Paz, member of the Comuna group. He was a member of the during 2007-2008 and served in the Ministry of Economics and Finances in President Morales' administration. Interviewed February 2, 2010.

Rocío Bustos: engineer with graduate degrees in water issues from the *Universidad Mayor de San Simón* (UMSS, Cochabamba), largely involved in the 2000 water struggle and follow up. Interviewed January 7, 2010.

Interviewees in Mexico

Jaime Taylor "Jacobino": retired engineer who works as a consultant and volunteers at what is known as the *Casa del Movimiento Benito Juárez*. Interviewed June 13, 2012.

Juan José Sánchez González "Juanjo": political scientist who was one of the founders of the study circles, employed at the government of the Federal District. Interviewed July 20, 2012.

Pedro Miguel: journalist, writer and columnist in the newspaper *La Jornada*. Interviewed November 17, 2009, and July 19, 2012.

All names and nicknames are real and are being used with interviewees' permission.

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