



**FROM PROGRESSIVE AGRARIAN POPULISM TO AUTHORITARIAN  
POPULISM?**

**THE CONFLICT BETWEEN THE MOVEMENT FOR SOCIALISM (MAS)  
GOVERNMENT AND COCA GROWERS ORGANIZATIONS OF THE BOLIVIAN  
YUNGAS**

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## Content

List of acronyms.....	iii
List of Maps.....	iv
Abstract .....	v
Relevance to Development Studies.....	v
Acknowledgments.....	i
<b>Introduction .....</b>	<b>1</b>
Research question .....	4
Methodology.....	5
Chapters overview .....	6
<b>Chapter 1. Theoretical Discussions on Populism.....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Chapter 2. The Government of Social Movements? The Rise of MAS and its Shifting Relations with Bolivian Rural Movements .....</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Chapter 3. A Counterpoint of the Political Economy of Coca in the Yungas and Chapare.....</b>	<b>19</b>
Geographical Location and Brief history of Yungas and Chapare .....	20
The Production and Commercialization of Coca in the Yungas and Chapare .....	22
The Social Organization of Coca Growers in the Yungas and Chapare: Peasant unions at multiple levels.....	23
<b>Chapter 4. Authoritarian Populism in the Yungas .....</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>Conclusions .....</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>References: .....</b>	<b>34</b>

## List of acronyms

Acronym	English	Spanish
ADEPCOCA	Coca Growers Association of La Paz Department	Asociación Departamental de Productores de Coca de La Paz
ADN	Nationalist Democratic Action	Acción Democrática Nacionalista
CIDOP	Confederation of Indigenous People of Bolivia	Confederación de pueblos Indígenas de Bolivia
COB	Bolivian Workers' Confederation	Confederación Obrera Boliviana
COFECAY	Federations' Council of La Paz Yungas	Consejo de Federaciones de Los Yungas de La Paz
CONALPRODC	National Confederation of Coca Retailers-producers	Confederación Nacional de Productores al Detalle de Coca
CONAMQ	National Council of Ayllus and Markas of Qullasuyu	Consejo Nacional de Ayllus y Markas del Qullasuyu
CSUTCB	Unified Confederation of Peasant Workers Unions of Bolivia	Confederación Sindical Única de Trabajadores Campesinos de Bolivia
FEJUVE	The Federation of Urban Neighbourhood Councils – El Alto	Federación de Juntas Vecinales de El Alto
IPSP	Political Instrument for the Sovereignty of The People	Instrumento Político por la Soberanía de los Pueblos
MAS-IPSP	Movement for Socialism-Political Instrument for the Sovereignty of the People	Movimiento al Socialismo- Instrumento Político por la Soberanía de los Pueblos
MIR	Revolutionary Left Movement	Movimiento de la Izquierda Revolucionaria
MNR	The Revolutionary Nationalist Movement	Movimiento Nacionalista Revolucionario

OAS	Organization of American States	Organización de Estados Americanos
TIPNIS	Indigenous Territory and National Park Isiboro Sécuré	Territorio Indígena y Parque Nacional Isiboro Sécuré

## **List of Maps**

**Map.1.1** Map of Bolivia showing main cities, roads and coca growing regions.

## Abstract

This research paper attempts to understand to what extent and for what reasons Evo Morales's Movement for Socialism (MAS) government has shifted from progressive agrarian populism to authoritarian populism as illustrated by the conflict between the government and coca growers' organization of Yungas (ADEPCOCA).

The research is framed in the field of critical agrarian studies and the flourishing literature on populism politics, including its relationship with the dynamics of agrarian change. The analytical approach combines elements of the Gramscian methodology of analysis of historical situations with the political theory of populism and its relations with authoritarianism. The inquiry is grounded in a short fieldwork carried out in La Paz and the Yungas (Bolivia) in which open-ended interviews and ethnographic observations were carried out. The paper argues that regardless of the progressive origins of MAS when it led a counter-hegemonic bloc against neoliberalism and traditional political parties in Bolivia, the government started to deploy coercion tactics against the political and social dissent of the social movements. In the case of ADEPCOCA, the adoption without socialization and active consent of the new Coca Law (907/2017) started to undermine the MAS legitimacy in the Yungas. To retrieve it, the MAS government has deployed coercion, co-optation, clientelism, and judicial persecution against coca growers' leaders. In the conclusion, the paper calls for the importance of going beyond the notion of authoritarian populism as a solely right-wing phenomenon and explores cases showing how progressive populism can lead to the path of authoritarianism.

## Relevance to Development Studies

The contemporary emergence of authoritarian populist regimes across the world both in developed and developing countries it is shaping the economic and political dynamics of many countries. In development studies in general and in critical agrarian studies in particular there has been flourishing literature in order to address the causes and consequences of these regimes. Less attention has been given to the historical situations in which a progressive populist regime can derive into authoritarian regimes. This paper addresses this situation in the case of Bolivia rural politics and the unexpected conflictive relations between the MAS's government and the coca grower's organization of the Yungas region.

**Key words:** Populism, Authoritarianism, Bolivia, Coca growers, MAS, Evo Morales

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# Introduction

On 10 March 2018, in a general assembly of Coca Growers Association of La Paz Department (ADEPCOCA) that took place in the municipality of Coripata, the Yungas region (Bolivia), thousands of coca growers elected a directorate headed by the peasant leader Franklin Gutiérrez. After some days, a parallel directorate was established, taking by force the Villa Fatimá market in La Paz, the headquarters of ADEPCOCA and one of the two places in Bolivia where it is allowed to wholesale coca leaves legally. This ‘coup’ was achieved with the support of some coca leaves retailers of ADEPCOCA (known as ‘*carpeteros*’), and plenty of backup of the ruling party, Movement for Socialism-Political Instrument for the Sovereignty of The People (MAS-IPSP or MAS), headed by the Bolivian president Evo Morales.

Considering what has occurred in Villa Fátima, Franklin Gutiérrez’s directorate called for an extraordinary general assembly with the decision to retake the ADEPCOCA headquarters. In an unprecedented rally of coca growers during Evo Morales’s presidency, between 10,000 to 15,000 thousand coca growers from Yungas mobilized towards La Paz to retrieve the coca market. Franklin Gutiérrez named the rally “the final battle for ensuring ADEPCOCA is respected by the MAS government”. His leadership was strengthened during the manifestation and thousands of coca growers that once used to support Evo Morales acclaimed: “Franklin yes, Evo no!”.

The police officers tried to repel coca growers away from the market with the deployment of coercive measures such as firing pellets, use of tear gas to the crowd, and capturing people, which left tens of injured and jailed protesters. The government also tried to avoid the transmission of news related to the riots by the local radios of Yungas. After one week of clashes with the public force and the supporters of the parallel directorate sheltered in the market, Franklin Gutiérrez’s supporters were able to make their way into Villa Fatimá and retrieve the control of the market. Notwithstanding, this was far from being the final battle of ADEPCOCA. Some months after the events, on 26 August 2018 Franklin Gutiérrez was imprisoned in a judicial process with several irregularities, in which many argue was biased by the interest of the executive power<sup>1</sup>.

This event might be surprising to those who are relatively familiar with Latin American politics. The arrival of Evo Morales to the presidency with his political party MAS is a landmark of Bolivian progressive politics. In a broader Latin American context, Evo Morales’ government is lumped into the so called ‘Pink-Tide’ or ‘Latin American’s turn left’, a third wave of populism in the region that started in 21<sup>st</sup> century which includes the governments of Rafael Correa in Ecuador, of Hugo Chávez in Venezuela (Barr 2017), of Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva in Brazil, and of Néstor and Cristina Kisher in Argentina (Grigera 2017). These governments can be characterized as left-wing populists “promised to ease the impact of recent (neoliberal) reforms, to restore the economic role of the state, to protect national resources, and to stop the elite from benefiting at the expense of the people” (Barr 2017: 2). ‘In the name of the people’, they were able to “foster the inclusion and participation of previously disempowered groups by redistributing income and reducing poverty”, but in many occasions continued implement extractivist and growth-oriented economic policies (Svampa, 2017) and also “undermined the institutions that guarantee contestation, pluralism, and civil liberties” (De La Torre 2013: 28). At the end of the second decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the progressive populist cycle in Latin American

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<sup>1</sup> The narrative above is based on an interview with a manager of a local radio in the Yungas. 17 July 2019.

politics seems to be approaching its end following the tendency towards the rise of worldwide right-wing populism, marked by of Bolsonaro's rise to power in Brazil in early 2019. Evo Morales, after three presential terms and more than 13 years in power, stepped down on 10 November 2019 in the middle of a political crisis and violent upheavals triggered by Morales's attempt to go for a fourth presidential term by manipulating the elections<sup>2</sup>.

Evo Morales was not only the first indigenous president of an indigenous-majority country, he also was the most important leader of the coca growers' unions of Chapare region in a country where coca cultivation and traditional consumption is deeply embedded in the national identity, which has also been repressed by the United States-led 'War on Drugs'. Organically tied to social movements and unions deeply enrooted in the countryside<sup>3</sup>, Evo Morales and MAS changed the correlation of political forces and challenged the hegemony of dominant classes in Bolivia. Some authors have characterized the outcome of this process of social change as the "Third Bolivian Revolution" (Dunkerley 2007), or the come to power of "the government of social movements" (García 2011).

Taking into consideration the political background of the election of Evo Morales as Bolivian president and contrasting with the riots of the Villa Fatimá market narrated above, it is puzzling how a coca grower leader became the president, coming to power hand in hand with rural movements and supposedly being accountable to them. Eventually, he tried to erode the autonomy and democracy of the coca growers' organization with authoritarian practices, supporting parallel directorates, prioritizing coercion under consensus during the rallies, and plotting to imprison the leaders of grassroots peasant organizations.

This research paper attempts to understand the conflict between Evo Morales's government and the coca growers' organizations of the Yungas ADEPCOCA. The research is framed in the field of critical agrarian studies and the contemporary reflections about populist politics in relation to agrarian dynamics (Scoones et al. 2017). The inquiry is grounded in a short fieldwork carried out in La Paz and the Yungas (Bolivia) in which open-ended interviews and an ethnographic observation were carried out.

In order to understand Bolivian politics and the tension between Morales's government and ADEPCOCA, one is required to take a look at the broader global picture and the contemporary political dynamics of populism, and the scholarly discussions about it. Nowadays, with the crisis of liberalism and the arrival to power of political regimes that poses a menace to liberal institutions and values, populism has become a political category for explaining the new socio-political changes of our time. Bello (2017: 1) claims that "whether one calls them fascist, authoritarian populist or counterrevolutionary, there is no doubt that angry movements contemptuous of liberal democratic ideals and practices and espousing the use of force to resolve deep-seated social conflicts are on the rise globally".

Populism has now become a widespread category for explaining political dynamics, both in Social Science and the media. However, it is charged with strong value judgements. In that vein, Ranciere (2016: 101) states out that "a day does not go by when one does not hear denounced in Europe the risk of populism". In the media, populism works as a label for discrediting a

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2 Evo Morales's opposition claimed that an electoral fraud took place and a monitoring group of the Organization of American States (OAS) "agreed there had been manipulation" of the election <https://www.bbc.com/news/newsbeat-50388934>. Accessed 12 November 2019. The conjuncture of Evo Morales resignation will be referred to in Chapter 2. And the conclusions.

3 Evo Morales has been for the last 25 years the president of the Coordinating Committee of the Six Federations of Cochabamba Tropic (Coordinadora de las Seis Federaciones del Trópico de Cochabamba Tropic) and also was one of the most prominent leaders of Unified Confederation of Peasant Worker's Union of Bolivia (CSUTCB) (García 2010). The latter organization is affiliated to the transnational agrarian movement La Via Campesina.

politician or a political regime when it causes polarization in society, implements fiscally irresponsible policies, deploys demagogic strategies of political communication, or discriminates migrants or ethnic minorities as an electoral strategy.

In academia, despite the long tradition of studies on populism (e.g. Canovan 1981, Germani 1978), the category of populism has just been recently used to explain political changes toward authoritarian right-wing regimes in India, Turkey, Philippines, United States, Hungary (Adaman et al. 2019: 518). In the United States, the election of Trump as the Republican candidate for the presidential election of 2015 undermined the self-portrayed image of the country as the bastion of liberal democracy (Koch 2017). Trump was able to come to power with right-wing populist appeals and pre-existing organized “White supremacy, Christian nationalism, and white nationalism”, partially enrooted in the rural areas, that vilified both the ‘liberal establishment’ and marginalized minorities: immigrants, Muslims, and LGBTQ community members (Berlet and Spencer 2019: 480). In Turkey, the Erdoğan government has deployed populist and coercive tactics in order to deal with the social dissent caused by the “neoliberal developmentalist” and extractivist policies implemented in the rural areas (Adaman et al. 2019). In Hungary, “considered as a success story of democratic consolidation in a post-communist country” (Buzogany 2017:1) authoritarian populism took place after just a few years. The government of Viktor Orbán is ruling with a populist strategy that targets NGOs, refugees and The European Union as the ‘people’s enemy’, meanwhile “the regime is consolidating itself economically and politically via land grabbing by and for national oligarchs and ‘pocket contract’ foreigners” (Gonda 2019: 605).

Both liberal and socialist scholars have warned against the risk of populism in its authoritarian version. On the one hand, the liberals argue that authoritarian populism threatens the values and institutions of liberalism as the representative democracy, the separation of power, the participation of political opposition within a democracy, and the liberal values of rationality and inclusion of diversity (without antagonism) (Crewe and Sanders 2019). On the other hand, the socialists are especially concerned with the right-wing version of authoritarian populism that besides eroding democratic institutions, are overt “champions of contemporary capitalism” and generally “antisocialist” (Borras 2019: 3).

In the field of critical agrarian studies, the analytical relationship between populism and politics of agrarian change is long dated<sup>4</sup> but have been experiencing an increase attention in the last years. Some scholars such as Ian Scoones et al. (2017: 2), have called attention to how populist politics have been shaped by dynamics of agrarian change, and how it might produce “more dramatic- and usually negative- changes in the rural areas”. The notion of authoritarian populism is seen in the paper of Scoones et al. as an overreaching dynamic “across the breadth and depth of the contemporary rural world” (Akram-Lodhi 2018)<sup>5</sup>, and the political dynamic which is required to fight against with to build up projects of emancipatory rural politics<sup>6</sup>. Among these projects, Scoones et al (2017:3) recognise that, regardless of their neoliberal and extractivist policies, the Latin American populism of the ‘Pink Tide’ is an example of how “arguments in favour of the people can be a positive mobilizing force of solidarity and emancipation”.

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4 The emergence and political influence of the *narodniki* (a left-wing Russian agrarian populist movement) is a classical topic of debate and inquiry within the critical agrarian Studies (Borras 2019: 9).

5 In Akram-Lodhi’s (2018) conference paper there is an important critique about the uses and misuse of the notion of authoritarian populism in Scoones et al (2017).

6 Emancipatory Rural Politics (ERPI) is scholar-activist project defined by Scoones et al (2017: 1) as “a global agenda for research, debate and action [...] This centres re on understanding the contemporary conjuncture, working to confront authoritarian populism through the analysis of and support for alternatives”.

Particularly, Evo Morales's government as part of the Pink Tide should be especially relevant for the critical agrarian studies as it:

“Is the only case in the region where social movements, originally in the rural areas, created a political leadership of their own, formed a political organization—the MAS—as their electoral vehicle, and captured state power through their participation in democratic elections after leading a series of mass protests” (Anria 2013: 20).

Regardless of the deep relations of MAS with social rural movements, the critical agrarian studies literature about contemporary Bolivia has already contested the progressive nature of Evo Morales because of his cooperation with certain fractions of agribusiness capital in the lowlands of the country (MacKay 2016), and also due to his implementation of neoliberal (Brabazon and Webber 2014) and (neo) extractivist policies in an authoritarian way (Tilzey 2019). In a similar critical vein, this research paper might contribute towards understanding from historical and empirical contexts,—the tensions of Evo Morales’s government and the coca growers’ organizations of the Yungas— how an agrarian progressive populist project in power under certain conditions might deploy authoritarian populist politics against organizations from the countryside.

## **Research question**

To what extent and for what reasons has Evo Morales’s MAS government shifted from progressive agrarian populism to authoritarian populism in its relationship with the coca growers’ organization of Yungas?

### **Research sub-questions:**

- 1) What were the historical conditions that led Evo Morales to become president of Bolivia and how has been its relations with the social organizations of the Bolivian countryside?
- 2) Which have been the major shifts regarding political and economic dimension of coca production in Bolivian regions?
- 3) How did the relations between Evo Morales and the Yungas coca growers evolved over time?

## Methodology<sup>7</sup>

The data for the research was collected from both secondary and primary sources. Besides the literature review on the research topic, secondary data such as news, governmental reports, coca-related legislation and drug policy documents were collected and organized. The primary data was collected during a short fieldwork in Bolivia (20 days). The fieldwork was carried out with an ethnographic approach. Ethnography is a qualitative-oriented methodology in which fieldwork is carried out in order to describe and understand the ‘native point of view’ on the basis of the everyday life and employing research technique including, but are not limited to, participant observation<sup>8</sup> and semi-structured interviews<sup>9</sup> (Guber 2001: 201, Hammersley and Atkinson 2007: 1). The flexibility of the ethnographic approach during fieldwork allows taking unexpected research paths that lead to the modification, partially or totally, of the research question. That was the case during my fieldwork as it guided me towards a new research ‘puzzle’, experiencing in short period everyday life of the Bolivian Yungas: the conflictive relationship that the coca growers have with the MAS government. Regardless of the time constraints, the ethnographic approach based on observation and participation in formal and informal settings provided me with insightful hints about coca social relations of production and coca grower’s social organization and political dynamics. In ethnography, the researcher is the main ‘research tool’ and the outcomes of the inquiry are determined by his positionality: social position, theoretical perspectives, political affiliation (Crossa 2012: 111). During my fieldwork, my positionality was both a risk and an opportunity. It was a risk because of my Colombian nationality in a coca growing region is associated with drug-trafficking activities, and on some occasions, people were reluctant to interact with me. However, it was also an opportunity since I have done previous research on Colombian coca dynamics which enabled me to engage in coca-related conversations with a comparative perspective, creating a meaningful rapport with my informants.

The fieldwork was carried out on July 2019 in La Paz and some towns and villages in Sud Yungas province: Chulumani, Yurupani, Villa Remedio, and Tajma. In La Paz, open-ended and semi-structured interviews were conducted following a snow-ball sample with journalists, indigenous leaders, researchers and activists. In Yungas, a brief participant-observation exercise was done with members affiliated to ADEPCOCA in different formal and informal settings (e.g. parties, dinners, union meetings, local radio stations programs). Also, semi-structured interviews were conducted with leaders and rank-and-file members of the same organization. The information obtained from the participant observation was registered in an ethnographic journal while the interviews were recorded and selectively transcribed. Taking into consideration the sensitivity of the situation that the research question addresses, the names of all the interviewees and people who are referred to in the fieldwork notes are consciously omitted in order to guarantee their security.

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<sup>7</sup> Part of the content of this section is drawn on a previous non-published essay (Ortiz 2019d).

<sup>8</sup> “This research technique has to do with a systematic and controlled observation by the researcher in the fieldwork about what is happening around him and his participation in some activities of the informants” (Guber 2001: 210). (Ortiz 2019d: 3).

<sup>9</sup> This research technique allows the collection of data regarding what “people know, think or believe” (Guber 2001: 75). Semi-structured interviews are designed following a sequence of topics to address, hence “there is openness to changes of sequence and forms of questions in order to follow up the specific answers given, and the stories told by the subjects” (Kvale and Brinkman 2009: 125).

## Chapters overview

This research paper is structured in four chapters followed by a conclusion. This part serves as the introduction. Chapter 1 presents the theoretical discussion on populism, including a discussion of its different definitions, its analytical core and the relevant populist ideal sub-types used for this research, namely: progressive agrarian populism and authoritarian populism. The next chapters are organized following the three research sub-questions. Chapter 2 analyses the historical conditions that catapulted Evo Morales's MAS government to power, considering elements of structural crisis: the crisis of neoliberal economic model and traditional political parties, and the eruption of social mobilizations. The chapter also deals with MAS progressive agrarian populist strategies for building hegemony and its shifting relations with Bolivian agrarian movement. Chapter 3 presents a brief political economy analysis of coca in Bolivia. The chapter deals with the social relations of coca production, political organization of coca growers, and drug policy in the country, contrasted with the particularities of the two regions in which coca is cultivated: the Yungas and Chapare. Chapter 4 addresses the shifts over time of the relations between the MAS government and Yungas coca growers' organization. The chapter presents the decline of the hegemony of MAS government in the region, the main milestones of the conflict between the coca growers and the government, and the authoritarian populism practices that MAS has implemented in order to retrieve its leadership in the region.

In the conclusions, the main elements of each chapter are wrapped up and analysed to address the research question. Finally, some reflections derived from the conclusion are presented for dialogue with the critical agrarian studies literature on populism, especially the possibilities of the shift of a progressive populist project to an authoritarian populist one.

# Chapter 1. Theoretical Discussions on Populism

This chapter presents the theoretical discussion on populism, including its different definitions from the perspectives of empirical generalization, historicist accounts, and symptomatic readings. The analytical core for understanding populism is the constitution of ‘the people’ as a political actor which assumes its shape against its opposite: ‘the people’s enemy’. The chapter introduces the progressive agrarian populism and the authoritarian populism as two sub-types of populism that, regardless of their significant differences can be analyzed with the same analytical core. It is argued that in a concrete historical setting, the emergence and shifts of a populist political strategy can be understood using the frame of hegemonic struggles. In that vein, the chapter concludes by looking at the Gramscian method of analysis of historical situations as a way of studying populism politics.

Populism is both a descriptive and an analytical category. On the one hand, the category attempts to name specific political phenomena. On the other hand, it “intends to grasp something crucially significant about the political and ideological realities to which it refers” (Laclau 2005: 11). Notwithstanding the widespread use of the category, its meaning remains surprisingly unclear and its conceptual boundaries are still blurred. There is not a complete agreement in the literature about what populism means, and many authors have even casted doubts “about its usefulness for political analysis” (Panizza 2005: 1). Ernesto Laclau (2005: 11) proposes that instead of abandoning the category or trying to find its ‘true definition’, it is required to assume the heterogeneity of phenomena that populism refers to and recognize it as a particular way of doing politics.

A starting point might be to identify what populism is not. It is neither a political ideology that defines its contents (e.g. socialism, liberalism, or fascism) nor a particular outcome of public policies (e.g. fiscally irresponsible public policies). More importantly, populism is not charted in the traditional ‘political cartography’ of right-wing and left-wing politics (Ranciere 2016: 103).

Panizza (2005) suggests clustering the definition of populism in three groups of literature: 1) Empirical generalization. 2) Historicist accounts. 3) Symptomatic readings. This research takes the last one as its main analytical category.

The empirical generalization follows an inductive way of defining populism by distinguishing its features from concrete empirical cases labelled as populism. Margaret Canovan (1981) follows that conceptualization comparing different empirical cases, including the Russian’s Narodniks and the US People’s Party in the late 19th century, and the first wave of Latin American populism in middle of 20th century. Comparing these cases, Canovan defines populism based on the features observed in the empirical cases analysed. The problem with such definitions, is that they do not establish the analytical relations between the different features identified.

The historicist accounts define populism as a descriptive rather than an analytical category which is used to describe a particular historical period. That is the case of Gino Germani (1978) that use the category for describing the political regimes in Latin America between 1930-1960 in which populist leaders such as Juan Peron of Argentina, Lázaro Cárdenas of México and Getulio Vargas of Brazil came to power. Some features of the politics of this epoch are take the general features of populism: charismatic leaders, multi-class constituency, import substitution industrialization economic policy, etc. (Barr 2016: 12). The problem with this definition is that it does not recognize populism as a transhistorical phenomenon, and therefore, does not advance towards a theoretical comprehension regardless of a specific historical context.

The symptomatic readings integrate the two previous definitions of populism since it recognizes the importance of defining it according to the features derived from concrete empirical analysis and the historical conditions in which it emerges. Although, the definition supposes “an analytical core, based on the constitution of the people as a political actor” (Panizza 2005: 3). This has to do with a political logic that attempts to define who is the people, what are its interests, and who represents them in the political arena. Populism necessarily operates in a logic of antagonism and conflict against ‘the people’s enemy’, that depending on the context might be an internal or external enemy based on a reactionary logic (e.g. migrants, ethnic minorities, sexual diverse groups) or on a progressive one (e.g. class enemies, foreign imperialists). In that sense, in populism, the constitution of ‘the people’ is necessarily relational as it assumes its shape against its opposite: ‘the people’s enemy’. Therefore, the populist logic creates a totalization of who is the people, taking only a fraction of social groups and excluding others (Borras 2019: 7).

The strategy of constituting ‘the people’ as a political actor is necessarily framed in hegemonic struggles. Hegemony is understood as the possibility that a ruling group has of generalizing—with an unstable balance of consent and coercion—its particular interests and values and moral in the broader society, acquiring the leadership among its allies in a historical bloc (a coalition of social forces) and the domination over its enemies (Gramsci 2000: 198-205). In a hegemonic moment, the ruling group is able to present its interest as the general people’s interest and its enemies’ interests as potential threats.

Notwithstanding, in populist politics the identification of who is the people, and who is its enemy is not always easy to establish as it does not assume crystal clear shapes of sociological or demographic group identification: social class, gender, generation, or even left-wing / right-wing political affiliation. In that vein, Laclau (2015: 224) proposes the “socio-political demand” and not the sociological groups as unit of analysis for populism. A concatenation of diverse socio-political demands is possible based on the identification of a common enemy. At this moment, it might be possible to look at the emergence of populism as a political phenomenon.

The analytical core assumption of populism is a necessary but not a sufficient factor for defining it. Gravitating around the core assumption of populism politics, it is required to identify other key features that bestow populism its analytical definition. Some of these features fundamentally opposes populist politics and liberal politics (Crew and Sanders, 2018).

The first one is that populist politics contradicts the liberal assumptions of rational and self-interested individuals in the political arena. Populists leaders usually appeal to emotions, fear and anger of the people (Barr 2016: 7). The second one is that in contraposition to the liberal idea of rational consensus in diversity or guarantees for political dissent, populism raises the political struggle of a zero-sum-game in which the people’s enemy should be defeated (Panizza 2005). A third feature is that some political liberal democratic institutions as the representative democracy and the division of power of check and balances (Crew and Sander 2018), are challenged by a political logic of unmediated (e.g plebiscitary linkages) and top-down relations between the leader and his followers (the people) that calls for an “anti-establishment” radical change of society (Barr 2016).

Populist logic is usually associated with the emergence of a charismatic leader who represents ‘the people’, its symbols, customs and identity. In a Weberian sense, charisma “applied to a certain quality of an individual personality by virtue of which he is considered extraordinary and treated as endowed with exceptional powers or qualities [...] Charismatic leader rules by

virtue of the devotion and trust which his political followers have in him personally” (Weber 1968: 242).

It is possible to identify different sub-types of populism that share the analytical core of populism politics. These sub-types are ideal types (in the Weberian sense). To wit, they are analytical constructions, rather than ‘things’ that can be found clearly in social reality. In that vein, Borras (2019: 6) proposes populism as a matter of degree: “populism is not an ‘either/or’ question; rather, it is a matter of degree. It is better understood not as a thing but as a relationship, not in black and white, but in shades of grey[...] As Laclau (2005, p. 45, original emphasis) puts it: ‘To ask oneself if a movement is or is not populist, is actually to start with a wrong question. The question that we should, instead, ask ourselves, is the following: to what extent is a movement populist?’”.

The most relevant sub-types of populism in this research paper are progressive agrarian populism and authoritarian populism<sup>10</sup>. Progressive agrarian populism is defined as an “attempts at rebundling socioeconomically differentiated class and group interests and issues into a more homogenized voice— ‘people of the land’—in relation to a constructed ‘other’” (Borras 2019: 13). This division between ‘the people’ and the ‘people’s enemies’ is set in terms of “the ‘community’ as the us, and the big corporations (agrochemical corporations, food empires, banks, and so on) and landed classes and oligarchs as the ‘them’ (Borras 2019: 15). The progressive feature of this sub-type of populism is that it keeps a class-oriented view of politics advocating for a radical transformation of society based on principles of social and environmental justice, including, but not limiting to, claims for redistribution of property (mainly land) and the fruits of labour and regeneration processes of ecosystems (Borras 2019: 19-22). The transnational agrarian movement as la Via Campesina are considered as the ‘champions’ of progressive agrarian populism and their ‘victories’ have contributed to:

“reframing the terms and parameters of a wide range of debates and practices in the field of international development, including environmental sustainability and climate change, land rights and distributive agrarian reform, food sovereignty, neoliberal economics and global trade rules, corporate control of crop genetic material and other technology, the human rights of peasants and gender equity” (Marc Edelman and Borras 2016:1).

In a broader sense, progressive agrarian populism is part of progressive left-wing populism that opposes ‘the people’ to the ‘oligarchy’ to achieve the democratization of politics and economics and “recovering and deepening the ideals of equality and popular sovereignty that are constitutive of a democratic politics. (Mouffe 2018: 9, see also McKnight 2019).

The other sub-type of populism is authoritarian populism. Considering that populism politics is built upon contraposition to liberal political values and institutions, the emergence of authoritarianism is always a possibility (Levistk and Loxton 2013). Stuart Hall was the first one who coined the notion of ‘authoritarian populism’ in the late 1970s, attempting to grasp the social changes that were taking when Margaret Thatcher came to power in the UK. Regarding the concept, Hall states that “was trying to comprehend the shift towards Thatcherism as it was

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10 Another relevant sub-type of populism is the right-wing populism. This populism is associated with a reactionary politics that defends capitalism and constitutes ‘the people’ based on national identities and against marginalized minorities: migrants, sexual diversities, etc. (see Borras 2019). On some occasions, the authoritarian populism category is used as a synonym of right-wing populism (e.g. Scoones et al. 2017). Nevertheless, as it is argued in this paper there are left-wing emancipatory projects that can move towards authoritarian populism without necessarily being right-wing, as illustrated in the case of Bolivia

taking place. So, admittedly, the theorization is a bit rough and ready" (Hall 1985: 118). Despite that the author did not built up his concept on what was defined above as the 'analytical core of populism', he was able to articulate, based on an analysis of conjuncture, an interesting theoretical reflection grounded in the Gramscian theory. Hall defines authoritarian populism as a change in the correlation of social forces and the balances between consent and a coercion of an hegemonic project that happens when there is "a movement towards a dominative and 'authoritarian' form of democratic class politics paradoxically, apparently rooted in [...] populist discontents" (Hall 1985: 117).

Authoritarian populism occurs when the hegemonic project relies on the consent of the 'populist discontent' while moving towards coercive authoritarianism. Complementing Hall's theorization, and following Adamant et al. (2019: 5), authoritarian populism might emerge when there is a lost or absence of hegemony in a populist regime. This happens when the ruling group unable to represent the 'people's interest' and has to rely on coercion to continue ruling. Adding the 'analytical core of populism', the authoritarian populist regime attempts to legitimize the coercion done in the name of the 'people' and against the 'people's enemies', but these enemies might be conveniently the political opposition and/or dissenters of the populist regime.

In an authoritarian populist regime (also in general authoritarianism) coercion "is not merely the exercise of brute coercive force [...] it can also be observed in the reconfiguring of state and institutional power in an attempt to insulate certain policies and institutional practices from social and political dissent" (Bruff 2013: 115). The authoritarian dimension in a populist regime appears when coercion is "frequent rather than episodic, and it must skew the playing field against the political opposition" (Levitsky and Loxton 2013: 31).

It is possible to identify authoritarianism as a scale between two extreme degrees depending on the grade of political and social dissent that the regime allows: 1) full authoritarianism "as a regime in which no viable channels exist for opposition to contest legally for executive power" and the minimum of civil liberties and the possibility of dissent and oppose the regime is violently restricted (Levitsky and Way 2010: 7). 2) competitive authoritarianism which is characterized by prevailing formal democratic institutions that are fraught with "electoral manipulation, unfair media access, abuse of state resources, and varying degrees of harassment and violence skew the playing field in favor of incumbents. In other words, competition is real but unfair" (Levitsky and Way 2010: 3). In some situations, a competitive authoritarian regime might move towards full authoritarianism when there is a "overt repression including the arrest of opposition leaders, the killing of opposition activists, and the violent repression of protest" (Levitsky and Way 2010: 8).

In order to analyse the emergence and shifts within a populist regime in a concrete historical setting, this research paper adopts the Gramscian method of analysis of historical situations (Gramsci, 2000: 201). This method attempts to understand a concrete situation—as populist and authoritarian dynamics regarding the contemporary conflict between the MAS government and the coca growers' organization of the Yungas, characterized by a broader social structure composed of social relations of production and shifting correlations of social forces in hegemonic/counter-hegemonic processes. A situation is produced by 'multiple determinations' and 'multiple temporalities'. The first refers to the Marxist method: "The concrete, for Marx, is the organized and articulated concentration of many determinations and relations. It is not given at the start for thought but is the outcome of a process of analysis and investigation" (Kain 1980: 295). Multiple temporalities mean the historical dimension of long-term processes and conjunctures, or in Gramsci words "organic movements" and "conjunctural movements" (Gramsci 2001: 201). For Gramsci, it is necessary to make a distinction between the two

dimensions regardless of the fact that both are dialectically integrated: “It is necessary to distinguish organic movements (relatively permanent) from movements which may be termed ‘conjunctural’ (and which appear as occasional, immediate, almost accidental). Conjunctural phenomena too depend on organic movements to be sure, but they do not have any very far-reaching historical significance” (Gramsci 2000: 201).

In order to explain a historical situation, the right balance between organic and conjuncture movements is required. If not, the former might lead to a social deterministic explanation while the second to voluntaristic assumptions (Gramsci 2000: 2002) The method of analysis of situation is the method of inquiry. Based on it the next chapters aim to identify and comprehend the organic and conjunctural elements that produce the situation addressed in the research question.

## Chapter 2. The Government of Social Movements? The Rise of MAS and its Shifting Relations with Bolivian Rural Movements

*“The MAS-IPSP is not a political party, it is a political movement of social movements”* Evo Morales.  
(Ministerio del Trabajo, Empleo y Provisión Social 2015: 23).

This chapter analyses the conjuncture which resulted to the triumph of Evo Morales and his political party, Movement for Socialism (MAS). It is argued that the first presidential triumph of Evo Morales was achieved because he was able to represent the different socio-political demands of heterogeneous groups necessary to build a populist hegemonic bloc. To explain this, it is required to address some elements of conjuncture movements and structural organic crisis as the failure of neoliberal economic policies, the decline of Bolivian traditional parties, and the reactions from grassroots in terms of social mobilization. The chapter also deals with the progressive agrarian populist strategies of MAS and its shifting relations with Bolivian rural social movements and organizations.

Evo Morales came to power in 2006 after a structural organic crisis of neoliberalism and ‘counter-hegemonic’ wars that took place since the beginning of 21<sup>st</sup> century. Since 1985, a set of neoliberal economic policies were implemented in Bolivia with a high social impact. These ‘structural adjustment’ policies, led by the Bolivian oligarchy with the tutelage of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, included austerity measures, denationalization of state-owned companies (e.g. telecommunication, airlines and mines), and privatization of strategic natural resources (Kohl and Farthing 2006). The neoliberal cycle reached its peak at the beginning of the 2000s when the government attempted to privatize the water supply and gas stocks (Perreault, 2006: 155). In April 2000, massive social protests led by peasants and water users occurred in Cochabamba against Hugo Banzer’s government concession to the foreign company Aguas de Turin for providing water supplies and sewerage to the municipality (ibid.). This cycle of social protests that was later known as ‘Water Wars’ (*Guerras del Agua*) which marked the “first rupture with the Bolivian government’s neoliberal policies” (Oikonomakis, 2019: 156).

Peasant organizations at the national and regional levels strongly supported the Water Wars. In the western highlands of the Andes region, peasant organizations affiliated to the Unified Confederation of Peasant Workers Unions of Bolivia (CSUTCB) led by Felipe Quispe, launched a strategy of demonstrations and roadblocks nearby La Paz city. Coca growers from the Yungas also took part in the roadblocks in areas connecting the region with La Paz. In the lowland tropic region, the coca growers of Chapare led by Evo Morales were present during the Cochabamba demonstrations and blockaded national strategic roads in both Cochabamba and Chapare (Kohl and Farthing 2006: 165). The Water Wars inspired other social mobilizations, such as demonstrations of teachers’ unions, university students, and pensioners, and the Bolivian Landless Movements Peasants (MST-B), that was fighting for immediate agrarian reforms which culminated to occupation of land for farming in large and underutilized properties. (Kohl and Farthing 2006: 168-170).

A similar story occurred in 2003 with the so-called 'War Gas' (*Guerras del Gas*) a reaction against Gonzalo Sánchez government's plan of denationalizing and exporting the Bolivian gas stocks to North America through a Chilean harbour. In La Paz and El Alto, thousands of protesters clashed with the police demanding to stop the government and have the president resign with the slogan "gas for the people" (Andreucci 2018: 831). In both wars (Water and Gas), the popular upheavals were able to push back the neoliberal policies and resulted to the resignation of two presidents: Góñzalo Sánchez de Lozada in 2003, and Carlos Mesa in 2005 (Webber, 2011: 149).

The conjuncture of the 'wars against neoliberalism' revealed the short-term historical crisis of the neoliberal model in Bolivia but also the long-term structural contradictions of society in terms of ethnic and class hierarchy and differentiated regional development. These contradictions were expressed in the conformation and polarization of two antagonistic historic blocs. To the organic intellectual of MAS and former vice-president Álvaro García Linera, the polarization between the two historical blocs took place in terms of different stands on ethnic (indigenous vs. white), class (workers vs. businessmen and landholders) and regional oppositions (west Andean region vs. east lowland region) (García 2005: 72). Following Laclau (2005), this polarization may be understood as an antagonistic rupture between 'the people' and 'the elite' called 'populist rupture'. The counter-hegemonic bloc of the 'the people', heterogenous in its compositions (e.g workers, peasants, indigenous, students, neighbourhood associations, intellectuals) was against the "elite" and led by indigenous and peasant movements. The bloc's different socio-political demands integrated in 2003 through the 'October Agenda, that included nationalization of natural resources, agrarian reform, indigenous government and constituent assembly (Errejón 2014: 95).

The new socio-political demands of the emerging counter-hegemonic groups could not be channelled by the traditional political parties that had governed Bolivia since 1985. The Revolutionary Nationalist Movement (MNR), the Revolutionary Left Movement (MIR), and the Nationalist Democratic Action (ADN), sometimes electoral contenders or coalition allies, were the majoritarian political parties that implemented the neoliberal policies contested by the emergent counter-hegemonic bloc of the first years of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. "Despite the social and economic costs of the New Economic Policy, the three major parties all adopted neoliberal economic policies (Domingo 2001). The general market orientation remained steady under the administrations of the MNR (1985–1989, 1993–1997, 2002–2003), MIR (1989–1993), and ADN (1997–2002)" (Barr 2016: 67). At the same time, the traditional political parties were criticized by the mobilized citizens for their corruption and clientelist practices (Barr 2016: 97). The negative perception of the Bolivian traditional parties became evident in the elections of 2002, when their decline left a hegemonic void that opened the political arena to 'outsiders' willing to contest the political dominance.

The political outsider willing (and able) to raise the flags of the counter-hegemonic political demands of the October Agenda was MAS. Since the 2002 election it became a national political power with 27 deputies in the lower chamber, including the deputy from Cochabamba Evo Morales. The Political Instrument for Sovereignty of the People's party (later known as MAS-IPSP) was founded in 1995<sup>11</sup> by the national peasant organization Unified Confederation of Peasant Working Unions of Bolivia (CSUTCB) after its Sixth Congress (Oikonomakis, 2019:

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11 The laws of popular participation (1994) and political-administrative decentralization (1995) created a favourable environment for the creation of IPSP and its success in local politics. These laws boosted a process of "ruralization of Bolivian local electoral politics" as allowed to ease the formation of political parties and create more than 300 municipalities with the local elections of their authorities (Anria 2011: 26).

156). In order to understand the progressive agrarian populist origin of MAS and Morales, it is important to highlight that CSUTCB is currently one of the member organizations of the transnational agrarian movement La Via Campesina<sup>12</sup>. Despite the fact that “agrarian movements rarely aspire to replace an established faction of the elite in state rule” (Borras 2019: 18), the IPSP is an interesting case in which a national peasant organization created a political party to contest state power from the neoliberal elite.

The coca growers of Chapare contested for political control of the IPSP with the leadership of Evo Morales. Due to the alliances within CSUTB and electoral success of Chapare coca growers at the municipal level, they were able to assume the leadership of MAS-IPSP overcoming other political competitors as Felipe Quispe (Oikonomakis 2019: 156).

With Morales’s leadership, MAS implemented a progressive agrarian populist strategy to contest the neoliberal political hegemony in the political elections. The party appealed to the identity of ‘people of the land’ (indigenous and peasants) (Borras 2019:13) but also tried “to appeal to a wider constituency by blending class and ethnic elements [...] to include left-leaning and nationalist intellectuals<sup>13</sup>, as well as the urban indigenous and non-indigenous middle classes” (Anria 2013: 27). MAS presented itself as the alternative to the neoliberal policies and traditional political parties and pointed out the ‘enemy of the people’ as white elite businessmen, landholders and politicians; heirs of colonial privileges and champions of neoliberalism and Washington imperialism. The identification of the ‘people’s enemy’ and the willingness to topple them from power helped MAS to achieve a successful political populist strategy. With more than 53.74% of votes Evo Morales came to power in 2006. Morales repeated the electoral triumph in 2009 and 2014 with 64.22% and 63.36% respectively. This was a feat since 1985 no president in Bolivia had been elected with more than 36% of the votes (Barr 2016: 80).

Anria (2013: 20) has claimed that Evo Morales did not implement a populist political strategy since he was organically articulated and accountable to the agrarian movements (the CSUTB in general and the Six Federations of Cochabamba Tropic in particular) and the main feature of populism is the top-down kind of relations and plebiscitary linkages between the leader and its non-organized followers. Nevertheless, despite having an organic relation with his core constituency, Evo Morales used charisma to broaden his constituency. He did this by presenting himself as an Aymara indigenous person born in a rural village in Oruro province who later on migrated to the Chapare province to work as a coca grower and eventually rise as the resistance leader of the Six Federations against forced eradication campaigns of coca shrubs supported by Washington.

The conjunctural movement of the expulsion of Evo Morales from the parliament in 2002 amidst strong clashes between coca growers of Chapare and forced eradication of police forces, and his enmity with United States ambassador Manuel Rocha, contributed enormously to his popularity (Oikonomakis 2019: 169). In the social mobilization during the early years of 2000, Evo became the main political symbol that united the heterogeneous people and diverse socio-political demands against the elite (Errejon 2014: 97). A remarkable hegemonic movement of MAS was also included the advocacy of coca leaves in the broader political platforms of the emerging counter-hegemonic bloc as a symbol of identity of Bolivian nationalism, representing the interests of both peasant coca growers and coca consumers against the drug policy led by Washington.

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12 <https://viacampesina.org/en/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2018/03/List-of-members.pdf>. Accessed 7 November 2019.

13 Notably included the Marxist organic intellectual of MAS and Morales’s vice president Alvaro García Linera.

The first presidential term of Evo Morales' MAS (2006-2010) government faced a frenetic opposition from the historical bloc that had been displaced from the state power. This bloc, now the right-wing opposition of the government, articulated a regional identity demand in attempts to retrieve their lost hegemony (Errejón 2014: 97). With their stronghold in the so-called "half-moon" provinces in the eastern lowlands (Santa Cruz, Tarija, Beni and Pando), the opposition led by the export-oriented agribusiness and big-scale cattle ranchers called for the autonomy of the half-moon provinces, which was very convenient in order to safeguard their class interests. They employed their own right-wing populist strategy opposing the virtue of the prosperity, whiteness and progress of the people of lowlands in contrast with the poverty, indigeneity and backwardness of the people of the highland west (Errejón 2014: 98). The confrontation between the two historical blocs almost led to a civil war but the government was able to deal with the conflicts and stay in power.

To some extent, the consolidation of MAS hegemony came with the installation of the constituent assembly in 2008 and the re-election of Evo Morales in 2009. There are some elements in the constitution that might be seen as achievements of the progressive agrarian populist politics of MAS, as recognized in the rights to food sovereignty<sup>14</sup> and the democratization of economy: "Article 300. The form of state economic organization includes the enterprises and other economic entities that are state properties, which shall comply with the following objectives [...] To promote economic democracy and achieve the food sovereignty of the population" (Plurinational State of Bolivia 2009: 97). The notion of *buen vivir* or *Suma qamaña* also was coined to become the most progressive local epistemologies for contesting contemporary developmentalism: "The notion assumes and respects differences and complementarities among human beings and between humans and non-humans from an ecological perspective, emphasising the principles of reciprocity, complementarity and relationality in human interactions and in relation to the cycles of nature" (Merino 2016: 273). Nevertheless, the last was achieved with political negotiations and consent-seeking with the landholding elites, which limited the institutionalization of the socio-political demands of the October Agenda, leading to the postponement of the Agrarian Reform (Andreucci 2017: 833).

After the constitution of 2009, García Lineras (2011: 23) argued that the social contradictions in Bolivian society is not anymore defined as a confrontation between two blocs of power and antagonistic projects of society but within the "national-people bloc" led by MAS. In that sense, the vice-president deems that the hegemony of the ruling bloc generates an active consent in the broader society that allows the conduct of the same "process of social change", and the contradictions have the role of boosting this process in a creative and dialectic way. This is what he called the "creative tensions of revolution" (García 2011). One of these is the relation between the state and the social movements wherein he points out that these tensions were overcome democratically as Evo Morales' government is the "government of social movements" (ibid.).

Notwithstanding, the notion of "government of social movements" is a subject of contestation since "MAS transformed into a more traditional political party and became increasingly characterised by vertical decision making and centralist tendencies" (Grissaffi, 2017: 62; see also Zegada et al., 2008). Initially the MAS-IPSP was conceived as the people's political instrument of the Bolivian agrarian movements that would allow the union leaders to take seats in the state, although, "the presence of leaders of social organizations in the cabinet has tended to decrease over time [...] key positions have been occupied by a technocratic elite that is

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14 Food Sovereignty is perhaps one of the most important and radical and anti-capitalism alternatives proposed by La Via Campesina and the International Planning Committee for Food Sovereignty (Edelman and Borras 2016: 63)

“invited” into the ranks of the party, that does not represent base organizations, and thus has few checks from below” (Anria, 2013: 36).

Evo Morales’s rise to power generated a huge expectation among the social movements organically linked to MAS in terms of political participation and decision-making at the state level, particularly in his core constituencies, the leaders and rank-and-file members of the Six Federations of Cochabamba Tropic thought that with Evo, “all of us are presidents” (Grissafi, 2013). This expectation was based on a conception of radical democracy practised by the coca grower unions in which all members debate, deliberate and take part into the decision-making of the organization. Radical democracy is a way of building bottom-up power as the leaders are linked to the grassroots on the basis of accountability and consultation mechanisms, similar to Zapatista politics “to lead by obeying” (Grissafi, 2013: 22). However, after some years, some members of Chapare coca growers’ unions felt disappointed with MAS since their notion of radical democracy has been eroded by top-down decision-making and personal political interest over the collective goals represented by the Union (Grissafi, 2019)

The 2012 conflict between Evo Morales’s government and the inhabitants of the Indigenous Territory and National Park Isiboro Sécuré (TIPNIS) was a milestone between MAS and the Bolivian social movements. It happened after the government traced the 300 km road of Tramo II of the Villa Tunari-San Ignacio de Moxos within the TIPNIS that is inhabited by indigenous people with a fragile and biodiverse ecosystem (McNeish 2013). The government stated that the project was required for the ‘regional integration and national development’, although, it would affect the indigenous people and benefit mainly the state revenues due to potential gas extraction and the Chapare peasants with the expansion of the agrarian frontier. The indigenous peoples of (TIPNIS) went to protest and marched with the support of regional and national indigenous organizations such as the Confederation of Indigenous People of Bolivia (CIDOP) and the National Council of Ayllus and Markas of Qullasuyu (CONAMQ). Thereafter, NGOs, environmental and human rights activists and other social movements joined the protests (McNeish 2013: 226). Instead of seeking consent, the government dealt heavy-handedly and employed unnecessary coercion through the state forces that left 1 dead, tens imprisoned, and hundreds of injured<sup>15</sup>. The strategy also “divided communities and families and created interfamilial pressures which, in some cases, amounted to intimidation” (McNeish, 2013: 232).

The outcomes of this were disastrous for MAS’s legitimacy. “The campaign of defamation and violence orchestrated by the government ultimately proved unsuccessful. The popularity of the president plummeted” (Webber 2012: 163). After all, the indigenous government was repressing the indigenous people, and the so called “creative tensions of revolution” and “government of social movements” of García Linera became a fragile moto. This resulted to a crisis within the populist historical bloc and threatened MAS’s political hegemony. In fact, after this, Evo Morales’s government suffered from the challenge of having to deal with political dissent from different social organizations. For Andreucci (2017: 837) the government strategy:

“was to try to disappear anti-government indigenous organizations. First, it divided and disarticulated the main indigenous organisations, in order to control them. Commencing in 2012 with the lowland indigenous federation, CIDOB (Confederation of Indigenous Peoples of Bolivia), the government identified members and cadres aligned with the party, or willing to be co-opted. It created parallel organisations under control of the MAS and

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15 [https://elpais.com/internacional/2011/09/27/actualidad/1317074403\\_850215.html](https://elpais.com/internacional/2011/09/27/actualidad/1317074403_850215.html). Accesed 8 November 2019.

isolated and marginalised the remaining—that is, legitimately elected—leadership and members. This formed a split between pro-government (MASista) and independent (organico) organisations”.

After the TIPNIS conflict, MAS has deployed the same strategy against anti-government or dissident social organizations, sometimes splitting internally the movements between a “MASista” and non-MASista” sides<sup>16</sup>. This happened with different movements and organizations as CONAMAQ, The Federation of Urban Neighbourhood organizations (FEJUVE), CSUTCB, and Bolivian Workers’ Confederation (COB).

Alongside the controversial relations with social movements, MAS’s government hegemony began facing declines due to undemocratic relations with the other branches of Bolivian state power, including constitutional and electoral power of the judiciary branch. On 21 February 2016, a national referendum allowing an extraconstitutional election of Morales and his vice-president took place, in which they lost by less than 1 percentage point. Despite this, Morales appealed to the Plurinational Constitutional Tribunal which ruled in his favor arguing that the re-election was a ‘fundamental political right’<sup>17</sup>. The controversial decision led Morales to win the elections in 20th October of 2019, defeating Carlos Mesa (former president of the neoliberal hegemony) with 47.1 % of the vote. He received 10 percent of the votes more than Mesa, not requiring a run-off second election. With this result Morales’s government proclaimed its victory; nonetheless, the political opposition in the middle of popular upheavals on the streets claimed that there was an electoral fraud and a monitoring group of Organization of American States (OAS) that Morales’s government convened for pacifying the country , “agreed there had been “manipulation” and called for the results to be cancelled”<sup>18</sup>.

The popular outrage after the electoral manipulation resulted in demonstrations and intensified upheavals across the country. In the middle of clashes with police officers, three regional headquarters of the Supreme Electoral Court were burnt in Potosí, Santa Cruz y Tarija<sup>19</sup>. On 28 November, the upheavals included road blockades and clashes on the streets between supporters of MAS and opposition forces that has left at least three deaths and more than 300 hundred injured<sup>20</sup>. Interestingly social movements that in the past considered themselves as part of ‘the process of change’ led by MAS either refused to defend the government or took part in the protests. Aside from Carlos Mesa other anti-MAS leaders emerged o like Luis Fernando Camacho, president of the Civic Committee of Santa Cruz and representative of the right-wing sector and businessmen class of that region. During the second of November, Camacho ‘invoking god and the bible’ called the police and the army to ‘stand by the *people*’ and help force the resignation of the president. During the next days, the police started to riot in different regions of the country (e.g. Cochabamba, Sucre and Santacruz). Despite Morales’s call for a national dialogue and the conduct of new elections with new members of the Supreme Electoral Court, he was forced to present his resignation after losing the support of the public forces in which he called a “coup d’etat”.

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16 Interview with an Aymara indigenous leader. La Paz. 8 July 2019.

17 <https://www.bbc.com/mundo/noticias-america-latina-42159445>. Accessed 8 November 2019.

18 <https://www.bbc.com/news/newsbeat-50388934>. Accessed 12 November 2019.

19 [http://uninomadasur.net/?p=2309&fbclid=IwAR3y3n\\_e1nQU4VSglUtXgrYlk\\_RGfKwgQ9TJIT9sBaq-Gh6e3SDvDI2vDFF](http://uninomadasur.net/?p=2309&fbclid=IwAR3y3n_e1nQU4VSglUtXgrYlk_RGfKwgQ9TJIT9sBaq-Gh6e3SDvDI2vDFF) . Accessed 12 November 2019

20 [https://www.clarin.com/mundo/extiende-violencia-bolivia-muertos-346-heridos\\_0\\_opfbXj8.html](https://www.clarin.com/mundo/extiende-violencia-bolivia-muertos-346-heridos_0_opfbXj8.html). Accessed 13 November 2019

At this point it is not possible to integrate a deeper analysis of the Bolivian conjuncture after the October 2019 election, as it is an ongoing process and goes beyond the scope of the research questions of this paper. Nevertheless, the paper might contribute towards the understanding of the decline of MAS hegemony, specifically in relation with the dynamics of social movements and the Yungas coca growers' organization dissension (this will be treated in the conclusions). The next chapters will present the elements to understand the shifting relations of the MAS government with the coca grower organizations of Yungas ADEPCOCA (Chapter 4.). It can be noticed that both coercion and co-optation have been deployed by MAS to deal with a powerful anti-government peasant organization. Before that, and in order to understand the conflict between MAS and ADEPCOCA, it is required to go deeper into the political and economic dimension of coca cultivation in Bolivia. That is the main topic of the next chapter.

## Chapter 3. A Counterpoint of the Political Economy of Coca in the Yungas and Chapare

This chapter identifies the organic and structural elements (Gramsci, 2000: 202) regarding the production of coca in Bolivia by taking into account the historical and geographical differences between the two regions where coca is cultivated: The Yungas (La Paz department) and Chapare (Cochabamba department). Considering the amplitude that the chapter addresses, it will focus on the economic and politic dimensions to contextualize the shifting relations and the conflict between coca growers' organizations of the Yungas and the government of Evo Morales. The economic dimension includes elements of the relations of production, commercialization and consumption of coca, while the political dimension addresses the political organization of coca growers and the state-society relations that revolve around the agrarian and drug policies related to coca.

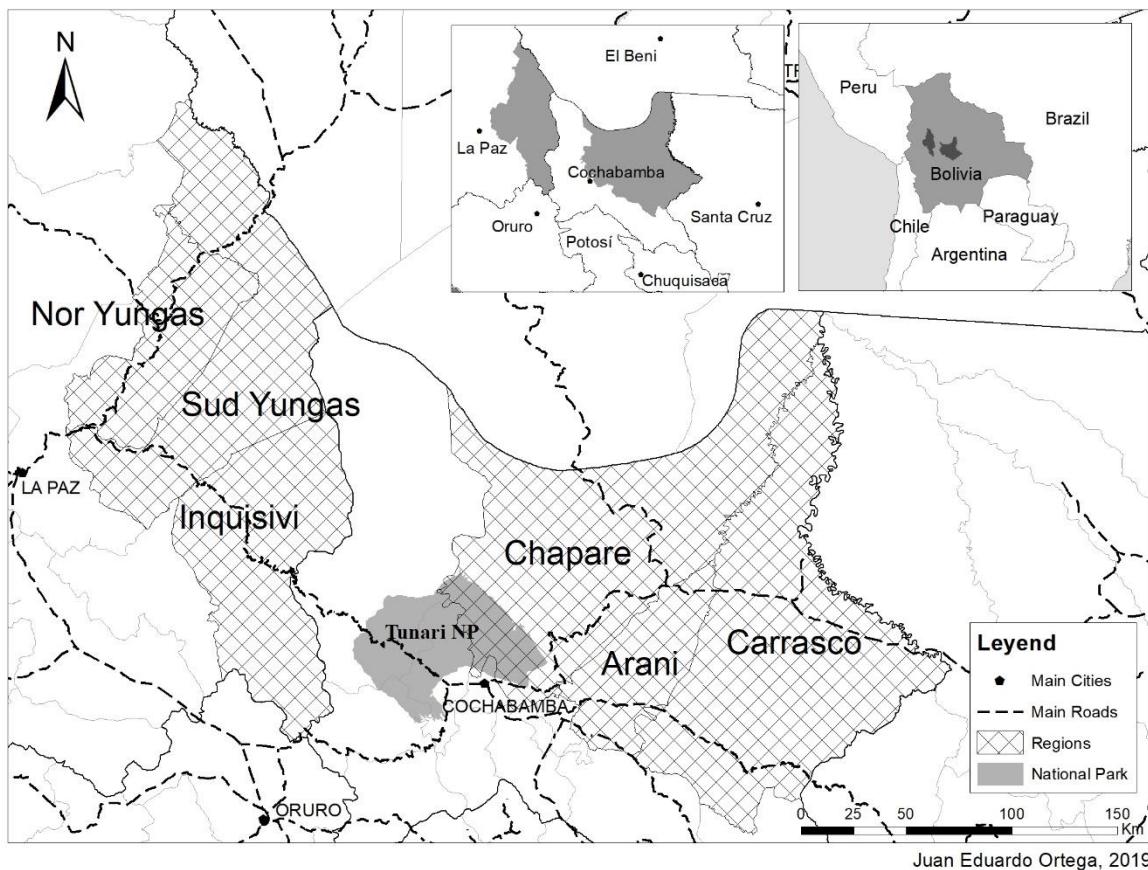
Coca (*Erythroxylum coca*) is a perennial plant that means 'shrub' in Aymara language. It is cultivated thousands of years ago in the Amazon and Andes region of what today is known as the Latin American countries of Colombia, Bolivia and Peru. Since prehispanic times, coca leaves have had a variety of cultural uses and have been a symbol of identity an identitarian symbol of indigenous peoples (Ortiz 2019a: 4). Nowadays, more than three out of eleven million people in Bolivia use and consume coca or coca-based products, mainly chewing dried coca leaves (known as *p'ijchar* or *acullicar*) or drinking coca tea (Grisaffi 2016: 150). "(when) Chewing leaves are fitted in the cheek and are dampened with a mix of saliva and ashes with a high calcium content (called "llujta" or "llipta"). The ball, carefully formed and placed, is slowly sucked rather than chewed, in a process which could take between two and four hours" (Laserna 1995: 58). When coca leaves are consumed it has effects such as reducing hunger, increasing energy and treating different malaises like stomach-ache or mountain sickness. Its consumption is also associated with sociability as it is widely exchanged and consumed during social activities in Bolivia (Ortiz 2019c:3). Coca leaves also has ritual uses, for example, when it is offered to mother earth (*Pachamama*) for "receiving its favour and prosperity" or during the foresight and fortune-telling rituals performed by the Aymara shamans (*Yatiri*) (ibid.).

Perhaps coca is better known across the world by one of the coca-based products: cocaine. This product is made with a series of chemical processes that allow isolating certain alkaloids from the coca leaves. In contrast to the long-dated uses of coca leaves in Latin America, cocaine was produced in Germany in the mid-19th Century (Escotado 1989: 331). Initially, cocaine was used in medical and psychiatric investigations related but in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, it became popular as a strong recreative drug (Goosenberg 2006: 324).

It is only after the World War II and the consolidation of United States of America as global superpower that both coca and cocaine became infamously known as a global threat to public health and security. Since then, a 'War on Drugs' has determined military actions and public policy outcomes that shaped the society-state relations in the rural areas where coca is cultivated. A milestone is the 1961 Single convention on Narcotic Drugs that established that "the parties [that signed the convention] shall so far as possible enforce the uprooting of all coca bushes which grow wild. They shall destroy the coca bushes if illegally cultivated,' and, 'coca leaf chewing must be abolished within twenty-five years" (Grisaffi and Ledebur 2016: 3). The international dimension of War on Drugs is of great importance for understanding the national conflicts between the state and the coca growers in general, as it has an approach that attempts the unreal goal of zero production through a supply-side regulation that in many occasions has

threatened the subsistence of peasants who derive their livelihood from the cultivations of coca crops.

## Geographical Location and Brief history of Yungas and Chapare



**Map.1.1** Map of Bolivia showing main cities, roads and coca growing regions.

The Yungas is a subtropical region “between 600 and 20.000 meters lying to the east of the eastern Andean mountain chains. It consists of sheer forested hillsides and narrow river valleys descending to the true tropical forest of Amazonian basin” (Speeding 1997: 48). Nowadays, it includes the provinces of Nor Yungas, Sud Yungas and Inquisivi of La Paz department. The region was colonized by Aymaras from the highland Andes in A.C 1.000 and later was conquered by the Inca empire (*ibid.*). One of the coca growers leaders during my fieldwork told me that because coca is cultivated in the Yungas since ancient times, the coca in the region is native and ancestral:

“Hundreds of years ago Titu Yupanquí arrived to The Yungas. He was the first ‘Inca president’ who lived in Pasto Grande, Irupana (Sud Yungas province), and nearby he built his palace that nowadays are ruins. He was the first one who introduces the coca shrubs in Yungas. For him, coca has a sacred function that only the Inca nobility could use. Since

then, coca spread little by little in all the region and even is possible to find coca growing wildly in the forest [...] That's why Yungas is ancestral, not even traditional (when it comes to coca cultivation)"<sup>21</sup>

The Yungas was scarcely populated during the first centuries of the Spanish colonization (16th-17th centuries), even though, since 16th century Peri Yungas (now Nor Yungas) And Chapi Yungas (now Sud Yungas) had a significant production of coca in the Viceroyalty of Peru that was controlled by the indigenous inhabitants for whom the coca was the main cash crop (Speeding 2019: 79). It is not until the 18<sup>th</sup> century that social relations of production and property/access to the land of the *haciendas* (large estates), expanded throughout the region, mainly as a consequence of the increase of coca demand associated with the booming mining industry<sup>22</sup>. Many large estates were established in the Yungas owned by white Spaniards descendants and landlords based on semi-feudal social relations of productions: "Hacienda tenants were generally forbidden to travel outside the estate [...] "(coca production) was based on the labour of the tenants, who had to work three days a week, both husband and wife, for the Hacienda; in return they received land in usufruct for coca and subsistence products" (Speeding 1993:50).

The social relations of production of the haciendas coexisted in the same time with the social relations of production of free landed peasants that colonized land or were part of ancestral communities (*ayllus*). These peasants farmed subsistence crops but also were "petty-commodityproducers" (Bernstein 2010: 17) who produce cash-crops (coca), based on both family labour and community-based labour exchange. Speeding (2019: 29) highlights that at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century 80% per cent of the coca produced in Yungas was farmed by free peasants, while the remaining 20% was produced in large estates. "That meant that there was a gradual process in which the servile production (of coca) was displaced by peasant production" (ibid.) The Agrarian Reform of 1953 completed this process and the entire coca production started to be produced exclusively by peasants since the large estates were distributed among landless peasants and tenant labour was abolished (Córtez 1993: 130).

The other region where coca is cultivated in Bolivia is Chapare, and its history of colonization is more recent compared with the Yungas. Chapare is a tropical agriculture "region located in the northern area of the department of Cochabamba (central Bolivia) in the northeast of Cochabamba city and that is well-known for the cultivation of coca crops since the decade of 1960" (Ortiz 2019b: 4). Geographically, the region is an extensive valley wetter and hotter than the Yungas (Cortéz 1993:133). Nowadays, Chapare encompasses part of three provinces of Cochabamba department: Chapare, Carrasco and Arani. The contemporary colonization of the region dated from 1920 when the road connecting Cochabamba with the highland regions of Bolivia was built (Sanabria 2004: 153). The agrarian colonization of Chapare has occurred in successive waves that involves actors from various social and regional origins.

The first wave of colonizers were landless peasants from the subtropical valleys and highland mountains that migrated to seek for land or were fleeing from the exploitative tenant labour of the Haciendas (Oikonomakis 2019: 144). "The first settlers established farms and cultivated with family labour range of crops, including rice, bananas, yucca, citrus fruit, and coca

21 Personal interview with coca grower leader of Los Yungas. La Paz.17 July 2019.

22 Since the colonial times until 1970, the internal demand of coca in Bolivia is closely related to the economic dynamics of the mining industry. During moments of boom, the demand on coca tends to increase, while at the moment of crisis it declines (Córtez 1993: 128). That is because dried coca leaves are an essential commodity for the miners due to the drudgery of the labour they have to perform.

for their own consumption and to sell in the market” (Grisaffi 2016: 8). The second wave of colonization to Chapare took place between 1960 and 1970 due to a land settlement programs led by the government in order to deal with the redistributive tension after the agrarian reform (Sanabria 2004: 154). During this time, coca crops became one of the cash crops better adapted in terms of social and environmental conditions and was also endorsed by the government. (ibid.). The third wave of settlers were miners that came to the region after 1985 when hundreds lost their jobs after ‘structural adjustment programs’ denationalizing the mining industry. Some authors argue (e.g. Oikomanis 2019, Grissafi 2019) that the migration of the miners brought to the region the union-like organization and the left-leaning political ideology that later would strengthen the political organization of coca growers of Chapare.

## **The Production and Commercialization of Coca in the Yungas and Chapare**

In the Yungas, coca crops are farmed in soil that have been cultivated hundreds of years ago, and due to the erosion and geological conditions, labour-intensive and difficult-to-learn techniques for improving the quality of the terrain (*Plantada* and *zanjeo*) are required. As the production of coca crops relies on cheap and simple farming tools (e.g. *paleta*, *waywa*, *picota*), besides the land, the fundamental factor of production is labour (Speeding 2019: 118). Coca cultivation depends on family non-waged labour based on a division of tasks determined by gender and generation. In addition to the household labour “the planting of a coca field and the harvesting both require inter-household labour exchange and communal work projects” (Speeding 1993: 47). This labour exchange is based on principles of reciprocity and solidarity that characterized the moral economy of the peasantry (Scott 1976).

In Chapare, coca crops are cultivated after cutting down virgin forests or stubbles. The main technique of cultivation is known as *estaqueada* and it is relatively simple to perform, allowing newcomers to learn fast how coca cultivate is done. This technique also requires different tools compared with Yungas (e.g. *estaca*, *pala de caprir*). Because the soil is not as eroded as it is in the Yungas, the productivity of the coca harvest is higher. While The family labour for coca cultivation is also used in Chapare, where hiring wage labour is more frequent and extended compared with the Yungas (Córtez 1993: 134), creating a class differentiation that is not seen in that region (Speeding 2019: 323). The main difference between the social relations of production of coca between the Yungas and Chapare is that the capitalist economic logic has penetrated the production of Chapare peasantry with technification, use of agrochemical inputs and hiring of wage labour.

The outcome of coca production in Yungas and Chapare also has substantial differences mainly identified by coca consumers (*acullicadores*). In an interview with an Aymara indigenous that usually chews coca leaves, she told me that *acullicadores* always prefer to consume the coca leaves from the Yungas because the leaves are “small, sweet, and smooth”, whereas leaves from Chapare are “big, bitter and rough”<sup>23</sup>. Based on the quality of the leaves and consumer preferences, many peasants in the Yungas argue that their production is mainly for ‘traditional’ use and consumption market of coca leaves in Bolivia, while Chapare coca goes mainly to the production of cocaine (Ortiz 2019c: 17). The last United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

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23 Personal Interview with an Aymara indigenous leader. La Paz. 8 July 2019.

(UNODC) report on monitoring coca dynamics in Bolivia might confirm this. The report states that 90% of coca commercialized legally is sold in Villa Fatimá market (La Paz), while the remaining 10% in Sacaba market (Cochabamba) (UNDOC 2018: 35). These two are the only places where it is legal to sell f coca in Bolivia.,

The differences between Chapare and the Yungas regarding processes of production and commercialization of coca are of great importance in understanding the tensions between the regions. When it comes to public policies regulating coca production, the categories of 'traditional', 'ancestral' or 'native' coca cultivation become categories of contestation among coca growers, as those elements allow the authorization for legal cultivation. The importance of these categories allows a differentiation between the coca that is cultivated for traditional consumption and the coca that goes for the drug production market, marking a difference when it comes to the implementation of drug policies.

## **The Social Organization of Coca Growers in the Yungas and Chapare: Peasant unions at multiple levels**

In the Yungas, the peasant union (*sindicato*) is the main social organization at the village level. The unions were consolidated after the Agrarian Reform of 1953 and had a central role in the processes of land distribution, and later in terms of political participation and dialogue with state institutions (Speeding 2019: 245). The local union also has functions related to the management of community infrastructure, resolution of local conflicts and authorization of transactions in the land market (Speeding 2019: 246).

These days in the Yungas, there are about 30,000 families belonging to local unions. The unions are part of six municipal federations, and the federations are joined together by the umbrella regional organization of Federations Council of La Paz Yungas Consejo de Federaciones de Los Yungas de La Paz (COFECAY) (Fathing and Ledebur 2015: 17). In 1985, the Coca Growers Asociation of La Paz Department (ADEPCOCA) was established as the regional organization of COFECAY that deals with aspects related to coca production and commercialization in the Yungas. ADEPCOCA is usually called the 'economic wing' of COFECAY and is managed by the peasants with officials elected in general assemblies under principles of union democracy (Ortiz 2019c).

In 1992, ADEPCOCA bought with the cash contribution of their members a building for the legal coca market of La Paz: Villa Fatimá. Solely, the members of the organization are authorized to sell coca in the market, and for doing so they have to present their ADEPCOCA membership identification. In order to acquire the ID, the coca growers require authorization of their local union. (Speeding 2019: 265). This serves as an important link between the regional organization and the village unions, and even each union has a local ADEPCOCA committee.

In Chapare, the peasant union is also the local way of community-based organization in the village, and it is similar to the peasant unions established across the country after the Agrarian Reform. Nevertheless, as Chapare is located in a region of agrarian colonization, the role of the *sindicato* is more predominant in local governance. The *sindicatos* were: "responsible for distributing and allocating land among the peasant colonizer families, building and repairing rural infrastructure (bridges, roads, village household, schools), managing local conflicts, and taxing and regulating the commercialization of coca leaves" (Ortiz 2019b:14). In a similar way the local unions in Chapare constitutes six federations at the municipal level, and then a regional umbrella

organization called Coordinadora de las Seis Federaciones del Trópico de Cochabamba. This organization has been led by Evo Morales since the 1990s (Oikonomakis 2019: 152).

Both umbrella organizations of coca growers in the Yungas and Chapare are represented at the national level by the Confederation of Peasant Worker's Union of Bolivia (CSUTCB). Since 1980, the coca grower's regional organization have been an important political reference of the social movements at the national level. Their leadership is important due to the high incomes gained from coca production and their political organization when it comes to negotiation the state, as well as the national cultural identity elements they represent (Córtez 1993: 134). As explained in Chapter 2, the coca growers' organizations of Chapare were the vanguard of the historical bloc that established MAS hegemony and catapulted Evo Morales to the presidency. Recent history reveals that the unity between the coca growers of Chapare and the Yungas is fragile and characterized by tensions, setting the background of the contemporary conflict between MAS government and the Yungas coca growers.

## The Law 1008: Repression and Rural Development<sup>24</sup>

In 1980s, the coca cultivation increased exponentially in Bolivia due to the increase of cocaine demand in United States and Europe. United States through its embassy pushed the Bolivian government to approve an anti-drug law in July 1988, known as Law 1008. Since then, until Evo Morales's first term, the law mediated the conflictive relations between Bolivian coca growers and state institutions. On the one hand, the law recognized that there is a traditional demand for coca consumption, and therefore authorized the coca cultivation in 'Traditional Zones' to supply the internal market. On the other hand, the law declared the coca cultivated out of the traditional area as illegal and enforced the eradication or substitution of coca crops policies<sup>25</sup>. The 'traditional areas' included the majority of the provinces in the Yungas but not the Chapare region: "the traditional zones of production are where there have been and historical, social and agroecological cultivation of coca. In these zones will be produced exclusively, the volumes required for supplying the demand of licit use and consumption [...] These zones covered the current coca growing regions of the sub-tropic (Yungas) of the provinces of Nor and Sud Yungas [...] and Inquisivi" (Law 1008: Article 10)<sup>26</sup>.

In Chapare, "the law required Bolivia to eradicate a minimum of 5,000 hectares a year" (Farthing and Ledebur 2015: 16). "The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) funded almost \$300 million (1982-2008) on substitution of coca crops programs (export legal crops, tourism, road infrastructure). The success of these initiatives was very limited because technical and commercial difficulties related to the small-scale production of peasant farming were present (Grisaffi 2016: 155)" (Ortiz, 2019b: 6). Besides, "programs refused to work with coca grower's unions and conditioned the assistance on eradication and farmers consistently complained about lack of transparency, market and inefficacy" (Farthing and Ledebur 2015:18).

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24 Part of the content of this section is drawn on previous non-published essays (Ortiz, 2019b).

25 "In the frame of drugs policy, coercive policies seeking the eradication of illicit crops were implemented through military forced eradication campaigns or criminalization and imprisonment of the illicit growers. Substitution of illicit crops policies aim for that the peasants who cultivate illicit crops to shift to other economic alternatives through rural development-oriented strategies" (Ortiz 2019b: 6).

26 I translated Law 1008 from Spanish.

Regardless of the implementation substitution of coca crops policies, the strategy prioritized by the law 1008 was the forced eradication of coca crops through the deployment of state military or police forces trained and funded by United States. “Between 1980 and 2004, the cocaleros of the Chapare suffered heavy repression and marginalization: 206 of them—including 8 babies—were killed either by the army or the special anti-drug and paramilitary forces, 519 were injured, 121 tortured, 447 whipped (including children), and 4134 detained” (Oikonomakis, 2019: 151). The only forced eradication campaign launched in the Yungas took place in 2001, in some of the areas not covered by the “traditional zone”, but it was “met with fierce resistance from thousands of coca growers both within and outside the ‘legal zone’. Sustained protests forced the government to abandon the plan” (Farthing and Kohl 2010: 201).

When Evo Morales came to power with the support of coca growers’ organization, he promised to ‘nationalize’ the drug policy in Bolivia and end the more than 25 years of failed and repressive drug policies implemented under the pressure of Washington politics. To some extent, Morales’s government was able to reduce the state violence related to forced eradication, allow the cultivation of a *cato* of coca (between 16000 to 2200 square meters) in Chapare, and also control the expansion of coca crops working together with the peasant unions from the region (Farthing and Ledebur, 2015). Most notably, at the international level he was able to modify in 2013 the 1961 UN Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs regarding the abolition of coca leaf chewing within twenty-five years (Grissaffi and Ledebur 2016: 3). Nevertheless, the United States-led global War on Drugs still limits the possibility of full-sovereign drug policy implementation and the Bolivian government cannot allow the cultivation of coca beyond supplying the internal demand of traditional consumption. In that sense, the Bolivian drug policy has put a ceiling regarding how much coca is allowed to grow in the country and providing permission in Chapare to grow coca means reducing coca production in the Yungas. Taking that context into account, the next chapter addresses how the new coca law of the MAS government is one of the main elements that has generated the unexpected conflict between MAS and the Yungas coca growers.

## Chapter 4. Authoritarian Populism in the Yungas

This chapter addresses the shifts over time regarding the relations of the MAS government with the coca growers of the Yungas. It presents how Evo Morales's populist appeals and organic linkages between MAS and the peasant organizations of the Yungas guaranteed a majoritarian support to the government. The chapter also tracks the conjunctural movements to understand the decline of the MAS hegemony in the region and the beginning of a conflict triggered by the adoption of the Coca Law (Law 906) in 2017. It is argued that the origin of the tensions has to do with a perception of unfairness regarding the differentiated treatment that the MAS government has had with the regions of Chapare and Yungas. Finally, the chapter identified the milestones in the conflict between a sector of ADEPCOCA and the government as well as the authoritarian politics that the government has deployed to deal with the conflict and retrieve its leadership towards the region.

The MAS government had a broad legitimacy in Yungas in its first years of ruling. ADEPCOCA and COFECAI as the main peasant organizations of the region unconditionally supported MAS, both at the national and municipal level (Ramos 2018: 47). As part of the umbrella organization CSUTBC, both regional organizations had organic linkages with MAS, which implied mutual support, coordination and the participation in the "process of change" (García 2011). This support was expected in terms of votes during the elections and the adoption of the new Bolivian constitution. In the Yungas, votes casted during the presidential elections show consistent support for MAS. In the 2005 elections the party obtained 66% of the votes, in 2009 87%, and in the 2014 56%<sup>27</sup>.

Besides the organic support to MAS, it is possible to identify how the agrarian populist appeals (Borras 2019) also had to do with the legitimacy of Evo Morales's government in the region. During my fieldwork, going from La Paz to Chulumani (municipality of Sud Yungas) I engaged in a conversation with a peasant woman sitting beside me travelling with her *wawa*<sup>28</sup>. She was around her 30 or 40 years old, had brown skin, delicate indigenous facial features, long lashes and very kind manners. Initially, we talked about the Yungas and the organizations of the region; she told me that was a rank-and-file member of ADEPCOCA. She enjoyed chatting and suddenly started to talk about the next presidential elections in October. She confessed that the presidential candidate she endorses is Evo Morales since "he represents the peasants and is hated by the businessmen". In her opinion, Evo has brought important changes to Bolivia, mainly in the rural areas where the people have been "marginalized" and "left-behind" for so many years. She explained that these changes are related to rural education (both for boys and girls), infrastructure, subsidies for farm inputs and rural housing. Interestingly, she recognized that regardless of her preference, one of Evo's problems is that "he wants to control all the social movements", and also has regional preferences to where he brings "more development" as is the case of Chapare; the "apple of his eyes" (Ortiz 2019c: 14).

In the previous narrative, it is possible to identify how the support to Evo Morales in the Yungas is related to populist identification with the president as peasant. It also appears the "businessmen" as the "the those who hate the president" and, therefore, an 'other' that reinforces his political identity. It is interesting to highlight two aspects of this political self-identification related to core elements of progressive agrarian populism (Borras 2019: 13): 1) that

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27 The computation is based on "Atlas Electoral de Bolivia" considering the outcome of the last three presidential elections in the provinces of Yungas: Sur Yungas, Nor Yungas and Inquisivi.

28 baby in Quechua language.

the self-identification is done in terms of social class (peasants vs. businessmen) and 2) the electoral decision is justified in terms of the public policy that the government issues for the benefit of the “left-behind” people of the countryside. The puzzle now is to understand the shift from political identification with Evo Morales in the Yungas towards a conflict between the government and a sector of ADEPCOCA. This is a crucial twist to grasp in order to explain the shift from a progressive agrarian populism to authoritarian populism in the region.

An antecedent of the conflict between Evo Morales and the Yungas is the delay of infrastructure projects for the region. In 2012, Evo Morales promised to pave the Unduavi-Chulumaní road within two years (Spedding 2019: 444). In the mid-2019, the project was not yet completed, and the Yungas inhabitants constantly complain about this, arguing that in comparison, Chapare has better infrastructure, public investment and attention from the government (Ortiz 2019). Since 2013, the cadastre, control and forced eradication of coca crops in some areas of Yungas also caused the malaise among the coca growers towards the government. Nevertheless, the bifurcation point is the adoption, without active consent and participation, of the Coca Law (Law 906) in 2017.

The Bolivian Constituent Assembly (2006-2009) set the conditions that allowed changing the law 1008 of 1989 some years after the Constitution was adopted (Ramos 2018: 40). The Constituent Assembly created a ‘Coca Commission’ to discuss the normative framework of coca crops in the new Bolivian Constitution, and its outcomes were drawn in the article 384<sup>29</sup>. Representatives of the Yungas and Chapare participated in the Commission and both agreed on changing the law. However, they disagreed on some aspects that were the subject of intense deliberation. A coca grower and expert adviser of Yungas that took part in the Commission told me:

“In the Constituent Assembly, there was a lot of controversy for more than one year. The representatives from Chapare wanted to write in the article that the state should protect the coca of both Andes and Amazon region. They wanted to legitimize the coca production of their region. We as Yungueños (people from Los Yungas) did not let them do that. Finally, we won that battle and wrote in the article that the ‘state protects the native and ancestral coca’. That article does not defend Chapare as the native and ancestral coca is from Los Yungas. We cultivate it from thousands of years ago and Chapare is making a business out of it for decades”<sup>30</sup>

Since 2010, ADEPCOCA started to work on a bill for a new coca law considering article 384 of the Constitution, especially the statement that “the State protects the native and ancestral coca” (Speeding 2019: 485). Despite this, article 384 does not specify the region or provinces where the native and ancestral coca is cultivated, and coca growers of Yungas interpreted this as coca cultivated only in their region. Thereby, ADEPCOCA convened a commission of experts from the region to propose a law that protects the cultivation coca crops in the Yungas. They met several times with the government in a context of mutual support, reciprocity and organic linkages (Ramos 2018: 41).

ADEPCOCA presented the bill by the end of 2016 to the Plurinational Legislative Assembly for its adoption. That day, a demonstration with hundreds of coca growers in La Paz

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29 Plurinational State of Bolivia Constitution. Article 384: “The State protects the native and ancestral coca as cultural patrimony, as a renewable natural resource of the biodiversity of Bolivia, and as a factor of social unity. In its natural state, coca is not a narcotic. The revaluation, production, sale and industrialization of coca shall be governed by law” (Plurinational State of Bolivia 2009: 114).

30 Coca grower leader of Los Yungas. La Paz. 17 July 2019.

was also conducted (Speeding 2019: 486). ADEPCOCA faced difficulties finding representatives to help them but at the end the bill was not approved. Since 2015, the government had been working on another bill without socializing it with the coca grower's organization of the Yungas. The government presented this Coca Law in the legislative and was adopted in March of 2017 as Law 906 (*ibid.*).

Law 906 is a landmark for understanding the shift in the relations between ADEPCOCA and the government because it was approved without consultation with ADEPCOCA. The content of the Law also provoked the outrage of the Yungas coca growers because it changed the denomination of "Traditional Zone" of coca cultivation covering the area of Yungas region, to "Authorized Zone" and "Non-authorized Zone" of coca cultivation. This means that in the new law, both the Yungas and Chapare are recognized as authorized zones for coca production, disregarding historical experience and cultural meanings. (Campero 2018: 4, see Chapter 3). The law authorized the cultivation of 22.000 hectares in Bolivia divided by 14.300 hectares for Yungas and 7.700 for Chapare. This means that the coca production in the Yungas will now be equal to that of Chapare, despite their conviction that only their coca is "traditional", "native and ancestral", as stated out in Law 1008 and the constitution.

Before the adoption of Law 906 on 17 February 2017, the directorate of ADEPCOCA conducted demonstrations and protests around Plaza Murillo in La Paz, the political centre of Bolivia where the Presidential Palace and the Plurinational Congress of the country are located. Due to lack of communication with the government, ADEPCOCA opted for a 'direct action' to show their stance towards law 906. This is to call for the modification of recognizing Chapare as an "Authorized Zone" and increase the area of cultivation allowed in the Yungas. They called their strategy the "Siege to Plaza Murrillo" placing hundreds of improvised tents around the place. The siege lasted more than a week after clashes with police officers<sup>31</sup>. Once the police broke down the siege, the coca growers retracted to Villa Fatimá market and from there organized protests across the city: "they were repressed with a massive deployment of tear gas that they have never seen even in the repressions of the neoliberal governments enemies of the social movements. More than a hundred of protesters were also arrested" (Speeding 2019: 487)<sup>32</sup>.

During the protests, the minister of government Carlos Romero justified the necessity of police deployment to deal with the protesters. He stated: "The siege to Plaza Murillo is equivalent to kidnapping the Palace Government and the legislative assembly which are actions of unacceptable political connotations". He also deemed that some of the leaders of ADEPCOCA are guided by "conservative right-wing political forces" and acting under orders from the Embassy the United States of America and therefore, are " betrayers of the 'process of change'"<sup>33</sup>. After intense days of confrontations, the representatives of the government and ADEPCOCA attempted a negotiation. The government did not accept all the demands but agreed to release the prisoners, recognize the municipality of Caranavi as 'Authorized Zone' and provide an additional 300 hectares of land for coca cultivation in the Yungas (Ramos 2019: 49). During the negotiations, there were rumours that representatives of the government compelled ADEPCOCA to sign the agreement under the threat or else they will pass a law to revoke the legal status of ADEPCOCA and imprison the coca growers arrested during the demonstrations (Speeding 2019: 501).

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31 interview with a manager of a local radio in Yungas. 17 July 2019.

32 The translation is mine based on the original text in Spanish.

33 <https://wwwelperiodicodigital.com/2017/02/20/romero-cerca-a-plaza-murillo-equivale-a-un-secuestro-de-palacio-de-gobierno/>. (Accessed 28 October 2019).

Despite the government was able to stop the protests of Yungas coca growers and force a negotiation in which law 906 was barely modified, it felt threatened its legitimacy among ADEPCOCA members and its directorate. The exercise of brutal coercive force against the peasants during the rallies and the forced negotiation for weakening the social and political dissent (Bruff 2013: 115), was an expression of the undermining of MAS hegemony and a reaction with authoritarian measures. The justification for the coercive actions in the statement of the minister Carlos Romero might be seen as a populist strategy in which the protesters are marked with an identity of antagonists and enemies of the ‘people’s process of change’, and guided by the conservative right-wing” and being functional to US imperialist interests.

Since then, the government has implemented non-democratic strategies to re-assert its leadership in the region. These strategies have to do with clientelism, co-optation, and supporting parallel social organizations. One of the clientelist practices of MAS in the Yungas has been to condition the execution of public works and infrastructure to gain the political support of the citizens. In Sud Yungas, there have been cases in which municipal mayors of MAS started implementation of social housing projects and construction of rural roads in exchange of political support to the leaders of the party (Ortiz 2019: 20).

The national government also has created in Los Yungas a parallel social organization of coca leaves retailers (called ‘*carpeteros*’) named National Confederation of Coca Retailers (CONALPROCD). The *carpeteros* are members of ADEPCOCA but they travel across the country to retail coca leaves with a special license authorized by both ADEPCOCA and a governmental entity called DIGCOIN. Since the creation of CONALPRODC in June 2017, the government has obtained a social base in the region through clientelist and coercive practices. Alison Speeding (2019: 475) has argued that DIGCOIN has granted licenses for retailing coca leaves in the region in exchange for political support.

CONALPRODC directorate is staffed by political leaders related to MAS that exert a rigorous pro-government political control over the rank-and-file members of the organization. During the last years, the directorate has convened for demonstrations to show support for the government. They also charge those who fail to attend with fees or temporarily suspends their license for retailing of coca leaves. There are also even cases in which the license of some members has been suspended for taking part in protests against MAS or complaining about the government (Speeding 2019: 474). This strategy created division and polarization between the Yungas coca growers now recognized a ‘MASista’ (pro-government) and ‘non-MASista’ (independent and/or opposition).

The other strategy of MAS has been the attempts to co-opt ADEPCOCA’s directorate. This was part of the events that preluded the ‘Villa Fatima riots’ in February 2018. MAS supported a pro-government parallel directorate in order to disclaim the directorate headed by Franklin Gutierrez and have more control over ADEPCOCA. Nevertheless, the MAS government was unable to have the results it was expecting because of the persistent opposition of the leaders in the region. In that scenario, the government opted to implement harder authoritarian measures.

After the coca growers headed by Franklin Gutierrez retrieved the ADEPCOCA headquarters in the ‘Villa Fatimá riots’, it was clear to the government that it was facing a powerful political opposition that is difficult to co-opt or dismantle. This is especially the case with the leadership of Franklin Gutierrez, who threatens the hegemony of Evo Morales in the region. By mid-2018, Franklin Gutiérrez announced his intention to run for presidency in the October 2019 elections. It was said that ADEPCOCA attempted to create a political party supporting Gutierrez’s presidential candidacy (Speeding, 2019: 493). His imprisonment in

August 2018 put a halt on his political aspirations as he was accused of carrying weapons and commanding an attack against the police during clashes between coca growers of La Asunta (Sud Yungas province) and police officers in a campaign of forced eradication of coca crops. One police officer and two coca growers died because of the confrontation. Gutierrez was imprisoned in San Pedro Prison in La Paz by a judge many argue was biased in favour of MAS. One of the persecutors involved even recognized that the order of capturing him came directly from MAS and not as a command of an autonomous judicial body<sup>34</sup>.

The judicial process that imprisoned Gutiérrez is not an isolated case as several leaders of ADEPCOCA has been captured or are facing judicial processes. There is a public prosecutor who has opened judicial investigations against almost 200 members of organization and at least 10 of them are imprisoned. Also, some members of ADEPCOCA feel a constant harassment by the surveillance by agents they argued work for the government (Ortiz 2019c: 17)

On 24 July 2019, Sergio Pampa was captured nearby Plaza Rosinho in La Paz. Pampa was the coca grower leader who succeeded Franklin Gutiérrez. On the day he was captured, I was in Villa Fatimá market, headquarters of the organization, and witnessed the concern and anguish that Pampa's arrest generated among the coca growers. I went there in order to conduct some interviews. When I arrived in Villa Fatimá I found a great dynamism with lots of commerce on-going-food stalls, a bank, some trucks transporting the packages of coca leaves (*taques de coca*), and a lot of people passing by. The market is a huge building with a deteriorated façade, green paint peeling in the walls and with some broken windows. On the walls, I saw a graffiti that said "Evo, dictator of the Plurinational State". In the rooftop of the building, the flags of Bolivia and ADEPCOCA are displayed, the last one with a coca leaf in the centre and the date of foundation of the organization. When I entered the building, some posters with political mottos and demands were posted:

- "We demand the liberation of our leaders headed by Franklin Gutiérrez, imprisoned without justification".
- "We demand the respect to the union autonomy and the mother law of the constitution"
- "We demand accountability to MAS mayors, CONALPRODC and DIGCOIN"
- "No more forced eradication and the register and cadastre in the ancestral and native zones of the three provinces (Nor Yungas, Sud Yungas, and Inquisivi)"
- "Freedom for our political prisoners and justice for our injured and fallen"
- "Vote against MAS and nevermore"

Once inside the building, I went to the office of the person I was going to interview. At that point, the people seem to be in a rush, and some were leaving the building with worried and angry faces. When I found my interviewee, he told me that unfortunately, today was not a good day since Sergio Pampa had been captured and intelligence agents and security forces were surrounding the building. He asked me, for my own security to leave the place as soon as possible, not talk to anyone and take the first bus leaving the neighbourhood.

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34 interview with a manager of a local radio in Yungas. 17 July 2019.

## Conclusions

This research paper attempted to understand to what extent and for what reasons Evo Morales's Movement for Socialism (MAS) government has shifted from progressive agrarian populism to authoritarian populism in its relationship with coca growers' organization of Yungas (ADEPCOCA).

Evo Morales and MAS came in power in Bolivia in 2006 in the middle of popular upheavals unleashed by an organic structural crisis of neoliberalism and Bolivian traditional political parties. At that time, a historical bloc willing to contest the political hegemony based on populist identity of the 'people' against the 'elite' (people's enemy) emerged. The historical bloc composed by a coalition of different classes and social forces was led by the indigenous and peasants of CSUTCB with their political instrument, MAS-IPSP. Evo Morales's charisma and his tactic using of his indigenous identification as an Aymaran and peasant coca grower enabled him to gain broad political support. He became the political symbol that united the historical bloc and its heterogeneous and progressive socio-political demands embodied in the 'October Agenda': nationalization of natural resources, agrarian reform, indigenous government, and constituent assembly. The hegemony of the emerging historical bloc consolidated in 2009 after the second term of Morales's government and with the new Bolivian constitution that was able to achieve legally some of the socio-political demands of the October Agenda, including agrarian populists demands such as food sovereignty and *buen vivir*.

In 2012, the MAS government developmental imperatives in the infrastructure project of TIPNIS resulted in an outbreak of indigenous protests handled with heavy-handed coercion. That conjuncture was a landmark that started to undermine MAS legitimacy. Coercion and co-optation became the frequent practices of the government towards social movements and organizations that showed political opposition. At this moment, the 'creative tensions of revolution' and 'government of social movement' thesis of the organic intellectuals of the historical bloc showed its fragility.

The coca growers of Yungas and Chapare and their organizations kept its consistent support to MAS leadership based on the organic linkages and agrarian populist appeals. In recent history, the coca growers have been a political vanguard of Bolivian countryside because of their economic incomes, political organization, and the national identity linked to the coca leaf. They are undoubtedly a meaningful social force that can make a difference in the unfinished hegemonic struggles of Bolivia. Evo Morales as president and chief of the coca growers' organization Six Federations of Cochabamba Tropic was able to lead the coca growers of both the Yungas and Chapare regions despite of their differences in geographic location, history and social relations of production. To make this possible he promised to 'nationalize the drug policy'.

Since 2012, the differential treatment of the government to Chapare in public investment, infrastructure projects and governmental accountability, started to undermine Morales's leadership in the Yungas region. Nonetheless, the bifurcation point was the adoption without consultation of the 2017 Coca Law 906. The law generated great social dissent due to its non-recognition of the 'traditional', 'native' or 'ancestral' coca cultivation in the region, as well as recognizing both Chapare and Yungas as 'Authorized Zones' for coca production. Because of the international constraints of the war on drugs, the law also established a ceiling for coca production in both regions of coca hectares in both regions. In this sense, in a kind of cero-sum-game, more hectares of coca allowed for Chapare to produce meant less authorized hectares of coca for the Yungas.

Law 906 weakened the hegemony of MAS in the region as the government was not able to present the particular interest of Chapare's coca growers as the general interest of Bolivian coca growers. This is because Yungas coca growers have the deep conviction that only their coca is 'native and ancestral' and is the one that supplies the traditional consumption demand, while Chapare's coca is used for cocaine production. Despite the social pressures in rallies and demonstration during 'Siege to Plaza Pedro Murillo' Yungas coca growers were forced to accept the law due to violent coercion and institutional pressure of losing the legal recognition ADEPCOCA. Their leaders were treated under the populist logic as 'the enemy of the people' as the government claimed that they were guided by the 'conservative right-wing leaders and being used for US imperialist interests.

The MAS's government was aware of the erosion of its hegemony in the region and considering how politically strategic it is to keep the Yungas support, has deployed different tactics for undermining ADEPCCOA political opposition and social dissent: co-optation, clientelism, and establishment of support of parallel organization. Nonetheless, they continue to face strong opposition and the emergence of political leaderships of Franklin Gutiérrez threatened, the fragile MAS hegemony. The answer of the government was to instrumentalize the judiciary power and arrest political opponents (real or potential), therefore violating the democratic principle of division of institutional power. Therefore, the MAS government opted for the way that might lead to the path of full authoritarianism: "overt repression including the arrest of opposition leaders, the killing of opposition activists, and the violent repression of protest" (Levitsky and Way 2010: 8).

The recent conjuncture of Evo Morales's resignation might be analysed as the end of the MAS hegemonic cycle in Bolivia. The MAS government has lost the leadership of the historical bloc that was established with the socio-political demands against neoliberalism of the early years of the 21st century. In the hegemonic balance prevailed coercion instead of active consent in order to deal with the social dissent of social movements (e.g. CIDOB and ADEPCOCA). More than 13 years in power of Evo Morales also undermined the MAS legitimacy with his attempt of perpetuation in power trying to modify the constitution calling for a referendum for getting another re-election and disclaiming the outcomes appealing the decision to the judiciary.

Paradoxically, Evo Morales as the political symbol that allowed to unify the different socio-political demands of the October agenda and represent 'the people', is now the political symbol that is unifying the heterogeneous groups (e.g religious, youngers, miners, environmentalists, coca growers, non-MASistas left-wingers) that pushed his resignation. A new historical counter-hegemonic bloc is emerging in Bolivia that identified Morales as the 'people's enemy'. Yet it is still unclear its political project (beyond Evo's resignation political demand) and who is going to get the leadership for shaping a new hegemonic historical bloc. So far the 'candidates' are either the social forces of old neoliberalism represented by Carlos Mesa (Morales's main opponent in the last elections) or the conservative and fundamentalist social forces represented by Luis Fernando Camacho (representative of financial and agribusiness capital and president of the Civic Committee of Santa Cruz) nicknamed as 'the macho' and who declared after the resignation of Morales: "The Bible has returned to the Presidential Palace. Never again will come back the Pachamama"<sup>35</sup>. Nonetheless, nothing is written in stone in the unfinished hegemonic struggles.

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<sup>35</sup> <https://jornada.com.mx/2019/11/11/politica/008n2pol>. Accessed 12 November 2019.

At least three learnings can be derived from this research for studying populist politics in general, and its relations with the dynamics of agrarian change in particular.

The first one is that authoritarian populism is not only a right-wing phenomenon despite of the contemporary mechanistic association between right-wing politics and authoritarian populism. Authoritarianism is always a possibility to emerge in populist politics because the logic of the “people vs. people’s enemies” might lead to those who claim to represent the people to say ‘Whoever is not With Me is Against the People’, and being reluctant towards political opposition and social dissent. This can take place regardless of the political position in the cartography of ‘right-wing’ ‘left-wing politics’. In critical agrarian studies, the notions of progressive agrarian populism and authoritarian populism usually are set as ‘antipodal’ notions. Nonetheless, a progressive populist project can derive in an authoritarian one. Left-wing and agrarian progressive populism regimes might follow the path towards authoritarianism and even deploy coercion with their constituencies from the countryside, as was presented in this research with the case of MAS government and coca grower’s organization of Yungas.

A second learning is that hegemony is a useful analytical category for understanding populist political dynamics and its relationship with authoritarianism. A populist leader or regime can become hegemonic when is able to present its interests as ‘the people’s interests’. The degree of coercion or consent deploys for keeping that hegemony is what might lead or not towards authoritarianism. In this research was argued that the prioritization of coercion over consensus for holding the hegemony was what led MAS’s government towards the path of authoritarianism.

The third learning is that the method of historical situations is promising for grasping the complexities of populist politics. This method that attempts to analyse a concrete situation in relation to broader scenarios of social relations of production, hegemonic struggles, and multiple determinations and temporalities, can be implemented for understanding the emergence, shift over time and decline of a populist leader or regime. In this research that method was implemented in order to understand populist politics of MAS rise, its shifts over time and what it seems the decline of MAS hegemony in Bolivian politics.

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