

## CHAPTER 7

## SOCIO-ENVIRONMENTAL REGIONALISM IN SOUTH AMERICA: TENSIONS IN NEW DEVELOPMENT MODELS

## 7.1. INTRODUCTION

The politics of post-hegemonic regionalism in South America are characterized by the pursuit of new bases of consensus and procedures aimed at building regional governance beyond market integration objectives. These include commitments to political cooperation in the areas of social, technological, communications, financial, infrastructure, energy, judicial, and defense policies. Post-hegemonic regionalism does not follow a unidirectional progression or a clearly defined doctrine (Tussie 2009). It is rather a path-dependent process driven at least by two distinct dynamics. On the one hand, regionalism is the result of new commitments by state and non-state actors seeking to cooperate and coordinate new policies based on the redefinition of priorities of development, social development, and growth in open contestation to the policies and practices of neoliberal models of the past. New regional projects such as UNASUR and ALBA have emerged out of those commitments grounding new practices in new consensuses about sovereign management of security, growth, and human development. The region became in this way a platform magnifying the potential and reach of coordinated public policies in these areas. New political coordination to safeguard and institutionalize instruments for the management of economic resources, democratic stability in the region, diplomatic conflict resolution, as well as convergence in an embryonic form of extra-regional foreign policy have been put in place.<sup>1</sup> All this has strengthened the sense of being part of an emerging regional political community which accommodates like-minded governments, yet of different ideological persuasion. In other words, new understandings of what regionalism *is for* expresses an identity-building process centered on shared values and practices challenging the narrative of neoliberalism and open regionalism as the only alternatives for inter-American governance. On the other hand, post-hegemonic politics are associated with a series of policies and initiatives that have been advanced in South America for a number of years with the aim of securing access to natural resources. Such initiatives

<sup>1</sup> UNASUR was a key stabilizing factor in offsetting attempts to destabilize democratic order in Bolivia and Ecuador, and in resolving diplomatic conflicts between Colombia, Ecuador, and Venezuela. It also adopted a common position to support Argentina's demands of UK compliance with UN resolutions over the Malvinas/Falkland Islands dispute; cooperation over the earthquake in Haiti; condemnation of the coup in Honduras followed by diplomatic actions that aimed to isolate the illegitimate government in international fora.

involve the establishment of new international agreements and practices in mining and energy integration, as well as intraregional foreign direct investments in resource sensitive sectors. As a form of *resource-driven integration*, this process is likewise connected with the proliferation of socio-environmental conflicts across the region derived from the detrimental implications of these policies on the livelihood of local communities.

The argument presented in this chapter is that unlike the first set of political dynamics that characterize post-hegemonic regionalism, resource-driven integration set the current limits to the transformative potential of regionalism in South America. This is the case since socio-environmental conflicts present new sources of development tensions related to the asymmetrical distribution of benefits and liabilities of natural resource extraction. In many ways this dimension regionalism contradicts the significant advancement reached in terms of political coordination.

There is a burgeoning literature that analyzes the emergence of socio-environmental conflicts related to extractive industries. Some authors explore the socio-political and cultural implications of such conflicts for development policies and processes (Broederlijk Denle and ALAI 2008; CIDSE/ALAI 2009; Chaparro 2006; Escobar 2010; Svampa and Antonelli 2009), while others stress the implications on state-building processes as part of shifting interrelations between social movements, companies, and states (Bebbington 2009). The strategies developed by local communities to demand rights accountability to powerful state and corporate interests when extractive industries undermine their sources of livelihood have also led to scholarly analysis (Martinez-Alier 2003; Newell and Wheeler 2006; Rodriguez and Carruthers 2008; Saguier 2010a). Yet, the regional and international dimensions of socio-environmental conflicts have been less explored. Some exceptions include analyses that focus on the redefinition of the South American regional space by its capture by transnational capital (Ceceña et al. 2007) or by the trans-local patterns of migration driven by small-scale gold miners (Theije and Heemskerck 2009). This chapter explores the intersections between socio-environmental conflicts and region-building process which define the path-dependent trajectories of post-hegemonic regionalism in South America.

To explore this claim the first section reviews a series of policies and initiatives being undertaken in South America with the aim of facilitating access to natural resources for trade and industrial development. The expansion of transnational mining activities and the integration of hydroelectric power infrastructure constitute key vectors of resource-driven integration. It is discussed that this approach to integration effectively represents a particular and controversial approach to regional resource governance. The second section explores the relations between resource-driven integration and the exacerbation of socio-environmental conflicts stemming from the unequal outcomes of mining and hydroelectric integration which often entail overriding communities' rights to a livelihood and to consultation. These conflicts are being represented and acted up by social movements and actors that express the views and demands of affected communities throughout the region. The third

section shows how this is changing the patterns of relations of civil society groups with regional governance. Finally, the conclusion speculates on the potential trajectories of post-hegemonic regionalism in the case that ongoing intersections between resource-driven integration and socio-environmental conflicts are maintained. It also suggests pending challenges to save regionalism from undermining itself.

## 7.2. RESOURCE-DRIVEN INTEGRATION

The politics of regionalism in South America are being shaped by a series of government policies, investments, and social conflicts that modify the terms of access and use of natural resources for trade and industrial development purposes. Mining and energy integration feature as two axes along which regional dynamics are being advanced. The politics of resource-driven integration can be seen as a gradual and more recent process that combines in a common geopolitical space trends that have been taking place in all South American countries for a long time, even if at different rates and levels of intensity. The economic dependence on natural resources, a historical characteristic of most Latin American economies, continues to be a defining element of the region's political economy (UNCTAD 2007). There has been a continuity and even expansion of extractive industries in all countries. This can be seen in the case of mining. From the early 1990s to the year 2000, the share of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in mining projects in Latin America increased from 12 to 33% in relation to overall global investments (De Echave 2007). During the same period, Latin America concentrated 12 of the 25 world's largest investment projects in mining (Bridge 2004). Recipients of mining FDI include not only countries where this activity has a long history, like Peru, Chile, or Bolivia, but also countries where large-scale mining is being promoted as a newly established industry. This is the case of Argentina, where mining investments increased by 740% between 2003 and 2009. Likewise, the number of transnational mining projects in Argentina went up from 3 to 150—mostly in copper and gold but also silver and molybdenum—from 2002 to the end of 2005 ("La nota. . ." 2009). Large-scale mining projects are also planned in Uruguay, another country where this industry is only recently beginning to enter.

A similar situation is found in terms of hydrocarbon (oil and gas) exploration and production. In Peru, areas of hydrocarbon concessions, where companies acquire exploration rights, cover more than 70% of the country's Amazonian territory. This is likewise the case in Ecuador, where two-thirds of the Amazon is already zoned for hydrocarbon expansion. Moreover, 55% of the national territory in Bolivia is officially considered to be of potential hydrocarbon interest. Indeed, under the current Morales administration in Bolivia, hydrocarbon operations have significantly expanded in the country's northern Amazon basin. Bebbington (2009) shows a structural dependence on extractive industries which is common to different Andean countries characterized by very different ideological persuasions of their governments. Peru, Bolivia, and Ecuador all rely on the expansion of such extractive

industries for fiscal purposes. A similar situation can be seen in relation to the expansion of extractive industries in other countries, such as soybean production and biofuel agriculture in Argentina, Brazil, and Paraguay, forestry in Chile, Uruguay, and Brazil, and salmon fisheries in Chile.

The reinforcement of historical patterns of extractivist models is largely associated with the high price of such primary goods in the world market which results from the sustained demand of industrializing China and India. This creates a complex situation for South American economies. It is the case that natural resource exports provide a reliable source of fiscal revenues that ensures solvency, and a platform for funding public policies. This is particularly important at a time when there is a global economic crisis. Moreover, such fiscal resources are key to financing much-needed social and redistributive policies as well as programs to support industrial development and innovation. Yet, having the right balance between industrial and natural-resource production is proving more difficult to attain.

Another factor driving the turn to extractivism across South America relates to shifting patterns in manufactured goods industries. South American economies are losing competitiveness to cheaper Chinese products affecting industrialization. Furthermore, the increase in revenues from natural resources introduces a pressure to strengthen national currencies, resulting in exports becoming more expensive. This affects particularly industrial goods, since the price of primary goods is expected to remain high in the foreseeable future. This situation, often referred to as the “resource curse” and as the “Dutch disease,” leads to the bolstering of the neoextractivist component of current economic models across the region based on the export of primary and agricultural goods.

Another regional implication is that in order to withstand the competitive pressures on manufactured goods, there are incentives to obtain natural resources and energy from the region by disregarding the social and environmental costs of doing so. Namely, the pursuit of industrial competitiveness is another factor leading resource-driven regionalism in ways that generate a race to the bottom to lower socio-environmental standards and override communities’ rights. The externalization of such “costs” becomes part of the ingrained logic of regionalism.

Resource-driven integration is thus based on the coexistence of extractivist and neodevelopmental policies. As it was suggested, both aim at different goals, namely the economic reliance on natural resource extraction in the first case, and the aspiration of industrial development in the second case. However, both policy orientations share something in common. This is that they equally pose a great challenge to socio-environmental sustainability in the region. One of the vectors of this form of integration is the expansion of mining activities in international border areas. This enables access to untapped underground minerals in locations which many times are prevented by national constitutions from exploitation. Mining has traditionally been banned from international borders due to geopolitical and national security considerations. Arrangements put in place to advance integration through transnational mining are varied.

There is the case of a bilateral *Chile-Argentina mining treaty*. It was signed in 1997 and ratified by both parliaments in 2000. This bilateral treaty marks a new generation of transnational resource governance. It allows for the first time a cross-border exploitation of mineral deposits in an area that covers more than 200,000 square kilometers equivalent to over 95% of the international border—one of the longest borders in the world. Many provisions that facilitate companies' activities were added to the treaty through further protocols. According to the treaty, Argentina and Chile must set up special border controls, grant access to the mining companies for "all types of natural resources"—including water—allow private airports in the border area, and grant broad exemptions to their immigration, health, labor, and sanitary laws. In the case of Chile, many of the treaty's provisions are protected by multiple bilateral free trade agreements (FTAs). In Argentina, the Mining Code (1999) and a Law on Mining Investments (2004) set the regulatory framework for the treaty. Mining corporations have already begun to explore in this area attracted by the conditions established in the treaty, while others have expressed their interest in doing so. At present, there are four large binational projects that have been approved. The largest project is currently Pascua Lama by Canadian company Barrick Gold. There are also the El Pachón project, owned by Xstrata (Switzerland) in addition to Vicuña and Amos-Andrés, both owned by Rio Tinto (UK). These projects, at different stages of development, are all concentrated in the highlands of northern Chile and Argentina and in the extreme southern end of the Andes range. Both areas are key sources of water that feed rural communities and several cities. Future projects will be located in more central areas of the Andes, near where most of the agricultural activity takes place and where most of the Chilean people and a significant part of the Argentinean population live.

Transnational mining is also taking place along the Peru-Ecuador border in the *Cordillera del Condor*. This area is known for the conflict that pitted Peru and Ecuador in 1995. Since then, mining investments were attracted to this area rich in gold reserves. Concessions issues to mining corporations have almost tripled between 2005 and 2010, turning the Cordillera del Condor into a "transnational mining district." Most of the mining concessions issued until now have taken place on the Peruvian side of the border. Cenepa is one of the largest projects, comprising of 10 mining concessions which total an area of approximately 9,000 hectares. New Dimension Resources Ltd. (Canada), Minera Afrodita (owned by Donato Resources from Canada), and Monterrico Metals (originally a British company that was sold to the Chinese Zijin Consortium in 2007) are the main investors. Zijin alone acquired 35 concessions in an area that covers 28,000 hectares, in addition to holding some concessions on the Ecuadorian side of the border. The Condor project, owned by Kinross Gold (Canada), and Ecuacorriente are also important investments located on the Ecuadorian side (IWGIA 2010).

In addition to transnational mining along international borders, resource-driven integration in South America is associated with the creation of regional energy infrastructure. Particularly, the development of a regional hydroelectrical power infrastructure mobilizes large sums of public and private investments. This is geared

toward increasing and integrating regional capabilities for electricity generation, transportation, and intraregional trade. The abundance of water in the Amazon basin makes this area the epicenter of a series of networks of interconnected dams and transport infrastructure that link production sites and consumer markets throughout the region marked by a growing demand for energy. Access to reliable, sufficient, and cheap energy resources is vital for industrial development prospects of all countries, though the Brazilian industrial sector constitutes the main source of demand considering its growth over the last years.

In this context, a number of large-scale hydroelectric dams are planned to be constructed in different parts of the Amazon basin. This is leading to new patterns of regional international cooperation in which Brazilian companies play a key role as the main concessionaries of infrastructure projects. The Initiative for Regional Infrastructure in South America (IIRSA) provides the finance for these projects. IIRSA is an institutional mechanism created in 2000 for the coordination of inter-governmental actions with the aim “to promote the process of political, social and economic integration of South America, including the modernization of the regional infrastructure and specific actions to stimulate the integration and development of isolated sub regions.”<sup>2</sup> IIRSA is a critical pillar in resource-based regionalism currently hosting an agreed portfolio of 524 infrastructure projects in the areas of transportation, energy, and communications, which are grouped in 47 clusters of projects that represent an estimated investment of US\$ 96,119.2 million at June 2010.<sup>3</sup> The Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), Corporación Andina de Fomento (CAF), and the Financial Fund for the Development of the River Plate Basin (FONPLATA) provide the technical governance of IIRSA. These organizations and the World Bank provide financial resources.

Yet, most importantly, Brazil’s National Development Bank (BNDES) is also a key regional player in mobilizing resources for IIRSA-sponsored projects that are planned both within Brazilian territory and in neighboring countries. One of the most emblematic projects being carried out in the IIRSA framework is the *Madeira hydroelectric complex*. Comprising of four interconnected dams, this project is currently the main hydroelectric initiative within IIRSA and, once completed, it will be the largest in the Amazon basin. The construction of the Santo Antonio and Jirau dams is already under way in the Brazilian state of Rondonia. They are being financed by BNDES, as part of the IIRSA component of the government-sponsored Growth Acceleration Program (PAC) set up to increase Brazilian competitiveness. It is planned that the Cachuela Esperanza dam will be located in Bolivia close to the Brazilian border. Lastly, the Gayra-Mirin dam will be placed on a river that sets the international border of Bolivia and Brazil, hence being binational jurisdiction.

<sup>2</sup> IIRSA website: <http://www.iirsa.org/> (Retrieved February 2, 2011).

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

Another project that is advancing resource-driven integration is the construction of a *mega-hydroelectric complex* in the Peruvian Amazon. This initiative followed the signing of a bilateral energy integration treaty between Peru and Brazil in 2010. Just as the IIRSA-sponsored Madeira project, the aim of this initiative is to generate electricity in Peru to be mostly transported to Brazil to meet its rising energy demand. The treaty establishes that Peru must ensure that up to 30% of the energy generated by the dam complex is for its own demand or use, while the remaining 70% can be exported to Brazil.<sup>4</sup> The hydroelectric complex includes the Inambari dam located in southeastern Peru. Once completed, this will be the largest hydropower project in the country and the fifth largest in Latin America. Its construction is expected to cost US\$ 4,000 million, which also includes a line of 357 kilometers to take the electricity to the Brazilian border. The construction work is planned to begin in mid-2011 to early 2012 and it is expected to take from four to five years to complete. The Inambari dam is supported by the Egasur consortium made up of a group of Brazilian companies: OAS, Eletrobras, and Furnas. The complex also contemplates the construction of four additional dams, the Paquizapango, Mainique 1, Tambo 40, and Tambo 60. The total combined investment is estimated at between 13.5 and 16.5 billion dollars. Brazil's BNDES finances this colossal project. These are only some of the projects planned to take place in the region and which will interlink the Amazon basin in a common hydro-energy system. Among other initiatives that are planned to follow there are projects to build 10 more dams along the Uruguay River within Brazilian territory, as well as the Garabí and Paramí dams on a binational Brazilian-Argentinean area.<sup>5</sup>

The politics of resource-driven integration suggest that regionalization is a politically sensitive process. States and private interests are currently building forms of regional resource governance that enhance in many ways autonomous development and the capacity of the states to financially support social policies, both nationally and regionally. But at the same time these policies are puzzling as they are engendering a new source of conflict related to socio-environmental effects on populations that affect their citizenship. Transnational mining and hydroelectric energy integration are examples of this. This depiction of integration suggests that there are no deterministic outcomes in current processes of regionalism in South America. Regional exploitation of natural resources and social and ecological consequences are two new elements defining the new agenda of regional development and at the same time refocused demands for social activists. As the next section discusses, the outcomes of these tensions are manifesting in concrete conflicts that will need further political will.

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.minem.gob.pe/minem/archivos/file/Electricidad/acuerdo%20junio%20%202010.pdf> (Retrieved February 4, 2011).

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.cipamericas.org/archives/3596> (Retrieved February 1, 2011).

### 7.3. SOCIO-ENVIRONMENTAL CONFLICTS

This section discusses the proliferation of socio-environmental conflicts in South America related to the advancement of resource-driven integration. The main claim is that conflicts arise because integration disregards its negative consequences for the livelihood of rural communities who are left to cope with the environmental liabilities of this form of regional integration.

Socio-environmental conflicts have been part of South America for a long time. These involve communities struggling against the unequal distributions of costs and benefits of natural resource extraction and the impact this has on their livelihood. What is at stake with resource-driven integration is who uses natural resources, how are they being used, and for what purposes. Conflicts emerge when there are asymmetric expectations and understandings concerning the economic, ecological, social, and cultural *value* of different resource-sensitive projects (Martinez-Alier 2003). The destruction of communities' livelihoods stems from the limitations of development conceptions and practices associated with resource-driven integration. These reflect what has been defined as the logic of "accumulation by dispossession" (Harvey 2003). This refers to a mode of generating material wealth that comes at the expense of depriving people of their rights and causing ecological destruction. This form of accumulation has been characteristic of prevailing forms of capitalism where accumulation depends on expanding the boundaries of a global market with the commodification of nature. Indigenous peoples are particularly vulnerable to this since their possibility of survival is directly dependent on their territories not only for material subsistence but also for cultural and spiritual reproduction.

This represents something of a paradox, as post-hegemonic regional politics of integration in many ways echo a resurgence of identity politics and recognition of indigenous populations as subjects of politics. Mining and hydroelectric energy integration, two main pillars in support of alternative projects of regionalism, however threaten the livelihood of poor rural communities whose subsistence depends on maintaining the rich biodiversity of rain forests, rivers, and land. Large-scale mining activities are responsible for the pollution of water reserves with the use of cyanide and mercury in the mineral extraction process. This leads to the decimation of fish in rivers, health problems in people exposed to this contaminated water, loss of fertile land, and shortages of clean water for human and animal consumption. All this affects fishing and husbandry activities of communities located near mining sites. Peasants and indigenous peoples are particularly exposed to this situation (CIDSE/ALAI 2009; Broederlijk Denle and ALAI 2008). In the region of the Southern Andes, large-scale mining activities have been responsible for the pollution of mountain glaciers and downstream water, such as raised by the accusation on Barrick Gold in relation to the Concota glacier in 2005 with its Pascua Lama project. Mining is a particularly sensitive industry that has led to different forms of conflict in connection to its negative social and ecological consequences on local communities. Throughout Latin America there are presently 154 mining-related conflicts out of a total of 184 mining projects



affecting 222 communities and involving 247 companies. In South America alone, these figures register 121 conflicts in relation to 148 mining projects with 179 affected communities (Table 7.1).<sup>6</sup> This shows the extent to which mining and conflicts are related, and the absence of adequate national and regional governance instruments to prevent such conflicts from taking place.

With the increase of mining activities there has also been a growing number of cases of deaths and criminalization of anti-mining community leaders (Godnick et al. 2008; Saguier 2010b). Often, violent clashes take place with police forces many a time leading to casualties on both sides. The protests of the Awajun indigenous communities in the Peruvian town of Bagua in 2009 resulted in the death of 33 people (23 police officers and 10 civilians), 200 wounded, and 83 detained. This event was the last episode of a long process of protests led by Awajun to resist the concessions of exploration and exploitation rights to mining company Afroditá in an area located in the Cordillera del Condor region where there has been a long-standing controversy between the government, indigenous communities, and the company (IWGIA 2010). All has led to an intense protest campaign by indigenous peoples affected by mining activities of the Afroditá leading to the government's decision in 2010 to revoke

TABLE 7.1. Socio-environmental conflicts related to mining in Latin America

Countries	Conflicts	Projects	Companies	Communities
Argentina	24	30	43	37
Bolivia	5	6	7	21
Brazil	21	21	37	34
Chile	25	28	42	34
Colombia	16	32	21	20
Costa Rica	3	3	4	3
Ecuador	4	5	4	5
El Salvador	2	2	3	4
Guatemala	4	4	7	4
Honduras	3	2	4	2
Mexico	13	13	17	15
Nicaragua	3	3	6	7
Panama	5	5	7	5
Peru	26	26	42	28
Dominican Rep.	3	3	2	2
Trinidad and Tobago	1	1	1	1

Conflicts registered: 154.

Projects involved: 184.

Affected communities: 222.

Source: OCMAL, <http://www.olca.cl> (retrieved January 28, 2011).

<sup>6</sup> See Table 7.1 for nationally disaggregated list of socio-environmental conflicts related to mining in Latin America.

the concession indefinitely. It was recognized that the concession had been irregular and that it violated constitutional provisions. The mining license granted to Afrodita on the Cordillera del Condor violates article 7 of the Peruvian constitution which establishes a prohibition of foreign direct or indirect ownership of mines and land anywhere within a 50-km strip close to the international border. Moreover, the area covering Afrodita concessions had been part of a national reserve whose size was reduced in 2007 to allow the company to be able to bypass yet another legal restriction. Indeed, the concessions issued to mining and oil transnational corporations in Peru without the consultation of indigenous communities cover 49 million hectares and affect 72% of the Peruvian Amazon region. There is suspicion that countries will try to seek a new bilateral mining treaty that will remove such impediments to transnational mining taking the antecedent of the Chile-Argentina mining treaty.

These conflicts are also experienced in relation to infrastructure projects to create a hydroelectric regional market. The construction of dams often entails the removal of local populations that inhabit areas that are flooded by the dams. This creates internal migrations and deep social problems related to this condition. Moreover, the flooding of large areas leads not only to great loss in biodiversity but also to the release in the atmosphere of great volumes of carbon emissions that are generated by the decomposition of biomass. This contributes to climate change. Likewise, the alteration to the natural flow regimes of rivers and streams is also recognized as a major factor contributing to loss of biological diversity and ecological function in aquatic ecosystems. This has led to great social backlash. In Brazil a united front made up of indigenous peoples, the Movement of People Affected by Dams, claims to represent one million people displaced from their land, several environmental organizations, and scientists. It is estimated that 44% of hydroelectric generation planned within PAC-IIRSA affects legally established indigenous territories, such as the Karitiana and Karipuna indigenous communities. Similarly, it is estimated that the mega-hydroelectric complex planned in the framework of the Peru-Brazil bilateral energy integration treaty will damage an area as large as 56% of the Peruvian Amazon. The worst case scenario predicts damages of 91% of the jungle area (Dourojeanni et al. 2009).

Socio-environmental conflicts are also the result of recurring patterns of exclusion and marginalization of affected communities which are reproduced in resource-driven integration. This has been the case in transnational mining where indigenous and peasant communities have not been consulted prior to the granting of exploration rights to mining corporations. This violates 196 ILO Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention which establishes the right to prior and informed consultation of indigenous peoples. This can be seen in the Pascua Lama project on the Argentina-Chile border and in the mining concessions issued on the Cordillera del Condor area on the Peru-Ecuador international border. Likewise, there have been no consultations in the IIRSA-sponsored hydroelectric projects. According to the UN 2009 special report on the rights of indigenous people, IIRSA infrastructure projects have been impacting the environment and local indigenous communities without implementing mechanisms of previous consultation and participation (Human Rights Council 2009). The

most controversial case in this respect has been the Belo Monte dam, which is strongly opposed by the indigenous peoples of Xingu and is one such project which will contribute toward the energy needs of the aluminum industry in Brazil. Likewise, the hydroelectric complex planned in Peru does not count with a social license which needs to be issued by the would-be affected local inhabitants that will be exposed to the impact of flooding of their land, loss of economic activities, relocation, etc. (Dourojeanni et al. 2009).

According to a report produced by CLAES, infrastructure works with high environmental impact such as dams and roads that are conducted in Brazil under the Growth Acceleration Program (PAC) have not received the required environmental permits or follow consultation with potential beneficiaries and affected (CLAES 2010; Van Dijck 2008, 2011). Indeed IIRSA has received little, if any, public debate or parliamentary oversight in any of the countries involved. IIRSA-sponsored projects suffer from a serious accountability gap. In many ways, this represents the limits to the transformative capacity of new forms of regionalism embraced by projects such as UNASUR. This also reveals an absence of national and regional political debate about what post-hegemonic integration means and a more technical question about how to finance it. There is a need for a regional debate which could lead to new policy frameworks for sustainable regional resource governance. How to deal with the asymmetrical distributive implications of natural resource use where populations are stripped of their livelihood and rights in the name of development? Who benefits from this kind of integration? Who can decide over such resources? The following section reviews some social responses spurred by socio-environmental conflicts which suggest the regional political process is also subject to changes in social dynamics of contestation.

#### 7.4. CIVIL SOCIETY AND REGIONAL GOVERNANCE

The proliferation of socio-environmental conflicts in South America connected with resource-driven integration is changing the ways in which civil society organizations relate with regional governance. The main claim of this section is that there is a migration of the socio-environmental agendas of social movements outside the institutional mechanisms established for civil society consultation on regional integration issues. This raises concerns about the future trajectories of post-hegemonic regionalism, particularly with respect to the fulfillment of its democratic and transformative potentials.

The political demise of the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) project at the 2005 Summit of the Americas marks a turning point in civil society relations with South American regionalism (see [Chapter 8](#)). This trade initiative had been the pillar of hemispheric economic relations since the mid-1990s and a key drive of the US engagement with the region in the post-Cold War context. The spirit behind the FTAA project was to embed and consolidate a neoliberal agenda with a model of regional governance based on market integration. Its demise in 2005 responded to the

concerted opposition of newly elected governments who came to power in the havoc of social, economic, and political unrest after over a decade of neoliberal policies. Stiff opposition also came from mobilized social movements and social actors from across Latin America who found in the FTAA a visible manifestation of growing global corporate power and the power of the United States and US doctrines in the Inter-American system.

Until this moment social movements' role as subjects in the regional arena had been shaped by resistance to neoliberal trade integration (this remained the case in Andean countries that subsequently pursued bilateral free trade agreements since the FTAA had ceased to be an option). Mobilization to oppose the FTAA proposal led to the formation of national and transnational social movement coalitions, some of which even engaged in grassroots bottom-up process to build alternative integration agendas. This was the case of the Hemispheric Social Alliance, a broad-based hemispheric coalition of trade unions, peasants, and indigenous movements created in 1997 (Saguier 2007). Likewise, the emergence of the World Social Forum since 2001 enabled a space for social movements to debate alternatives to neoliberalism. These and many other practices resonated with a generalized loss of credibility of neoliberal policies and institutions around the world which came to public sight with unprecedented mass demonstrations in Chiapas, Seattle, Porto Alegre, Quebec, among others (Gill 2003; Pleyers 2010; Seoane and Taddei 2002).

The defeat of the FTAA, however, was a turning point not only for the definition of the regional agenda advanced by new leaders and governments, but also for the reposition of civil society organizations that now saw a turn to the Left in national and regional political platforms, incorporating and acknowledging several aspects of their resistance to the FTAA. This context epitomized the crisis of neoliberal hegemony in the region as well as a reorientation of social activism. As a consequence, new relationships were configured between new leaders, new agendas, and new spaces for dialogue and political action between social actors and governments. Doing so required reinventing the spaces for social movement engagement in regional political process. Many social movements saw the emergence of UNASUR and ALBA as opportunities to engage with governments in the construction of new agendas, mostly now focused on the consequences of natural resource extraction and the recognition of citizenship rights. These had been historically ignored issues in regional integration and now emerged as prerogatives replacing trade liberalization and other considerations of the past.

Three institutional initiatives were introduced in the attempt to explore novel arrangements of civil society relations with regional governance. First, the *MERCOSUR Social Summits* were created in 2006 as a deliberative supranational space where social movement representatives could engage with governments to discuss regional issues in the search for policy proposals moving beyond its trade-centric legacy (Carranza, 2006, 2010).<sup>7</sup> Second, the *ALBA Council of Social Movements* was

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.somosmercosur.net/>

established in 2007 with the aim to formulate and present projects and declarations to the ALBA presidential council. Though ALBA is a subregional grouping, the council is open to the participation of social movements from the entire region, including from non-ALBA countries. Some of these organizations which engaged in this council include the landless workers movement (MST) from Brazil, peasant organizations from Argentina, and even some groups from the United States. The Latin American Coordination of Rural Organizations (CLOC)—the regional peasant coalition member of the international network Peasant Way (Via Campesina)—also endorses the ALBA council.<sup>8</sup>

Finally, the *Social Summit for the Integration of the Peoples* was convened by the newly elected government of Morales in Cochabamba, Bolivia, in 2006, as a parallel event of a presidential summit of the South American Community of Nations (with was later replaced by UNASUR). An embodiment of Morales concept of “peoples’ diplomacy,” the summit was attended by 5,000 social movement delegates and was coordinated by the Bolivian members of the Hemispheric Social Alliance. Among the key resolutions that emerged from this social summit was a recommendation urging governments to sign a protocol for the homogenization of national legislations related to *extractive activities*, which includes social, cultural, economic, and environmental aspects. Similarly, it also proposed the creation of a regional institution to gather information about the behavior of transnational corporations operating in the region (Fundación Solón 2007). All these agendas are relevant for the regional governance of natural resources, its social, environmental, and developmental implications.

It would be premature at this point to try to reach any conclusive assessment on the extent to which these new regional governance arrangements have improved the possibilities of civil society organizations and movements to influence the regional political process. Influence on regional policy also depends on a number of other domestic factors that fall beyond the scope of this chapter. Yet, in some way these arrangements do represent a departure from past experiences of regional integration processes in Latin America, which have historically been led by strong executive leaderships with minimal, if any, participation of civil society actors and parliamentary oversight (Icaza et al. 2010; Malamud 2008). However, it is also the case that post-hegemonic regionalism in the form of resource-driven integration still present social and environmental dilemmas that can potentially derail commitment to social inclusion and identity politics embraced by the new leaders and manifested in the letter of many projects. The fact that the *Social Summit for the Integration of the Peoples* has never convened again after the establishment of UNASUR in 2008 is indicative of this tension.

<sup>8</sup> “CLOC ratifica compromiso con ALBA de los Pueblos”, V Congreso de la Coordinadora Latinoamericana de Organizaciones del Campo, Quito, Ecuador, 8 al 16 de octubre del 2010, [http://www.movimientos.org/noalca/albasi/show\\_text.php3?key=18360](http://www.movimientos.org/noalca/albasi/show_text.php3?key=18360).

The ambiguities of regional agendas that portray a post-hegemonic, anti-elitist message yet with limited channels of social voice in new and highly conflictive areas of policy are also fragmenting social actors' position vis-à-vis the governments. While some social movements and organizations continue to participate in new, yet embryonic, regional governance mechanisms, others preferred to disengage from them considering they serve as means of cooptation rather than transformation. What this shows is that the new agenda of regionalism has not been able to maintain, recreate, or capitalize on the levels of social movement convergence that were reached during the phase of resistance to the FTAA project. Building a peoples' alternative to neoliberal regionalism is proving to be a difficult process.

In the pursuit of alternative agendas of regionalism, a number of affected communities and social organizations involved in socio-environmental conflicts from across the region have begun to explore transnational advocacy opportunities. There is a burgeoning literature which explores how transnational mobilization allows social actors to complement, and redefine, the local and national focus of their work as part of experimentation with different forms of interest representation and rights-claiming practices (Della Porta and Tarrow 2005; Gaventa and Tandon 2010; Khagram 2004; Tarrow 2005; Keck and Sikkink 1998; Smith et al. 1997). Networks that had been created for continental resistance to neoliberal trade policies, like the Hemispheric Social Alliance, provide a valuable organizational resource to foster new solidarity links. Others, like the indigenous movement, have a long-established trajectory which has enabled them to regionalize a grassroots debate on the relation between new forms of citizenship and collective rights to "natural resources" (Bengoa 2000; Toledo Llancaqueo 2005; Yashar 2005). Local ecologist organizations link up with international issue-based NGO networks to gain support for their struggles, advocacy expertise, and access to wider audiences. In different ways, such transnational solidarity alliances aim at preventing and redressing the detrimental consequences of extractivism on livelihoods that are being exacerbated by resource-driven integration. As a bottom-up process, transnational activism is another form of civil society engagement with regionalism.

Mining has become a focal point for regional transnational advocacy. Social mobilization to oppose large-scale mining activities led to 40 organizations and networks creating a regional anti-mining coalition in 2007; the *Observatory of Mining Conflicts of Latin America (OCMAL)*. Its goal is to defend communities and populations against the effects of mining in their livelihood activities (agriculture, livestock, forestry, fisheries, tourism, housing, and culture).<sup>9</sup> From an environmental justice

<sup>9</sup> OCMAL has roots in the work started by the Ecuadorian organization Acción Ecológica in the mid-1990s. Its member organizations come from Ecuador, Argentina, El Salvador, Bolivia, Guatemala, Brazil, Honduras, Chile, Mexico, Colombia, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, and Perú. Additionally, there are also two regional networks members, the Central American Alliance against Mining and the Latin American Network of Women for the Defence of Social and Environmental Rights. See OCMAL, <http://www.conflictosmineros.net> (Retrieved February 5, 2011).

perspective centered on rights, OCMAL's work focuses on the analysis of current institutional frameworks for mining activities to offer alternatives which do not accentuate asymmetries and infringe rights of populations.

Communities affected by mining projects located on international borders increasingly build solidarity links to coordinate joint advocacy actions. This is the case with communities from Argentina and Chile for the exchange information and the systematization of research on the socio-environmental implication of the Pascua Lama project—and on the proposed future investments that are planned along the border. They also organize public events aimed at reinforcing solidarity ties, such as holding meetings on the international border with the message to “embrace the Andes range simply because it is ours.” The sharing of experiences in anti-mining struggles permitted Union of Citizen Assemblies (UAC) in Argentina to learn from a popular consultation held by social movements in the Peruvian town of Tambogrande in 2002 in opposition to a mining project. This was later replicated in Argentina (CIDSE/ALAI 2009), leading to changes in provincial legislations that ban the use of chemicals in extraction procedures.

Similar developments are taking place in the Cordillera del Condor along the Peru-Ecuador border. Indigenous communities from both countries are joining actions to prevent their ancestral territory being destroyed by the arrival of extractive industries. They press their governments to declare this region free of large-scale mining and promote the creation of an international commission to investigate and sanction the many cases of assassination of community leaders associated with communal resistance to mining activities. They also collaborate in joint judicial actions in national and international courts, including the Inter-American Commission of Human Rights, to demand that their rights to consultation and to the sovereignty of indigenous territories are respected.<sup>10</sup>

Much of these solidarity actions led by indigenous communities build on intensive previous work, at times in collaboration with peasant organizations and labor unions. This is the case of the *Andean Forum on Large-scale Mining: Alternatives by the Communities, Indigenous Peoples and Workers* that was held in Bogotá, Colombia, in 2008. The forum gathered 500 delegates of 49 organizations. They issued a declaration which, among its several points, called for a continental action for states, peoples, and communities to reclaim the control of their territories, nature as a public good and biodiversity. It also called for the promotion of alternative mining policies based on the previous consent of communities, the prohibition of using underground sources of water in dry areas, pollution, violation of labor rights, and others.<sup>11</sup> Regional events

<sup>10</sup> Binational Declaration of indigenous communities of Peru and Ecuador affected by mining enterprises Piura, Peru, July 2–4, 2010, <http://www.conflictosmineros.net/contenidos/19-peru/5661-declaracion-binacional-de-comunidades-afectadas-por-mineria> (Retrieved February 5, 2011).

<sup>11</sup> Declaración del Foro Andino frente a la Gran Minería: Alternativas de las Comunidades, Pueblos Indígenas y Trabajadores: <http://www.asc-hsa.org/node/651> (Retrieved February 5, 2011).

like this bring together vibrant national processes with different levels of mobilization experiences, such as at the National Confederation of Peruvian Communities Affected by Mining (CONACAMI) founded in 1999<sup>12</sup> and the Colombian Network against Large-scale Transnational Mining (RECLAME) launched in 2010.<sup>13</sup> The Americas Social Forum is also another important venue for the articulation of common views and strategies of resistance to policies and projects that undermine the livelihoods of indigenous and peasant communities.

Increasingly social organizations that respond to mining activities from a rights-based perspective resort to non-legal public opinion tribunals as means to denounce and systematize information about rights violations connected to extractivism in Latin America. This is the case of the *Ethical Tribunal on Transnational Mining*, which was held in the city of Santiago, Chile, in 2010 hosted by the Latin American Observatory of Environmental Conflicts (OLCA)—a Chilean organization member of OCMAL. This tribunal is the first of its kind to address specifically the subject of mining on international border areas. Affected communities located along the borders of Mexico-Guatemala, Guatemala-Salvador, Peru-Ecuador, Bolivia-Brazil, and Chile-Argentina presented cases to be reviewed by the tribunal.<sup>14</sup> Likewise, a similar experience was the *Permanent Peoples' Tribunal* processes held in Peru and Colombia during 2008. In these cases, affected communities from many Latin American countries brought accusations of the complicity of transnational corporations in the violation of human rights. Most of the cases presented evidenced crimes related to extractive industries including mining, among others. These abuses were facilitated by public-private regimes of impunity that involve corporations and national and international organizations (Saguier 2010a).

Hydroelectric energy integration, another vector of resource-driven integration, is also a growing focal point of regional transnational advocacy for an evolving Latin American anti-dam movement. The *Latin American Network against Dams and for Rivers, their Communities and Water (REDLAR)* was set up in 1999 to articulate 250 social organizations, movements (indigenous, human rights, women, environmental), and networks from 18 Latin American countries. This network stems out of the struggles for the defense of access to water as human rights against policies of privatization of public services during the 1990s. It advocates the democratization of water and energy policies and governance mechanisms, in line with principles of social equity and ecological sustainability.<sup>15</sup> It is opposed to the construction of socially and environmentally destructive dams that have not been approved by affected populations through a genuine and properly informed and participatory process that can ensure

<sup>12</sup> CONACAMI: <http://www.conacami.org> (Retrieved February 5, 2011).

<sup>13</sup> RECLAME: <http://www.reclamecolombia.org/> (Retrieved February 5, 2011).

<sup>14</sup> Indictment Declaration of the Ethical Tribunal on Transnational Mining, [http://www.olca.cl/oca/mineras/fallo\\_tribunal\\_etico\\_a\\_mineria\\_de\\_frontera.pdf](http://www.olca.cl/oca/mineras/fallo_tribunal_etico_a_mineria_de_frontera.pdf) (Retrieved February 5, 2011).

<sup>15</sup> REDLAR: <http://www.redlar.org/> (Retrieved February 5, 2011).



that their basic needs are prioritized. IIRSA-sponsored hydroelectric projects feature as an important element of REDLAR's work. Indeed, the plans to build 10 dams on the Uruguay River within Brazilian territory, as well as the Garabí and Paramí dams in a binational Brazilian-Argentinean area, are expected to give greater dynamism to this regional movement. It is estimated that these future dams will displace 50,000 people that live on the shores of the Uruguay River.<sup>16</sup>

The relations between civil society groups with regionalism are complex and far from linear. Transnational advocacy represent social actors' search for new channels to resist, critically engage, and transform some of the current features of post-hegemonic regionalism. Governance arrangements set up for civil society consultation do not yet provide a venue where affected communities can find immediate solutions, in the form of policy changes which could prevent and redress the continuing threats to which they are being exposed. The formal regional political process is cumbersome, slow, and often swamped by the short-term priorities of entangled government leaderships. The pressures to gain economic competitiveness at the expense of social and environmental costs reduce incentives to advance in new regional policy approaches to natural resources and their impact on communities. As a result of this, growing demands for coherence between the regional development aspirations and the socio-environmental rights of communities are not being adequately addressed by the regional political process. In this respect transnational social activism becomes another form of engaging in the politics of regionalism.

Transnational activism does not necessarily express the emergence of a socio-ecological political movement in South America. The wide diversity of mobilized actors across sectors, classes, and cultures in rural and urban settings is both the source of strength as well as weakness of transnational coalitions. Yet, solidarity actions create possibilities for new encounters to take place between indigenous movements, ecologists, and ordinary citizens concerned with the implications of the expansion of extractivism on their lives and on future generations. These encounters are not resulting in a coherent and unified agenda on regional issues. However, there is indeed a process of regionalization of dialogues in which socio-environmental conflicts are increasingly seen as rooted in socially exclusionary and ecologically detrimental processes of development. Perhaps the most salient significance of this is the emergence of a new language and set of values to refer to nature and communities in their relation to development. A regional public space is being created even if its connection with the formal political and agenda-setting process of regionalism cannot be easily seen yet. Indeed, as observed in the last section of the chapter, much of this regionalizing movement led by transnational social activism can be equally hijacked by competing sectoral and national interests which could undermine the aspirations of political regionalism.

<sup>16</sup> <http://www.cipamericas.org/archives/3596> (Retrieved February 1, 2011).

## 7.5. PENDING CHALLENGES IN REGION-BUILDING

There are contradictory trends with respect to the politics of post-hegemonic regionalism. There is no doubt that the new socio-political context in South America turns to new political economic goals and progressive agendas which have been long overlooked and neglected. Regionalism has opened political space for institutional innovation and for the exploration of more democratic forms of regional and national governance. The transformative aspiration of regionalism needs to be uploaded but also defended. It is here that this chapter has tried to make a contribution, hoping to identify sources of tension that may inform future debates on policy and institutional developments.

The argument put forward is that regional integration in natural resources are causing and exacerbating socio-environmental conflicts in ways that undermine ongoing efforts to build more cohesive regional governance. While at one level regionalism contributes to set in motion a process of collective reassurance, rules of engagement, and assertion of common interests, at another level it generates conflicts that raise important questions about their future influence in the regional process.

There is a growing source of tension with local communities that are left to bear the costs of “development” in the form of impoverishment, displacement, health hazards, ecological devastation, and even cultural extinction. It is reasonable to expect that the intensification of these tensions will strain governments’ legitimacy and social support to engage in regionalism. The tensions experienced from the radicalization of indigenous communities’ positions with respect to natural resource policies seen in Bolivia, Ecuador, and Peru suggest potential future pathways that could be also extended to other countries, even if there are different federal state arrangements in place and socio-political configurations.

There already appears to be a shift in the rhetoric used to refer to these conflicts. This can be seen in relation to the demands of Paraguayans for a renegotiation of the terms of hydroelectric energy export to meet the demands of the Brazilian industry. The issue became a Paraguayan “national cause” where people understood that their dignity was at stake. In the same vein, Bolivia under the Morales administration renegotiated the value of the contracts of gas exports to Brazil, following the implementation of a sweeping national hydrocarbon policy reform and straining bilateral relations. The view that the protection of natural resources is a duty of the armed forces, since they constitute a strategic asset for national development, is an accepted idea in Brazil and Venezuela. Likewise, the diplomatic rift between Argentina and Uruguay over the installation of a pulp mill plant on a river that is the international border was many times approached by civil society groups and governments in both countries as a conflict between competing national interests. Indeed, it was leaked in the news that former Uruguayan president Tabaré Vázquez contemplated that the bilateral conflict could escalate to a war with Argentina. The preponderance of a Brazilian gravitation in resource-driven integration (with the alignment of public instruments and companies for this purpose) agitates fears of imperialistic attitudes toward the region and its resources.

It is uncertain how the regional context could evolve should the proliferation of socio-environmental conflicts that are currently expressed as community struggles against state policies and corporations be nationalized. Could this scenario end up pitting countries against each other in a struggle to control common regional resources? It is certain that such a form of resource nationalism can only complicate the future prospects of regionalism as a political project. In the same vein, the prospects of radicalization of community-state relations could only add to such a treacherous context.

A regional policy and institutional framework for the governance of natural resources is needed to prevent these burgeoning tensions leading to the worst possible outcomes. This means defining common regional standards on environmental sustainability and adherence to respect the right to prior consultation of vulnerable and affected communities to resource-sensitive projects. This requires also the creation of mechanisms of enforcement that can be effective and transparent and which can ensure that member states and companies are equally subject to judicial accountability and public oversight in line with regionally defined standards, consistent with the respect and advancement of international human rights principles. Access to justice and reparation to the “victims of development” also need to be taken into account.

In a positive scenario civil society groups at the forefront of these conflicts will continue generating new forms of consensus on the treatment of regional natural goods that will be eventually incorporated by governments in the making of new regional governance arrangements for natural resources. In this respect, the regionalization of civil society groups acts as a form of articulation and diffusion of new ideas across national societies. Just as UNASUR has demonstrated great progress in making democracy, peace, and defense regional public goods, it is also time that it treats nature as a regional public good. Only then is it feasible to conceive of regional governance instruments that can protect and use sustainable natural resources in harmony with the welfare of populations.

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