Conference Paper No.62

Populism v. Neoliberalism: Indigeneity, Territorial Rights, and Hegemony in Honduras

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March, 2018

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"Juan Orlando Hernandez may not be the best option for Honduras but he is the best for Mosquitia," Jarbin told me while we discussed electoral politics in the eve of the general election in November 2017. Jarbin's comments took me by surprise considering the rise of state-sponsored violence against civil society since the 2009 coup against Jose Manuel Zelaya and the controversy over Hernandez's reelection bid. As a fervent supporter of territorial rights in the indigenous region of Mosquitia in eastern Honduras, I had expected Jarbin to support Salvador Nasralla, the candidate for the left-center "Alliance of Opposition against the Dictatorship", who was considered the progressive alternative. Jarbin explained that Hernandez's right-wing National Party had been the one to support the titling of indigenous lands in Mosquitia. During the nationalist administration of Porfirio "Pepe" Lobo (2010-2014) and Hernandez's first term (2014-2017), the Honduran state recognized over one million hectares of land as collective property (del Gatto, 2015). Hernandez had promised that the state would share governance of the region with the indigenous people as part of a plan known as the Alliance for Development of Mosquitia (ADM). As many other Hondurans, Jarbin was critical of the way in which Hernandez had overstepped the rule of law to seek reelection, but that did not change his perspective on which candidate was better for Mosquitia.

A few days after our conversation, Honduras became engulfed in a political crisis when the electoral board failed to declare the winner on the night of the election. During the unusually slow counting process, Nasralla held the lead for three days before the results turned in Hernandez's favor (Main, 2018). Thousands of people took over the streets to challenge the results, who were met with heavy state repression. While flames of burning tires blocked the main roads of Honduras calling for an end to the dictatorship, there was only one protest in all of Mosquitia. The official results, albeit contested, indicated that Hernandez had won in the region. Could Jarbin had been right that the majority indigenous population of Mosquitia rewarded the National Party for their actions on land titling?

Explaining social outcomes in terms of political preferences may be giving too much merit to the idea that political parties in Honduras stand for defined ideological platforms. The traditional political parties in Honduras, the National Party and the Liberal Party, have been more known for operating on the basis of kleptocracy and neopatrimonialism than ideology or programs (Taylor-Robinson, 2006 ; Ajenjo Fresno, 2009). Both parties have oligarchical origins and are connected to the business elite. Zelaya, from the Liberal Party, himself campaigned on a center-right platform. It was during the course of his administration that he switched center-to-right in a style more identifiable with the "pink tide" of Latin America (Cunha Filho et al., 2013). One could say that a "populist" movement was emerging in Honduras, but it was drastically cut short by the coup. In contrast, the National Party pursued a violent form of authoritarian neoliberalism when they regained power. The coup itself had catalyzed the mobilization of civil society to contest the impunity. A broad coalition of various grassroots and social movements, including Afro-Honduran and indigenous peoples, joined in the National Front of Popular Resistance (FNRP). This movement consolidated in the founding of the Liberty and Refoundation Party (Libre). The party was still under Zelaya's influence. Zelaya's wife, Xiomara Castro, was Libre's first presidential candidate in the 2013 elections. In 2017, Libre invited Nasralla, who himself had founded another party after the coup, to be their candidate as part of an alliance with another minor party. Alliance supporters took to the streets to protest the electoral results re-activing the social dynamics under the FNRP.

Beyond party affiliations or political programs, understanding the apparent support to Hernandez and quiescence of the population in Mosquitia requires that we take into account how hegemony is constructed at the intersection of emancipatory politics and clientelism. Mosquitia has the characteristic of being a majority indigenous region with a strong autonomist sentiment. In this paper,

I analyze the distinction between how the "populist" administration of Zelaya and the "neoliberal" administrations of Lobo and Hernandez dealt with the question of territorial rights in Mosquitia. I argue that the technocratic approach of the neoliberal administrations was more effective at cultivating hegemony than the direct democracy style of the populist administration.

However, we should be careful not to over-interpret Zelaya's populism. He started as a center-right politician who swirled to the left, with some questioning his actual commitment to progressive politics (Peetz, 2009). Therefore, it is more useful to conceive of Zelaya's politics as a potential populist regime that was frustrated by the coup. Also, the neoliberal support for territorial rights in Mosquitia may not have come if it weren't for post-coup reconciliation politics.

This paper contributes to recent concerns over the emergence of authoritarian populism (Scoones et al., 2017). Populism is a mode of persuasion based on the notion of the sovereignty of the people and the conflict between powerful and the powerless (Kazin, 1998). Populism is often at odds with minority rights precisely because of the way in which it capitalizes on the idea of defending the voice of the majority (Muller, 2016). In contrast to the pluralism advocated by constitutional liberalism, populism posits an unmediated representation of the will of the people (Panizza & Miorelli, 2009). Marginalized populations are driven to populism by exclusion and disillusionment with mainstream political parties. It is interesting to ask how minority populations who have been marginalized, such as indigenous peoples, fare in governments with populist tendencies. This implies paying attention to the micro-politics of populism to understand meanings of participation in context (Wodak, 2015).

Based on ongoing dissertation fieldwork, this paper attempts to explain the positioning of the pro-territorial rights among regional leaders in Mosquitia with respect to national politics. Although leaders represent only one dimension of hegemony, they exert great influence on the population. Also, these leaders are more likely to act as facilitators of clientelistic networks between the national and the local spheres. I build the case historically to explain the origins of the autonomist sentiments and the antecedents of political organization in Mosquitia. Then, I describe the land titling process that took place from the late 1980s until 2015, and how it relates to electoral politics. In the discussion, I address how a "common sense" over the meaning of territorial rights is formed within these hegemonic entanglements. The paper concludes by proposing that the recognition of territorial rights in Mosquitia allows the National Party to brand itself as a supporter of indigenous rights despite its authoritarism. Also, identity politics facilitates token participation in governance structures but constructing meaningful participation would require rethinking the object of autonomy from "legal victories" to a more substantive process of de-colonization (Wainwright & Bryan, 2009).

Hegemony, Authoritarism, and Identity Politics

One of the central tenets in the Gramscian concept of hegemony is that a class is able to present its particular interest as universal (Gramsci, 1971). As a result, the ruling class is able to enforce authority through consent rather than domination. Gramsci used the term "historical block" to describe the coalition of capitalist interests, political class, and subaltern population that is created around these universalisms. Populism can be described as a historical block where inter-class articulations built on the imaginary of "a land" and "a people" that must be defended, usually against external threats (Muller, 2016). Historically, populist movements have developed around the figure of a charismatic leader, fostering a personality cult and a nationalistic rhetoric (Panizza & Miorelli, 2009). Populist regimes maintain control through clientelistic networks that redistribute benefits and services. There is no programmatic coherence, such as a common ideology, linking these various movements worldwide (Rancier, 2016). Political parties from both the left and right have mobilized populist platforms to bolster their influence during elections and consolidate power. Populism distinctively embodies the contradictory nature of hegemony by summoning an imaginary of a universality (Butler et al., 2000). Populist leaders promise inclusion to sectors of the population that have been historically excluded.

This attitude of claiming that a leader or party speaks "for the people" has led to new forms of authoritarism. In Latin America, Bolivia and Venezuela are examples of left-wing populist

governments that have refashioned authoritarian politics by continuing the extractivist model (Panizza & Miorelli, 2009). Although significant attention has been given to the urban-rural divide in the making of populist regimes (Powell, 1970 ; Kitschelt, 2000 ; Cinar, 2016), there is less understanding about the conjugation of identity politics and rurality. Scoones et al. (2017) identify isolation and despair are identified as two factors that contribute to regressive politics in rural areas. They call for a historically situated analysis of these areas to understand current political practices based on their specific trajectories. In other words, how histories of capital, labor, and land have conjugated to make certain political scenarios possible.

In bringing these histories into an analysis, it is important to consider how race and ethnicity have enabled or disrupted authoritarian and populist practices. In Latin America, racism and exclusion of indigenous peoples were a fundamental component of nation-building. During the 19th century, Latin American states sought to dismantle the few colonial policies that protected the autonomy of indigenous peoples over their lands and territories (Paige, 1998). Then, in the 20th century *indigenista* policies shifted the discourse towards the preservation of an indigenous past while attempting the assimilation of the indigenous population in the present (Earle, 2007). An important element of populist discourses in countries like Bolivia and Ecuador has been to challenge the mestizo construction of the nation (De la Torre, 2007).

The rise of identity politics in the 1970s changed the panorama for the intersection of politics and indigeneity. Throughout Latin America, some rural populations began to articulate their demands based on an ethnic identity rather than on class-based positions (Strobele-Gregor et al., 1994). The 1990s was a crucial moment for indigenous identity politics. On the one hand, the neoliberalization of Latin American economies increased pressure on the lands and natural resources used by indigenous peoples pushing them to mobilize (Yashar, 2005). On the other hand, the emerging discourse of sustainable development and a growing transnational advocacy network provided a new framework to include indigenous peoples in development programming (Brysk, 2000). Latin American states began experimenting with their versions of multiculturalism, albeit in a top-down fashion and without disrupting the neoliberal economic model (Hale, 2005). According to Charles Hale, Latin American elites realized that it was far more effective to control the indigenous movements by recognizing cultural rights than resisting it. In other words, hegemony was re-arranged to elicit the consent of the claims made on the basis of indigenous identity.

Latin America's multicultural turn provides an opportunity for examining how race and ethnicity intersect with authoritarism and political emancipation. In particular, how is multiculturalism conceived under populism and neoliberalism? What forms of authoritarian control are facilitated by these political configurations? And what are the possibilities for imagining political emancipation? The case of the Honduran Mosquitia can help us understand some of the answers.

State Formation and Hegemony in Mosquitia

Mosquitia is a culturally diverse region that spans the Caribbean shores of Honduras and Nicaragua. The British officially established a protectorate on the Mosquito Coast in 1749-1786 and 1840-1860. In 1857, Great Britain signed treaties with Honduras and Nicaragua ceding claims over a protectorate on the Mosquito Coast. In Nicaragua, the British negotiated the creation of the Mosquito Reserve to guarantee the political autonomy of the Miskito king. This autonomy, however, was dissolved when liberalist president Jose Santos Zelaya "reincorporated" the Mosquito Reserve in 1894. The next significant political event came in the early 1980s when Miskitu forces rebelled against the recently established leftist Sandinista government for breaching into the *de facto* autonomy that they had enjoyed during the conservative Somocista regime. As part of the peace negotiation process, the Sandinistas approved the Autonomy Statute of the Atlantic Coast dividing the region into two autonomous zones.

In Honduras, the treaty with the British demanded that the Honduran state recognize the property rights of the Miskitu. The British, however, did not impose any penalties for non-compliance or established any supervision arrangements leaving the Miskitu to their own devices.

From 1860 to the 1960s, the presence of the Honduran state in what is now the department of Gracias a Dios was limited to a few military posts and primary schools. The Moravian Church, which had entered in the 1930s from the United States, ran the only hospital and secondary school. Foreigners controlled timber and gum extraction. In the Honduran and Nicaraguan Mosquitia this is the period of "company time" when the activities of American companies in the agricultural, mining, and timber industries were the main articulation with the global economic order (Hale, 1996).

During the 1980s, the Contra conflict in Nicaragua caused one of the biggest transformation to the region. The Honduran military government permitted the operation of CIA-backed Contra forces in the country to launch the rebellion against the Sandinistas. In 1981, the Miskitu joined the Contra rebellion and one of its factions set up training camps in the Honduran Mosquitia. In addition, the region received about 20,000 refugees from Nicaragua, which almost doubled the local population. This was a difficult time for the local Miskitu population. The Honduran military tolerated the subversive activities of the Nicaraguan Miskitu but repressed any discussion of autonomy for the Honduran Miskitu; meanwhile most relief services were directed toward the refugee population (Perez Chiriboga, 2002 ; Miralda Bulnes, 2012). The end of the Contra conflict in the late 1980s marks the start of a new chapter for the Honduran Mosquitia when identity-based politics take a center stage in the interactions with the state.

Identity Politics and Land Titling in Mosquitia

The organization Unity of the Miskitu People (MASTA) is the main powerbroker of identity politics in Mosquitia. MASTA was established in 1976 as an initiative from student and magisterial gremial associations from the Department of Gracias a Dios. During the early years, the organization did not have broad community support (Perez Chiriboga, 2002) , but its influence grew over time. The main factor that contributed to MASTA's political rise was its involvement with the agenda to legalize indigenous lands. The first campaign for land legalization began in 1988 with support from the Agency for Development of Mosquitia (MOPAWI), a non-governmental organization. In 1992, MASTA and MOPAWI collaborated in the making of a participatory map which gave a "geo-body" to indigenous territoriality in Mosquitia (Galeana, 2017). Soon after, MASTA changed its organizational structure from affiliated chapters to territoriality-bounded federations.

MASTA and MOPAWI presented the first legalization proposal to the Honduran government in 1995. The proposal advocated for declaring the department of Gracias a Dios as an indigenous territory. The intention was to firmly reject the government's counter-proposal which involved titling only the perimeter of individual communities. The proposal, however, did not frame territoriality in terms of a political right to autonomy, such as the one that existed on the Mosquitia region of eastern Nicaragua. Instead, the justification for territorial rights was based on a combination of cultural rights and the positive contribution of indigenous land use practices to environmental conservation. Despite this quasi-technocratic framing, carefully articulated in the language of sustainable development, the government rejected the proposal. The prospect of recognizing the Honduran Mosquitia as an indigenous territory was considered too radical, potentially igniting a separatist movement, in the eyes of the government. Also, it did not help that in 1995 a group of Honduran and Nicaraguan Miskito leaders signed a binational declaration promoting cultural unity, which the some people in the government interpreted as an act of Miskito nationalism.

During the following years, MASTA continued to refine its proposal for land legalization. In the mid-2000s, MASTA once again changed its organizational structure from federations to territorial councils, with each council holding an average of 20 communities. The new structure is based on a three-tier governance model with representation at the regional, territorial, and community level. The name of MASTA, however, continued to be associated with the top echelon. In 2007, MASTA presented another proposal to legalize the territorial council of FINZMOS based on fieldwork conducted by the

American-based non-profit Caribbean and Central America Research Council (Bryan, 2011). In this occasion, the Zelaya administration rejected the proposal on the grounds that the demarcation work did not meet the technical requirements. Meanwhile, the legalization of indigenous territories already formed part of two ongoing land titling programs, the Land Administration Program (financed by the World Bank) and the Community Territorial Ordering and Environmental Conservation Project (financed by the German cooperation). In 2012, the Lobo administration recognized the first title to the territorial council of KATAINASTA. The other eleven councils were titled between 2013 and 2016. The state also titled an area to the Pech and another to the Garifuna of Gracias a Dios.

Populism and Neoliberalism in Honduras and Mosquitia

As mentioned, the titling of the territorial councils occurred during nationalist administrations. The National Party reinstated the neoliberal model which was briefly questioned as a result Zelaya's right-to-left policy switch (Peetz, 2009 ; Rusiñol, 2009 ; Cálix, 2010 ; Pirker & Nuñez, 2010). This switch point in Zelaya's politics is marked by his decision to join the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America agreement (ALBA) in 2008 (Altmann Borbón, 2009). This later phase of the Zelaya's administration were the closest that Honduras got to the populism of the Latin American 'pink tide' (Cálix, 2010 ; Cunha Filho et al., 2013). Next, I will explain the particularities of Zelaya's administration in Honduras and Mosquitia.

From the start, Zelaya had adopted '*Gobierno del Poder Ciudadano*' (Citizen's Power Government) as his administration's motto. Before he was inaugurated into office, he asked Congress to approve the *Ley de Participación Ciudadana* (Citizen's Participation Law). The law intended to open more direct channels for political participation, with the creation of the National Forum for Citizen Participation, the Municipal and Departmental Development Councils, and the Community Boards of Citizen Participation. The law itself was the continuation of institutional channels of civil society participation which had been developing since the end of the 1990s under the framework of the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries –Poverty Reduction Strategy (HIPC-PRS). Financed by IFIs such as the World Bank, the HIPC-PRS required the consultation and participation of civil society in order for countries to access debt reduction (Cuesta, 2007 ; Dewachter & Molenaers, 2011). In this regard, *Poder Ciudadano* was an example of direct democracy favored by left-wing populist leaders in Latin America (Canovan, 1999). Nonetheless, the implementation of this law was still dependent on the traditional political structure, packed with leaders from the Liberal Party or people close to Zelaya, thus hindering its potential for transformation of the Honduran political system (Cunha Filho et al., 2013).

More than transform the political system, Zelaya's *Poder Ciudadano* consolidated patronage networks in Honduras. As part of the Poverty Reduction Strategy, Zelaya implemented the program *Red Solidaria* (Solidarity Safety Net), one of the largest anti-poverty programs to be implemented in Honduras. The program followed the same clientelistic logic of conditional cash transfer programs like *Bolsa Familia* and *Progresa/Oportunidades* (De Haan, 2014). Zelaya also traveled around the country with his cabinet scoring popularity points among marginalized social classes who were not used to having direct contact with high-level politicians (Zaldívar Guzmán, 2015). An agreement that Zelaya signed with Venezuela's PetroCaribe was going to provide even more funding for social programs. Zelaya's tenure, however, was tainted with accusations of inefficient spending and corruption. The administration spent 70 percent of the 4 billion dollars condoned as part of the HIPC-PRS on paying the salaries of public workers in the education and healthcare sector (Asociación para una Sociedad Más Justa, 2009). After the coup, an investigation conducted by a Truth Commission revealed several instances of corruption at the highest level of the Zelaya Administration (Comisión de la Verdad y la Reconciliación, 2011).

In this paper, the specific question is on the relation between Zelaya's *Poder Ciudadano* and demands for territorial rights in Mosquitia. The legacy of Zelaya's administration elicits mixed opinions among the indigenous leaders in Mosquitia. Before becoming president, Zelaya was already known in Mosquitia from the time that he was Minister of the Honduran Social Fund of Investment (FHIS)

under the administration of Carlos Roberto Reina. In interviews and informal conversation, I have found that indigenous leaders associate Zelaya with various works of infrastructure that the FHIS financed, such as a navigation canal and road rehabilitation. During this presidency, Zelaya continued this practice of financing small civil works throughout Honduras, usually transferring the money directly to municipalities or neighborhood associations (*patronatos*) without much supervision. He is also remembered for organizing meetings with indigenous leaders in Tegucigalpa and Mosquitia which had a "merry" atmosphere. In other words, Zelaya's populism in Mosquitia followed similar trends as in the rest of the country

Zelaya's *Poder Ciudadano*, however, did not have any substantial achievements in terms of territorial rights in Mosquitia. The municipal councils and community boards were government structures that did not reference any particularity to indigenous social organizations. During the last year of his tenure, the governor of Gracias a Dios worked with MASTA and other indigenous organizations on preparing a proposal to declare the department as a *región de régimen especial* (special regime region). The special region would have included land titling to indigenous territories and greater decentralization of the state apparatus. Furthermore, many Afro-Honduran and indigenous leaders hoped that Zelaya's plans for drafting a new constitution would include greater recognition and protection of their rights (Loperena, 2016). We cannot know what would have happened if the coup had not stopped Zelaya's plans for a Constituent Assembly, but the fact remains that there were no concrete actions on land titling during his administration.

More broadly, Zelaya's own landed oligarchical origins put him at odds with agrarian and territorial questions. His family were among the richest landowners in Olancho, the department east of Gracias a Dios, which has an economy based on beef production and timber extraction. In 1975, Zelaya's father was indicted for the massacre of Los Horcones and Santa Clara in which 14 people were murdered. The victims were part of an agrarian movement that were traveling from Olancho to Tegucigalpa to take part of a march to demand agrarian reform. In 1980, Manuel Zelaya Senior was released from jail after receiving a pardon. He continued to have one of the largest timber operations in Olancho which also worked in Mosquitia. Zelaya's commitment to agrarian reform during his presidency was also feeble. He promised to conduct a legal inquiry to resolve the land conflict in the lower Aguan River Valley, the most notorious agrarian conflict in Honduras. The inquiry did not go very far, again partly because of the disruption of the coup (Human Rights Watch, 2014).

Some indigenous leaders in Mosquitia refer to Zelaya as an *Olanchano*. Zelaya's support for the hydroelectric project Patuca III was one of the defining moments that put him at odds with the indigenous leadership of Mosquitia. The project was the latest reincarnation of a previous efforts to build several dams on the Patuca River. The site of Patuca III project was located in the department of Olancho but was going to have ecological and social consequences for the Tawahka and Miskitu communities downstream. In 1999, a coalition of indigenous and environmental activists had managed to block an earlier investment project known as Patuca II. In 2006, Zelaya signed a memorandum of understanding with a Taiwanese company to build the dam. Ultimately, the Patuca III project was not built under Zelaya because the Taiwanese government rescinded funding. Zelaya also had plans to open the Caribbean Coast for oil exploration as part of the PetroCaribe agreement.

In spite of Zelaya's shortcomings, the coup mobilized a wide range of grassroots movements and social organizations against what was perceived as a takeover by military and oligarchical interests (Loperena, 2016). MASTA issued a statement denouncing the coup and demanding to stop the persecution against two Miskitu leaders who had been targeted by state forces. Apart from this official declaration, there were no other direct interventions by the Miskitu leadership, compared for example to the active role that other Afro-Honduran and indigenous organizations played in the resistance (Loperena, 2016).

MASTA's mobilization against the Lobo administration specifically materialized in the context of defending territorial rights against the plans of the plans to restart the Patuca III project. Lobo, coincidentally another *Olanchano*, was promoting a campaign with the motto "Honduras is Open for

Business". The campaign included the controversial plan to allow charter cities, extraterritorial enclaves for capitalism, in Honduras. One of the proposed charter cities in Trujillo would affect some areas of Mosquitia. In addition, Lobo had announced plans to expand palm oil plantations into Mosquitia. In October 2011, MASTA staged a protest outside the presidential office against the plans of the Lobo administration. The critical political moment occurred when during the negotiations with MASTA's leadership Lobo agreed to the plan of titling territorial councils in Mosquitia. Although this plan had already been under discussion during the Zelaya administration, this was the first time that a president had personally committed to the titling agenda.

Lobo's support for land titling did not mean a stop of extractivist plans in Mosquitia. The state actions could be seen as part of "neoliberal multiculturalist" policies (Hale, 2005) to obtain the consent of the indigenous movement in Mosquitia. The Lobo administration moved ahead with the construction of Patuca III, with notably less opposition from indigenous organizations. Also, during his presidency, the government signed an agreement with British Gas (BG) for oil exploration off the coast of Mosquitia. The agreement was signed bypassing MASTA's consultation protocol. Under pressure, BG financed a consultation round organized by MASTA and established a compensation fund. Ironically, Lobo followed up on many of Zelaya's plans for Mosquitia such as Patuca III and oil exploration with the difference that these extractivist activists were pursued alongside the titling of the territorial councils.

The Hernandez administration completed the titling of the twelve councils in 2016. He used the occasion of the titling ceremony to announce the launch of the ADM. The ADM was Hernandez's signature move to continue multiculturalist policies in Mosquitia. The ADM began with an agreement among the Honduran government, the indigenous and Afro-descendant organizations of Mosquitia, the United Nations, and the Swiss and German aid agencies. The purpose of this agreement was to establish a participatory and inclusive framework to support development activities from the perspective of shared territorial governance. Most importantly, one of the core principles of the ADM was shared governance, which was seen as a way of complying with ILO Convention 169. The government justified the ADM based on the isolation and marginality of the region. Although it is considered a government initiative, in practice funds are expected to come from foreign donor agencies. As such, the ADM is really a mechanism to coordinate donor funding.

The ADM is built on a multi-scalar structure that includes a high-level Steering Council, a membership-only multi-stakeholder forum known as the Platform of Territorial Governance, and open-membership working groups to discuss problems and solutions in the areas of Justice and Governability, Economic Development and Natural Resource Use, and Social Development and Basic Infrastructure. The Steering Council is headed by the Secretary of the General Coordination of Government, one of the highest level positions in the administration. Despite the multiple entry points for participation, decision-making power is vested in the Secretary of the General Coordination.

The main effect of this organizational structure is to increase the decisiveness of the executive branch on the affairs of Mosquitia. In this regard, the ADM is the latest reconfiguration of state efforts to increase its presence in the region. In fact, the government and the military have justified the titling of the territorial councils in account of fighting drug trafficking activities in Mosquitia (Altamirano Rayo, 2017). The more recent scandals involving Lobo's family and high members of the military with drug traffickers in the region suggest a far more complicated reality (Goldstein & Weiser, 2017), but the clear message was that land titles were meant to indicate greater state control rather than a support for autonomy and that the ADM seeks to manage this new socio-spatial ordering.

Discussion

In Mosquitia, it seems that a territorial agenda has accommodated better with neoliberal technocracy than populist's direct democracy. This relationship, however, has to be understood as part of a dialectic. Lobo may not have conceded to land titling if it weren't for the pressure to legitimize his government as one of national reconciliation. In this regard, the territorial ordering of Mosquitia could

be interpreted as an example of a "counter-revolution" that reconfigures a historical block (Bello, 2018). For the nationalist regime, the advantage of supporting territorial rights went beyond electoral votes.[1] Instead, the leverage of multiculturalism came from the way that the nationalist regime could use the example from Mosquitia to legitimize itself despite accusation of abuses against human and indigenous rights. For Lobo, the stakes in constructing this legitimacy were clear. In the case of Hernandez, his public commitment to Mosquitia was much more visible after the assassination of indigenous and environmental activist Berta Caceres. Two months after her murder, Hernandez traveled to Mosquitia to hand deliver titles that had been registered over a year ago. The handling had no legal effect, but it was rather a mediatic spectacle to show the government's commitment to territorial rights.

Meanwhile, the structure of the territorial councils and the ADM provides spaces for participation of indigenous peoples in governance structures. This kind of participation creates a new mandarin class of indigenous leaders and professionals with a vested interest in the perpetuation of bureaucratic structures (Hale, 2005 ; Hale, 2006). This type of effect is not necessarily exclusive of multicultural policies under neoliberalism, but in case of Honduras the populist framework of *Poder Ciudadano* failed to incorporate a territorial angle for the people of Mosquitia. One useful comparison for future research would be the case of the autonomous regions in Nicaragua since the Sandinistas regained power in 2007. In this case, the new Sandinista regime has combined elements of the autonomy discourse with its populist platform and the party has gained electoral control of regional governments and most municipalities (Gonzalez, 2016).

A more tenuous proposition is attempting to link the land titling agenda to the relatively quiescence of Mosquitia during the recent elections. As mentioned, one cannot assume party loyalty based on ideology or programs given the clientelistic dynamics of the Honduran party system. For example, the National Party does not have a monopoly of representation in the department of Gracias a Dios. In the local elections, four of the six municipalities remained under the National Party, but one was turned from the National Party to LIBRE and another remained under LIBRE. Also, Miskitu leaders involved in the territorial councils supported candidates from other political parties as well. Hence, there was some mild competition, particularly at the local level.

In Gramsci's original formulation, hegemony is never totalitarian. James Scott (1977) expanded this view by arguing that there were spaces of collective consciousness that were outside hegemony. Rural populations may not resist openly, but they find other ways to subvert power, the so-called "everyday forms of resistance" (Scott, 1985). In other words, subaltern populations find a way to manage their positioning within hegemonic relations. These type of analyses, however, have tended to overestimate agency without accounting for processes of subject-formation (Gledhill, 2012). More recent scholarship has tried to account for subject-formation in a way that does not preclude an analysis of agency (Ortner, 1995 ; Wolford, 2010 ; Moore, 2012).

In Mosquitia, one could find people singing to the tune of "*JOH pa' fuera te vas*" a popular protest song exclaiming that Juan Orlando Hernandez (JOH) was on his way out. Regardless of political affiliation, most people had a general perception that politicians were corrupt and would do anything to stay in power. This was also the view that many people held of Zelaya, who was not himself on the ballot, but was perceived as the power behind Nasralla. It is from this perspective that people like Jarbin had reason to believe that the National Party at least had demonstrated a disposition to engage with territorial rights. The discourse of technocratic governance had accommodated better to autonomist sentiments than populism. The effect of hegemony was not the elimination of criticism against Hernandez, but the resignation of living under a regime that had learned to manage multiculturalism.

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[1] The votes of the department of Gracias a Dios are only a fraction of the national electorate. Also, the department only elects one of the 128 deputes to Congress.

It is also important to note that the construction of hegemony occurs at the level of the civil society and not just political elites. Although leaders exert greater influence, their views cannot be equated to popular sentiments. In this regard, an unresolved question is the opinion that the population has of the new property regime and the ADM, and the extent to which they associate them with the multiculturalist policies of National Party. A more general explanation for quiescence in rural areas should also consider the clientelistic base that the National Party cultivated through the social spending program *Vida Mejor* (A Better Life). Ironically, this is a reconfiguration of the social welfare program started under Zelaya. Most people in Mosquitia have not heard about the ADM, and even still a significant segment of the population is unclear about what exactly are the territorial councils. Yet, they know about *Vida Mejor* and they understand its clientelistic logic. Also, local patron-client relations influence voting patterns. Access to transportation, food, and small payments are common practices to solicit the vote of the poor. There is also the possibility of fraud, which means that the official results may not be an accurate representation of the real voting outcome.

Conclusion

What form of political participation can emerge in this conjuncture? What are the prospects for a shared governance of the land and natural resources of Mosquitia? For Ernesto Laclau (1985), the open-endedness of hegemony is what provides the possibilities for a re-articulation of meanings. One can imagine that multicultural governance, as democracy, can function as an empty signifier allowing for new claims of inclusion that expand its horizons. However, this type of inclusion in the framework of technocratic governance is vulnerable to spaces manufactured for token participation, such as the ADM. One question for future research is to further analyze to what extent identity politics can be redirected from claims over property rights to broader questions of political economy. In other words, the question of emancipatory politics cannot rest simply on the recognition of a title or an autonomy statute, but rather it must find deeper roots in an analysis of strategic articulations and disarticulations with the global economic order (Hale, 2011).

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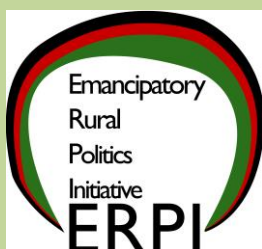
The Emancipatory Rural Politics Initiative (ERPI) is a new initiative focused on understanding the contemporary moment and building alternatives. New exclusionary politics are generating deepening inequalities, jobless 'growth', climate chaos, and social division. The ERPI is focused on the social and political processes in rural spaces that are generating alternatives to regressive, authoritarian politics. We aim to provoke debate and action among scholars, activists, practitioners and policymakers from across the world that are concerned about the current situation, and hopeful about alternatives.

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