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Introduction

During the past thirty years, market-oriented economic reforms have swept much of the globe. Privatizations, free-trade agreements, the elimination of subsidies, and cuts in social safety nets have dominated national and international economic policy agendas. Some communities have met these reforms with relative quiescence; in others, the reforms have generated sustained resistance. This book explores the origins and dynamics of this resistance through a careful examination of two cases in which social movements emerged to voice and channel opposition to market reforms. Protests against water privatization in Cochabamba, Bolivia, and rising corn prices in Mexico City, Mexico, offer a lens for analyzing and understanding the mechanisms through which perceived market-driven threats to material livelihood can prompt resistance. The cases prompt an overarching question: Why and how does the marketization of certain goods become the basis for broad-based mobilization? Through these cases, this book explores how everyday life is intertwined with extraordinary events and how the ideas with which some grievances are imbued can generate social mobilization.

The most basic claim of the book is this: studying the grievances around which a political protest emerges adds explanatory leverage to our understandings of the dynamics of contentious politics. Dominant theories explicitly argue that grievances, although a necessary condition for social mobilization, are constant and therefore have little explanatory power. Other approaches simply assert that particular threats (such as erosion of rights, state repression, or declining economic opportunities) are more conducive to social movements than others, without exploring the potential mechanisms at work.[1] Although

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[1] Some scholarship does focus directly on grievances. See, for example, Snow et al. (1998), McVeigh (2009), and Snow and Soule (2010). See Simmons (2014) for a full treatment of these authors' contributions. More recent contributions (e.g., Cederman et al. 2013; Buhaug et al. 2014) are treated in this chapter and the conclusion.

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political opportunities, organizational resources, and framing processes played
critical roles in the events in Bolivia and Mexico, they leave gaps in our under-
standings of the mechanisms at work.[2] I aim to "help pluralize understand-
ings of the microfoundations of contentious politics" (Pearlman 2013, 388) by
encouraging scholars to study the ways in which the content of a movement's
claims shapes its emergence and composition.

Instead of paying attention to the perceived or relative severity of a griev-
ance, as much of the early grievance literature did (e.g., Smelser 1963; Davies
1969; Gurr 1970), I encourage the study of the meanings with which grievances
are imbued (see Simmons 2014).[3] This approach is both in line with recent
efforts to focus our attention on the mechanisms at work during contentious
episodes (e.g., McAdam et al. 2001) and with important insights into the role of
meaning-making in contentious processes (e.g., Kurzman 2004a; Gould 2009).
When we study social movements – and grievances in particular – through the
lens of meaning, we recognize that claims are both materially and ideationally
constituted. The ideas with which some claims are imbued are more conducive
than others to motivating political resistance; by paying attention to meaning
we improve our ability to explain and analyze the dynamics of contention.

This approach serves as the basic premise on which to build specific theo-
retical propositions. The core theoretical argument of this book focuses on a
particular category of grievances – threats to subsistence goods – and how the
meanings these threats take on help to explain not only the mechanisms at
work in the Bolivian and Mexican cases, but also broader patterns of mobi-
lization and resistance. Because of their central role in daily life and practice,
subsistence goods can signify not only "imagined communities" (Anderson
1991) but also what I call "quotidian communities" – communities that are
built through routine, face-to-face interactions where members know each
other personally. As a result, market-driven threats to subsistence goods can
be perceived not only as material threats but also as threats to community.
These perceptions help to bridge salient cleavages and forge understandings of
common grievances and goals that allow for broad-based, widespread mobi-
lization. We cannot explain the dynamics at work in the Cochabamban and

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[2] See McAdam et al. (1996, 2001); Tarrow (1998); McAdam (1999); Aminzade (2001); and
Goodwin and Jasper (2004) for overviews of dominant approaches to social movements as well
as critiques of those approaches. I use the term *frame* in the way it is generally deployed in social
movement scholarship. See, for example, Snow and Benford, who describe a frame as an "inter-
pretive schema that simplifies and condenses the 'world out there' by selectively punctuating and
encoding objects, situations, events, experiences, and sequences of action" (1988, 137). Framing
refers to "the process of defining what is going on in a situation in order to encourage protest"
(Noakes and Johnston 2005, 2). Although these usages draw on Goffman (1974), they imply a
far narrower conceptualization of the term.

[3] Following John Comaroff, I take *meaning* to be "the economy of signs and symbols in terms of
which humans construct, inhabit, and experience their social lives (and thus act in and upon the
world)" (cited in Wedeen 2009, 81–2).

Mexican movements without paying attention to the ways in which water and corn meant "community" to many of the people who participated and how those meanings contributed to political resistance.

Building on classic works on markets and mobilization (e.g., Polanyi 2001) and moral economies (e.g., Thompson 1971; Scott 1976), as well as on more contemporary analyses of contentious politics (e.g., McAdam et al. 2001; Goodwin and Jasper 2004) and political identification (e.g., Brubaker 2004), this analysis investigates connections among marketization, local practices and understandings, and political protest to show how the material and the ideational are inextricably linked in resistance to subsistence threats. Threats to subsistence highlight the ways in which the material and the cultural cannot be pried apart. When people perceive that markets have put relationships with subsistence goods at risk, material and symbolic worlds are both at stake; citizens take to the streets to defend not only their pocketbooks but also their perceptions of community. By theorizing the connections among subsistence, markets, and social mobilization, this book sheds light not only on processes of political resistance but also on how identifications are mobilized and groups made (see Wedeen 2008).

The argument developed here deepens our understandings of responses to marketization and offers conceptual frameworks with which to explore an increasingly familiar collection of empirical events. As markets regulate relationships with water and basic foodstuffs, and global integration intensifies price fluctuations and insecurities, more communities are likely to perceive that subsistence resources are at risk. By rejecting the notion that goods such as food and water can simply be treated as "commodities" that do similar political work across time and place, the argument offers tools with which to understand variation in responses to price shocks. Why might rising corn prices spark civil unrest in Mexico but have little impact in Japan? This book suggests that we must look beyond comparative consumption levels. To fully explain both the outliers and the events conforming to expected patterns, we must understand the meanings these staples take on in particular times and places, and how those meanings might work to produce group identifications. The Bolivian and Mexican cases are not contingent events, but rather examples of a type – a type that has appeared throughout history and one that will take on increasing importance in the years and decades to come. The cases can teach us much about what we might expect as the welfare state continues to retreat and markets regulate access to increasingly scarce resources.

The claims I make are both constitutive and causal, but they are not claims for which I attempt to establish necessary and/or sufficient conditions for a particular outcome. The dynamics I identify are neither necessary nor sufficient for social mobilization.[4] Nor do I make the kinds of causal claims that are based

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[4] See Ragin (2000) and Chapter 4, in particular, for a discussion of causal complexity and necessary and sufficient causes.

on the logic of statistical inference. An interest in dynamic, unfolding processes is ill-suited to that type of variable-oriented analysis (Simmons and Smith 2015).

Instead, this research employs a logic of inquiry that draws on relational approaches (Emirbayer 1997; Tilly 2002) in which actors are embedded in dynamic, shifting social contexts. A relational approach emphasizes the importance of practices in constituting individual and social relations, and it challenges conceptions of individuals or social groups as discrete units. First, I make causal claims about the ways in which subsistence symbolized community and how those meanings helped to produce broad-based, widespread mobilization in the Bolivian and Mexican cases. Second, I argue that these dynamics and mechanisms are likely to appear in other times and places. What I observed is both specific to Cochabamba and Mexico City respectively *and* suggestive of a broader relationship. I am identifying a particular set of relationships that sometimes work together to help produce political resistance. They will not do so everywhere and always; nor can the particular conditions under which these mechanisms are most (or least) likely to work in these ways be identified. Too much causal complexity exists in mobilization processes for this kind of inferential logic to be effective. Furthermore, although scholars may find that these mechanisms appear to be at work most frequently outside of fully "developed" contexts, there is no theoretical reason that the argument is not broadly applicable. I argue that subsistence goods will symbolize community in cases beyond the ones explored here and that, through investigating other times and places, scholars will uncover other moments when the community-related symbolic work done by relationships with subsistence goods plays a role in generating political resistance.

THE CASES: PROTEST IN BOLIVIA AND MEXICO

In January 2000, thousands of Bolivians took to the streets to protest the privatization of the water supply in Cochabamba, Bolivia's third largest city. Bolivians had previously voiced their opposition to the economic policy shifts that had begun almost fifteen years earlier. The mobilization in Cochabamba, however, grew to an unprecedented scope and scale. The protests were precipitated by the Bolivian government's sale of the rights to the Cochabamba's water to a private firm in June 1999. The firm gained rights not only to Cochabamba's municipal water system but also to water collected through private and communal wells. By the time ownership was formally transferred five months later, a cross-class, cross-ethnic social movement demanding access to affordable water had taken hold in the region. In January when bills came due for water that had, in some cases, doubled in price, the water wars began – shutting down the city for days at a time.[5] Protests spread throughout the country, and, by April, the

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[5] Some accounts of these events describe them as the "water war" in the singular. Others use the plural. I adopt the plural, "water wars" as there were multiple protest events, each of which can

government was forced to re-nationalize Cochabamban water. Although protest politics quickly subsided in the region, the Cochabamban movement was arguably the beginning of a period of political unrest that lasted for more than five years, removed two presidents from office, and dramatically reshaped the landscape of Bolivian politics.

Seven years later and thousands of miles away, in January 2007, Mexicans filled the central square in Mexico City to express opposition to rising corn prices and corn imports. Farmers drove tractors from Aguascalientes and Puebla, union members came on buses from as far as the Yucatán in the east and Chihuahua in the north, and urban residents of Mexico City came out to join them. The price of tortillas had been rising dramatically across the country – in some regions, prices had quadrupled since the previous summer. A combination of increased international demand and the reduction of tariff barriers on corn imports caused the price increases that became known as the *tortillazo*; it was no coincidence that the January demonstrations coincided with the final stages of implementation of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). Marching under the banner *Sin Maíz No Hay País* [without corn there is no country], consumers, producers, middle-class workers, and *campesinos* united to demand access to affordable, explicitly *Mexican*, corn. Recently inaugurated President Felipe Calderón moved quickly to cap prices, and the movement largely collapsed. Nevertheless, social movement organizations continue to work to demand NAFTA's renegotiation and the protection of Mexican corn seed varieties.

The water wars were one of the most influential events in recent Bolivian history. Often given partial credit for current trends in Bolivian popular politics, they have been identified as one of many factors culminating in the election of indigenous activist Evo Morales to the presidency in 2006 (see Petras and Veltmeyer 2005). In offering additional analysis of these particular events, this book contributes to understandings of the changing dynamics of Bolivian social mobilization as well as the origins of what is often touted as the recent revival or "rise of the left" in Bolivia. In spite of extensive attention both to the Bolivian water wars (e.g., Crespo Flores 2000; García Linera et al. 2004; Peredo et al. 2004; Domínguez 2007; Spronk 2007a, 2007b) and to social movements in Bolivia more generally (e.g., García Linera et al. 2004; Crabtree 2005), the existing literature does not fully illuminate the mechanisms at work in the Cochabamba mobilization, and why that mobilization took the forms it did.

be understood and described as its own "war." Interestingly, most participants in the water wars call the entire set of events *la guerra del agua* using the singular. However, when they discuss different episodes of protest, they use *la primera guerra del agua* (the first water war) to refer to the January protests events, *la segunda guerra del agua* (the second water war) to refer to the February protest events, and so on. The plural, therefore, although not a literal translation of how most participants name the events, remains true to how they describe them.

The *tortillazo* cannot be similarly credited with setting Mexico on a new political path. Yet the events of January 2007 continue to shape Mexican public policy and helped spark a sustained movement that focuses on Mexico's countryside in general, and corn in particular.[6] More broadly, corn in Mexico has received extensive attention (Fox 1993; Hewitt de Alcántara 1994; Nadal 2000; Otero 2008a, 2008b; Fitting 2011), and Mexican social movements have generated significant scholarship, particularly since the Zapatista uprising in 1994 (e.g., Foweraker and Craig 1990; Harvey 1998; Williams 2001; Otero and Bartra 2005; Stolle-McAllister 2005). However, little attention has been devoted to connections between civil unrest and consumer staples.

The Mexican protests do not look precisely like the events in Bolivia to which they are compared. Indeed, we would never expect contentious episodes to map perfectly onto one another. The events in Mexico were brief and felt like a routine political protest to many residents of Mexico City. The protests in Cochabamba lasted almost nine months and shut down the city and later the country for days at a time. I want to leverage these differences to better understand how threats to subsistence might work both similarly and differently across contexts. Whereas at the meso-level the Mexican and Bolivian protests appear to be different categories of events entirely, a micro-level analysis reveals important commonalities. A comparison of the Mexican and Bolivian cases allows us to shed light on understudied events, look at well-travelled empirical terrain with new lenses, and theorize the dynamics of political resistance across space and time.

THE QUESTIONS

A number of specific questions motivate this book. What accounts for the broad-based, widespread composition of the movement to resist water privatization in Cochabamba? What explains cross-sector, cross-political cooperation in the Mexican protests? Why do responses to two different claims in two different contexts look so similar with respect to the diversity of the participants and the frames employed? In light of strong histories of sector-specific or identity-based mobilizations in both countries, how do we explain the cross-class, cross-ethnic, and cross-urban-rural nature of the two movements? More generally, varied responses to recent spikes in the prices of basic foodstuffs have generated questions in both policy and academic circles (e.g., see Hendrix et al. 2009; Leblang and Bernard 2011; Hendrix and Haggard 2015).

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[6] I am referring here to the *Sin Maíz No Hay País* campaign, a social movement that followed the *tortillazo* protests, using language deployed during the earlier protests. The campaign was officially launched in June 2007. The campaign coordinated marches on January 31, 2008, and January 31, 2009. It has also coordinated a "National Day of Corn" celebration every September, beginning in 2009. As of the completion of this book, the campaign continued to hold meetings and events.

What might the Bolivian and Mexican cases tell us about why we see protest in
only some times and places in spite of comparable increases in economic hard-
ship when the prices of foodstuffs go up? And what might they tell us about
who participates in these protests and why? More broadly, what can these
cases tell us about why some claims become the basis for broad-based mobili-
zation while others do not? In tackling these questions, this book explores the
conditions under which social mobilization emerges and the forms it takes.

THE ARGUMENT

This research starts with the proposition that meanings matter. Everything
we do (or do not do) in the world tells us something about the environment
in which we are operating and has an effect on how our social and political
worlds are constructed. Our worlds are socially made, and the "things" we
see in the world index and generate meanings beyond what we might take as
their face value.[7] This book focuses specifically on the content of a movement's
claims and how that content is both materially and ideationally constituted.
But is there a way to think systematically about those claims? Can we catego-
rize grievances in ways that can help us better understand processes of social
mobilization across time and space? I propose that the intersection of subsis-
tence resources and market reforms serves as one of these categories.

The central argument develops as follows: Because of the ways in which
daily life and livelihood often revolve around subsistence goods, these goods
can come to signify community. They can signify both the "imagined com-
munities" (Anderson 1991) of, for example, nation, region, or ethnic group,
and quotidian communities. Quotidian communities are built through rou-
tine, face-to-face interactions where members know each other personally.[8] In
other words, they are not mediated the way an imagined community is (by, for
example in Anderson's case, the print media); members interact directly with
one another.

Imagined communities are constituted by individuals who may never meet
one another face to face yet they develop connections and have affinities for
each other even in the absence of direct, personal communication. Anderson's
original formulation emerges through the study of national attachments. The
nation is "imagined because the members of even the smallest nations will

[7] I am using the word "index" methodologically. I intend to invoke the concept of indexicality
whereby a sign (image, action, utterance, etc.) is indicative of something not necessarily present
in the sign itself.

[8] The quotidian community concept has some resemblance to Tönnies's concept of "Gemeinschaft"
insofar as the term refers to ties based on relationships developed through direct, person-to-
person contact (Tönnies 1988). See also Gudeman for a discussion of the how economic prac-
tices help to create what he calls "on-the-ground associations" in addition to imagined solidari-
ties (2001 p.1). Thanks to Dan Slater, Helen Kinsella, and Jackson Foote for helping me label this
category.

never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion" (Anderson 1991, 6). The simultaneous imagining of collective communion central to the concept of an imagined community is not limited to the territorially bounded communities implied by concepts like nation. For example, to imagine ties with others through a shared culture does not require notions of territorial connection. In the pages that follow I use Anderson's term to explore how other kinds of imagined communities – some tied to bounded territories like region or nation and others that may require only assertions of a shared culture – might be produced and reproduced.[9]

Subsistence threats can tap into these imagined and quotidian identifications, heightening solidarity through bringing to the fore common relationships with the threatened resource. As a result, market-driven threats to subsistence goods can be perceived not only as material threats, but also as threats to communities as large as a nation, or as small as a neighborhood.

These perceptions create the conditions of possibility for broad-based, widespread mobilization in the face of market-driven subsistence threats. The possibilities emerge through the ways in which subsistence-related communal identifications both bridge preexisting cleavages and appeal to everyday communal ties. The indiscriminate nature of the threat among poor communities creates the possibility for organization across ethnic and regional divides, while the potential appeal to imagined communities of nation, region, or ethnic group can both bridge divides among the poor and motivate middle- and upper-class participation by tapping into preexisting identifications and historical legacies or repertoires. These solidarities may be episodic, solidifying only when a threat is apparent, but they may also be more durable – lasting well beyond a particular threat and creating new possibilities for mobilized action.

But more unmediated identifications may also be at stake. As established community routines and centers for social interaction are altered, the foundations of social structures or interactions may be perceived to be at risk. These quotidian communities may help to produce strong identifications as well as the networks and ties that often prove critical in mobilization processes. When citizens perceive both imagined and quotidian communities to be at risk, individuals at odds over salient local divisions (e.g., those rooted in class, sector, occupation, gender, ethnicity, or geographies – urban, peri-urban, and rural) can coalesce around the perception of a shared threat. These overlapping identifications can help to create the conditions of possibility for broad-based, widespread resistance.

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[9] My comments here recognize that, in fact, by the time we get to the twenty-first century (long after the period during which national imaginings began to emerge) assertions of cultural sameness are often anchored to ideas of territorially bounded communities. Thus, assertions of cultural sameness are often tied to territorially located political communities, although they need not be. Thanks to Lisa Wedeen on this point.

When markets threaten affordable access to or established relationships with
a good broadly understood to be a subsistence resource, contested and varied
conceptions of the resource can come together through shared understandings
of insecurity and vulnerability. To threaten access to water in Cochabamba was
to create perceptions that ancestral *usos y costumbres* (roughly translated as
"traditions and customs" or "customary uses") were at risk. This threat also
tapped into a legacy of cultivation and regional scarcity, undermined irriga-
tion and water collection practices – as well as the community organizations
that had developed to maintain these practices – and challenged a pervasive
belief that water belongs to "the people." In Mexico, tortillas (and corn more
generally) are a cornerstone of both urban and rural diets; they are included in
well-known myths, serve as a centerpiece of daily ritual and social interaction,
and are a part of how many conceive of themselves as Mexican. In each of
their respective contexts, to threaten water or corn was to threaten not only a
material relationship with a material good, but also perceptions of community,
both imagined and quotidian.

THEORIZING AND STUDYING GRIEVANCES

Throughout this book, *grievance* is used to refer to the central claims a social
movement makes – the practices, policies, or phenomena that movement mem-
bers claim they are working to change (or preserve). For example, do partici-
pants claim to fight to stop climate change? To advocate for gay marriage? To
reduce the size of government? The term is also central to literature on violence
and civil war where it is often deployed not only to refer to claims an actor
makes but also to the structural conditions – for example, political or economic
inequality – from which violence emerges. This book advances the argument
that we should treat these grievances as categories that require analysis because
they are not just objectively identifiable conditions but also social experiences.
As a result, both the explicit claims a social movement makes and the struc-
tural conditions from which it emerges are imbued with ideas – they index and
generate meanings beyond the fact of climate change, gay marriage, the size
of government, or political or economic inequality. Understanding these ideas
furthers our understanding of contentious politics and opens up new possibili-
ties for the study of social mobilization and conflict.

Building on the contentious politics literature

When I began this project I did not intend to focus on grievances broadly or sub-
sistence specifically. I was intrigued by water's potential role in Cochabamba,
but I grounded my analysis in the political process model (e.g., see Piven
and Cloward 1977; McAdam 1982), looking for moments of political open-
ing, the resources available to local social movement entrepreneurs, and the
mobilization frames these entrepreneurs deployed. I also looked to literature

that emphasized mechanisms of contention and paid particular attention to interactivity (e.g., McAdam et al. 2001). The focus on social construction that was critical to the so-called cultural turn (Bonnell et al. 1999; Sewell 1999; Goodwin et al. 2001; Goodwin and Jasper 2004) was also foundational to my early analysis. But I found that attention to elements central to political process theory could not fully explain the dynamics at work in the Cochabamban and Mexican cases. Political opportunities, organizational resources, and mobilization frames each undoubtedly played a role at various stages in the water wars and the *tortillazo* protests, and these factors provide an important foundation to understanding the dynamics at work. Yet they could not tell me why these particular issues at these particular moments brought such broad, unexpected coalitions to the streets.

Literature that looked to mechanisms in contentious politics (e.g., McAdam et al. 2001) shifted my analytical focus from outcomes to processes, providing useful guidance on how to identify and compare dynamics across contentious episodes. But how the content of a movement's claims might systematically relate to the mechanisms at work in social mobilization was under-theorized, if addressed at all. Furthermore, it appeared as though attention to a movement's claims might shed light on why some mechanisms worked the ways they did, when they did. For example, brokerage mechanisms ("the linking of two or more previously unconnected social sites by a unit that mediates their relation with another and/or with yet other sites" [McAdam et al. 2001, 102]) were clearly pivotal in the Cochabamban water wars and Mexican *tortillazo* protests. Yet attention to this mechanism suggests a prior question – what are the conditions of possibility for effective brokerage mechanisms in the first place? Similarly, mechanisms of social appropriation ("appropriation of existing social space and collective identities in the service of [attributions of threat and opportunity]" [ibid., 102]) played a critical role in both protest movements analyzed here. And once again, a prior question emerges – are there some conditions under which some mechanisms of social appropriation will be more effective than others?

Social movement scholars who foreground culture and emotions offered a critical ontological shift (e.g., Goodwin et al. 2001, 2004; Wood 2003; Gould 2009; Pearlman 2013). Protesters' lived experiences and affective orientations, not simply political contexts or physical resources, help us to understand why people engage in social mobilization when they do. Concepts like "moral shocks" (Jasper 1997) both draw attention to a social movement's claims and situate those claims in emotional processes and cultural perceptions.[10] But concepts like moral shocks raise additional questions. Why were some grievances

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[10] Jasper defines a moral shock as "an unexpected event or piece of information [which] raises such a sense of outrage in a person that she becomes inclined toward political action, with or without the network of personal contacts emphasized in mobilization and process theories" (1997, 106).