

Broken promises and violent reactions

A single case study of the grievances of indigenous communities surrounding the Las Bambas conflict



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Abstract

In tandem with the rapid expansion of mining in Peru, and the increased dependence on foreign direct investment into the sector, social conflicts have escalated in recent years. Protests and strikes have become common features of the mining sector, deterring investors and insurance companies alike. This thesis analyses the cause and problem of the protests – their underlying foundation and why they continue and how the reactions of the actors involved unfold. The dilemma is analysed by applying a Neo-Gramscian theory as the lens through a qualitative content analysis of newspaper articles and media information on mining strikes, mobilisation and responses from the mining company and the government. By analysing the case of Las Bambas, this thesis aims to grasp the politicized conflict through the concept of Neo-Gramscian theory with its specific focus on counter-hegemony. The thesis particularly uses a case study analysis of the Las Bambas mining project as it is illustrative of the questions addressed in this thesis. The data is analysed through a qualitative content analysis. The thesis suggest that the underlying socio-economic grievances are caused and upheld by the power structures. Local communities protest the ‘broken promises’ in a Neo-Gramscian counter-hegemonic way. This also means that protests in Las Bambas and other mining areas in Peru will likely continue until the underlying grievances are resolved.

Key words: Mining, Indigenous people, Neo-Gramscian political economy, counter-hegemonic claims, FDI

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List of Abbreviations

BHRRC	Business and Human Rights Resource Centre
CNDH	Coordinadora Nacional de Derechos Humanos
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
ILO	International Labour Organisation
MMG	Mineral and Metals Group Limited
MNC	Multi-National Corporation
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
OCMAL	Observatorio de Conflictos Mineros de América Latina
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNDRIP	UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People

1 Introduction

Over the last decades, Peru has become a prominent success story in Latin America, having achieved continuous growth under political democracy, substantial poverty reduction and bringing forth an expanding middle class. This has largely been brought about through a global demand for minerals and other primary commodities that Peru exports.

However, the country is still marred by social issues, which largely attributes to the mining sector's over reliance on unskilled workers, and the governmental struggles to balance lifting rural people out of poverty and maintaining economic growth, which depends on the mining industry and in turn is dependent on foreign investments into the sector. Furthermore, mining activity has brought about massive social protests in Peru in recent years, and the exploration and exploitation of mineral resources in Peru are frequently linked with violation of economic, social and cultural rights of indigenous and rural communities.

The Andean strip that connects Apurímac and Cusco is known as the “southern mining corridor” due to the amount of mining megaprojects with investors from all over the world located here. The Chinese owned Las Bambas (MMG Limited) along with Swiss based Glencore's Antapaccay, and Anabi of Peruvian Anturani together make up 40% of the national copper production. Fifty thousand people live in this corridor where more than 200 communities are located, many of which are considered as indigenous.

Las Bambas is one of the largest open pit mines in South America and is regarded as one of the most important mining projects in recent history, making Peru the second largest copper producer in the world (Proinversión 2019). It is located in the province of Apurímac, which has one of the highest poverty rates in Peru, with low access to basic services (UNDP 2019).

For several years prior to the start of the mining operation, company representatives and local communities managed to establish a harmonious relationship. The majority of the population surrounding Las Bambas agreed to the mining activity as it came with expectations of an improved livelihood (Ocmal 2019). But investments in the mining region is not necessarily associated with a better quality of life for its inhabitants, as many indigenous communities in Apurímac and nearby Cusco watch the wealth from the mineral extraction from afar, being left without water and electricity. Along with this, promises made to the communities by the mine are continuously being broken, creating a landscape of mistrust.

1.1 Purpose and research question

The purpose of this thesis is to investigate the grievances of the local communities surrounding the Las Bambas mining site and how these grievances are met. This is important in light of recent expansions of mining projects in Peru, which further indicate the critical relationship the sector has with the economy.

However, the mining sector is exposed to social conflict that are unprecedented in large parts of the world. As argued by Sanborn and Chonn (2015), one of the major routes to change the power balances is through social mobilization, which can drive those in power to make positive institutional innovations or change the very balance of power.

As fundamental interests are at stake for both communities and corporations, the expansion of mining has been surrounded by protests and negotiations related to distribution of resources, land rights and socio-environmental impacts.

Furthermore, mines are often located in remote areas where state presence and capacity are low; social demands and conflicts are therefore often only regulated following protests and negotiations between corporations and community organizations. In the context of the weak mediating role of the Peruvian state, corporations have played an important role in dealing with demands and protests through dialogues and negotiations, by offering compensation, and using coercion as well as legal repression.

Mining operations in Peru have experienced a number of social resistance movements that has hindered production. At the time of writing (November 2019) not less than four copper mines with international ownership are disrupted by anti-mining protesters. In this thesis selected case of the MMG- owned Las Bambas mine, the operation has been blockaded for several weeks at time at various points the last years, amongst other factors due to communities seeking derogations of a 2016 degree which authorized the construction of a new highway, without prior consultation of the local communities.

A crucial question is how these interactions influence community mobilization. Some studies suggest that competing interests and power asymmetries between communities and corporations will reinforce clientelism and are therefore associated with community fragmentation and demobilization (Bebbington 2010).

In some cases, however, the comprehensive protests have made it difficult to develop macro-economically important mining projects, which suggest that peasant communities have a strategic importance that enhances their bargaining position, permitting them to negotiate access to resources, land, and political influence in a course that go outside the mining project in question (Arce 2014 in Gustafsson 2018, 3).

Communities' capacity to influence mining policies is inherently interconnected with mobilization processes, as their formal rights are weak and often violated. Therefore, it is important to look into the grievances behind their protests, and further examine how these protests are met, by the company as well as the state.

The aim of this thesis is thus to map out what the main grievances behind the protests of local communities are and how these are met. As previously mentioned, issues with displacements and broken promises has led to frequent protests in the last years, with heavy reactions from the state.

This is highly important since we need to address one of the most pressing issues for a country like Peru. Because if the companies withdraw, the economy will completely fail. But it is a two-way street, where both the institutions of the government are important but also the behaviour of the companies and how they affect workers and local communities.

From a regional perspective, this is further important to study as many countries in Latin America are putting large efforts into attracting more foreign direct investment. Prime examples are Chile where the mining sector accounts for almost 10% of GDP, highlighting its importance to the overall economy. This highlights a general trend in the region and does resonate well with the Neo-Gramscian foundation of the global financial system, which will be discussed below. In many countries with heavy mining industries, with Chile being the notable example, social conflicts have appeared. As such, as the growth in the mining sector and foreign direct investment continue, there is a big risk that social conflicts will to, which motivates a study like this.

1.1.1 Research question

To analyse the conundrum at hand, this thesis will focus on the question of how international companies' mining projects in Peru affect local grievances. To further boil this down into a narrower concept, this thesis will address the following subset of questions to hone the analysis and make it more comprehensive:

What surrounds the grievances in the Las Bambas-surrounding community? What has been the government reaction, and what, if any, has been the company's reaction and potential subsequent action?

To contextualise the questions, this thesis will specifically analyse the questions through a neo-Gramscian theory perspective. While there are several approaches through which the conundrum could be analysed, the neo-Gramscian perspective is particularly applicable, and thus chosen, as it pays particular attention to power and such relations. Indeed, related concepts of power have been bestowed by manifold scholars, however, Gramsci's theory offers an important insight into the *resistance*

in power relations through the amalgamation of power, coercion and consent, which is the particular focus of this thesis.

1.1.2 Argument

The primary argument of this thesis is two-fold, firstly: despite the attempts at counter-hegemony by local communities in Las Bambas, the power dynamics in the Peruvian mining sector, as a combination of companies' power and government policies, reinforce social grievances. This leads to the second part, that until grievances are properly addressed, social conflicts in the sector are likely to continue.

2 Background

The mining conflicts of recent years reflect on the deep-rooted historical grievances of Peru's campesino communities, which have continually been excluded from the profits of mineral extraction. This relates to the unequal distribution of wealth in the country, which may have intensified by the mining boom. While this has brought about higher living standards for the urban coastal elites, the indigenous and campesino populations that usually are the one closest to the mining operations have experienced scantily of this - despite laws that obligate that revenues are to be returned to the areas surrounding the mines. Mining activity tend to generate relatively few jobs for locals. Hence, the redistribution of revenues is ought to trickle down to communities through government programs. This has shown to be problematic, as local governments have meagre capacity to successfully invest the funds. Thus, this creates frustration among local communities as despite revenues, the mining activity rarely serve to improve their living standards, but rather brings about environmental impacts that peril their sustenance (Oxfam America 2009).

As the Peruvian government neither have the capacity nor political incitement to regulate the industry and the communities mistrust the government to address their concerns, this leads to tensions and conflict. Sanborn et al (2017) point out three key variables that demonstrate the weakness of the Peruvian state: "its limited territorial reach; autonomy from non-state actors; and capacity to deliver essential public goods and services and protect fundamental rights". The authors emphasise how the perpetuation of these persisting weaknesses, affect elite priorities and capacity for broader inclusion" (Sanborn et al 2017, 26).

Thus, there is a huge asymmetry of power, resources and information in the 'southern mining corridor'. An assumption to be drawn is therefore that mining corporations often arrive with promises which leads to high expectations among locals. When these are not fulfilled, it brings about grievances which will be discussed later in this chapter.

2.1 Peruvian dependence on foreign investment in extractive industries.

As previously mentioned, Peru is witnessing an increasing drive in investments into the natural resource extractives sector, particularly by transnational and

international mining giants. Mining now plays an essential macro-economic role in Peru, the result of increased global demand for minerals. This increase is expected to continuously expand, as the Peruvian government will continue to invest in this sector (Proinversión 2019).

The Peruvian mining boom which preceded the economic liberalisation and market stabilisation in the 1980s, rapidly became a key element of the country's economy, which expanded by over 30 percent in the late 1990's and early 2000s (Taylor and Bonner 2017). This economic development has been predominately associated with the considerable mining exports and foreign direct investments (Castellares and Fouché 2017:7).

Now Peru is the second largest producer of copper, zinc and silver globally, and possesses some of largest copper reserves in the world (Fraser 2018). The mining activity constitute for around 10 percent of the countries' GDP, and 60% of FDI (MDO 2019).

However, this has come along with an equally remarkable upsurge in social mobilisation, protests and anti-mining conflicts (Bebbington et al. 2007). In many ways, Peru has become the epicentre of the mining conflict. Entire regions have been implicated into serious conflicts, which has brought about numerous injuries and deaths (Zibechi, 2015).

In recent years, China has increased their operations in Peru. Today Chinese companies control 30% of all mining operations in Peru, and the expansion is only set to continue (Sanborn and Chonn 2015). The dependency on mineral exports has raised questions concerning the social- and environmental implications of large-scale extractive activity. Some scholars argue that the advantages of Chinese investment have been mitigated by concerns regarding whether Chinese-owned firms are capable to comply with global standards in areas such as revenue transparency and environmental and labour policies (Ibid).

Some reports indicate the absence of actions by the Peruvian state, as to pursue the Chinese government to fulfil their agreed external agreements, with regard to economic, social, cultural and environmental rights that have been hurt by companies that have surrendered to its jurisdiction in Peru (BHRRC/EQUIDAD 2019).

In 2011, the World bank granted a 3-billion-dollar loan to help with then- president Humala's anti-poverty initiatives. At this time, a demand for social inclusion became the centrepiece of national policy, and the government increased their budget for social inclusion by half (The Guardian 2011).

When Humala came to office, he enshrined the rights of indigenous communities to be consulted over mining on their territory. This brought Peru in line with the UN convention of indigenous and tribal peoples of 1989, making it the first nation

in the region to fully implement the international labour organisation's (ILO) convention 169 on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples (Ibid). The convention obligate governments to assure that these groups are consulted about projects or laws that may affect them (The Economist 2016).

The promise of social integration heavily depends upon continued investment in the extractive industry, which in turn depends on high prices for commodities. Hence, the Peruvian economy is reliant on both global demands for minerals, and the interests of investors.

However, the effects are precarious. As Sanborn and Chonn (2015) argue, the increasing profits that the FDI brings about rarely trickle down to communities affected by mining, as revenues are frequently displaced by elites that does not distribute revenue taxes to regional and municipal governments.

Furthermore, the extractive mining model is a problem of power and therefore of politics according to an OCMAL report which also adds that "large multinational companies are taking advantage of the state's neglect of its obligations to promote an image of social responsibility that satisfies the needs of the population" (Zibechi 2015).

Despite the frequent conflicts, more mines go ahead than don't in Peru. Cheap energy and high-grade ores make the Peruvian mines remain competitive notwithstanding the upsurges in social movements and higher production costs (The economist 2016). Las Bambas together with other new mines contributes to the expected rise of the country's copper output: from 1.7m tonnes in 2015 to 2.5m tonnes 2018, second only to Chile's (BNA Americas 2019).

2.2 The grievances of the local communities of Apurimac and Cusco

Until 2014, Las Bambas was owned by Swiss mining giant Glencore Xstrata. The project was then sold to a Chinese consortium of companies, led by MMG Limited, a subsidiary of China Minmetals (The Financial Times 2014).

Peru, as most other Latin American countries, recognise the indigenous peoples' territorial rights, with the adaptation of UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) and the International Labour Organisation Convention No. 169 (ILO 169) as prominent examples. Numerous protective measures have historically been in place to protect the indigenous communities, both constitutionally and through policy efforts. However, Peru also has a history of long-running inequality with marginalisation of indigenous communities (Sanborn et al. 2017). Of course, this has been a recurrent theme throughout much of the region's history. However, in line with the Peruvian drive toward mining and other natural resource extraction

investments, the communities have come increasingly in between. Numerous studies, and recently even UN statements and publications, have come to question the role that foreign investments play in displacing indigenous communities (United Nations 2018).

Peru has been no exception to this trend. Several mechanisms are at play here, one which includes the argument that as Peru is highly dependent on maintaining good relations with private international investors for primarily land use and resource extraction, as in the case of Las Bambas, these international mechanisms are often ineffectual in practice, when state contracts with investors are prioritized over the promises made to indigenous communities (Coletta and Raftopoulos 2018).

Issues with how MMG's Las Bambas manage and influence environment, public welfare, lost land, violation of rights and breaches of agreements has created high levels of mistrust which has shaped the grievances of the indigenous communities of Apurimac and Cusco.

Despite creating new jobs for locals during construction of the mine which stimulated the local economy, social problems have persisted. Few locals have been employed by the mine and half of the population in the region cannot afford basic goods and services, the illiteracy rate remains high at 24%, 40 % of children under five suffer from anaemia and 27% is affected by chronic malnutrition (Zibechi 2015).

The influence of the mine extends across all communities, but the distribution of welfare and services are unequal and the economic contrasts in the area are visible. In the richest district of the region, Chalhahuacho which is located next to the mine and regarded as the most important town in size and commerce in the area, most businesses are either sponsored by the mine or attended by miners. Another power dissimilarity is not only economic and material but also that the workers themselves are low skilled, which resonates with the neo-Gramscian view of the 'financial system', which will always put the low-skilled workers at the bottom of the value chain. This has been discussed by numerous scholars as another mechanism of power in the global economic system, whereby the low-skilled workers become even more powerless in their positions due to their lack of social mobility (Gereffi and Fernandez-Stark 2011).

The district of Fuerabamba was relocated to an urban area around Chalhahuacho, which is now called Nueva Fuerabamba. With the move, they got access to basic services that they lacked before and now benefit from a full range of services that was granted by MMG. However, adjusting to the new setting has not been easy for the residents, and after the first year much of the original enthusiasm has exhausted. The people of previously adjacent Chuicuni however does not benefit from neither electricity and running water nor stores. Yet, what they are most concerned about is whether the mine affect water quality in the spring which the entire town relies on as the water exploitation rights for the mine was granted without any detailed water studies of the Apurímac basin (OjoPúblico 2018).

When interviewed, the president of Chuicuni recall how the community was enthusiastic about the mining project, thinking it would have a positive impact, and that declare how they now are left with nothing, but the plausible environmental impacts Las Bambas brings about. “They [Glencore Xstrata] offered us everything. Now when we complain they tell us that those deals were made by the previous owner” Ibid).

The inequality between these adjacent districts give a good example of how promises are broken, and mistrust created but is only one aspect of what surrounds the grievances behind the conflict. Other crucial factors include environmental concerns and the fact that the communities were not consulted on a modification of the environmental impact study (Zibechi 2015).

It is important also to note how the protests have been perceived and what their effect has been. In some cases, the frequent protests have attributed to some tangible effects, in terms of reactions from the mining company. In October 2019, MMG stated that the company would be forced to halve production at Las Bambas if protesters continued to block roads (The Financial Times 2019).

In 2018, the production of copper reached 385 000 ton in Las Bambas, to a value of 2,4 billion dollars. In comparison, the two-month long blockade would have cost the mining company around 400 million US\$. Since the government depend greatly on the mining revenues, it is not surprising that the congressman Richard Arce of Apurímac proposed an amnesty bill for community members who participated in the protests (Mining.com, 2019).

3 Theoretical framework

3.1 Neo-Gramscian theory

Antonio Gramsci (1891-1937) was an Italian philosopher and politician, often considered a key neo-Marxist. Gramsci his generation of Marxist contributed to a tradition of critical which can be drawn upon when assessing capitalism and its relation to the state (Burron 2014). In his *Prison Notebooks* he scrupulously discloses the extent to which capitalism is perpetuated not only by economic means but also political and cultural factors (Gramsci in Hoare and Smith, 1971).

Neo-Gramscian thought deliberates how the interface of ideas, institutional and material capabilities shape societal structures. While it primarily offers a state perspective, its notions of power and related dynamics have been used by scholars on a sub-state level (Radice 2008).

Arguably, the post-international relations theory with its divide of realist versus liberalist moves beyond the static state perspective, accounting for a more comprehensive perspective of non-state actors – their role, influence and agency in social developments, such as the one under study (Sinclair, 1996).

Specifically, analysing Peruvian mining strikes from a perspective that moves beyond state actors allows a novel way of approaching the issue, focusing on the communities affected and their intersection with other non-governmental actors, such as mining companies (Gill, 1993, p. 43).

Specifically, neo-Gramscian thought, regards society as a “complex dynamic system of structures and forces operating at multiple levels”. The term Hegemony describes how cultural and ideological leadership is achieved by social groups. Gramsci used this term indicate a relatively stable condition is this system, in which a ‘historical bloc’ emerges (Levy 2008). In Gramsci’s view, hegemony is entrenched in the institutions of civil society and rests on a broad base of consent (Levy and Egan 2003). According to Gramsci, power operates via two mechanisms: consensus or coercion. Thus, this approach is appropriate to examine the conflict of Las Bambas as the state reactions to the community protests are examples of how power is operated, and hegemony is retained.

The Neo-Gramscian approach derives from Gramsci's conceptual framework of national class conflict but is extended to encompass several social actors in conflicting social issues in international arenas, including businesses and other societal actors (Levy 2008). Hence, a neo-Gramscian perspective understand social orders is founded on the relationships of social forces and suggest that changes in structures are reflective of changes in the social relationships which underpin it.

The neo-Gramscian framework provides an integrative approach that overcomes the dichotomy between market and non-market strategies. The tradition of neo-Gramscian was in many ways developed by the scholarly works of critical theorist Robert Cox who considers hegemony "as the exercise of leadership within historical blocs within a particular world order" (Robinson 2005, 2). His critical theory of hegemony puts focus on questioning the current world order, and does thus not "take institutions and social and power relations for granted but calls them into question by concerning itself with their origins and whether they might be in the process of changing" (Cox 1981, 129). Thus, this strand of neo-Gramscian theory and understanding of hegemony emphasizes on the interactions between specific processes, particularly emerging from "the dialectical possibilities of change within the sphere of production and the exploitative character of social relations; not as unchanging, ahistorical essences but as a continuing creation of new forms (Cox 1981,132, in Morton 2003).

Of importance here is also the concept of power as it delineates who holds the hegemonic power in the relationship. The neo-Gramscian approach here is of importance, as it moves beyond the traditional concept of power as 'getting someone to do something they would not otherwise do'. Instead, power is also used as a tool of coercion between actors, though not only by force, as is arguably the case in Las Bambas. Thus, hegemony, as pointed out by Cox, is that hegemony also comes alive through the conjunction of civil society and political society through both coercion and consent.

3.1.1 Counter-hegemony

Cox also contributed to our contemporary understanding of counter-hegemony, which can be understood as a kind of social reorganization and refers to attempts to challenge the elite hegemony through creation of alternative historical and political discourses. In order to be successful, a counter-hegemonic movement requires a 'coalition of social forces' to come together around the rejection of the prevailing hegemony (Cox, 1981: 132).

In the context of Las Bambas, the concept of counter-hegemony relates to the protests of the communities, which aim to influence the power dynamics between state, company and community. The protest movements largely resemble the counter-hegemonic theory that social movements that act as counter-hegemonic forces do not start as radical groups but rather persuade and encourage others

through propaganda or raising awareness. On the other hand, a branch of the theory holds that the counter-hegemonic group would attempt to overthrow the hegemon following the drive. This arguably applies less to the Las Bambas case, as the community seeks not to overthrow the hegemon as such but to restore the situation to its original state. However, the movements of raising awareness and mobilising fall in line with the counter-hegemonic school's fundamental thought.

4 Research design and methodology

In order to assess the material and answer the research question, this study is conducted as a qualitative content analysis. A qualitative content analysis can be understood as a positivist approach that argues that scientific knowledge of the social world is limited to what can be observed, and that social phenomena can be explained and predicted through discovering empirical regularities (Halperin and Heath 2012: 6).

This research method was selected as it allows the researcher to immerse in the data as to identify hidden meanings in the text by identifying relevant themes (Bryman, 2016: 303-306). This is motivated by the assumptions that it is possible to expose meanings, motives and purposes embedded within a text, and to infer valid or underlying meanings of interest to the researcher (Halperin and Heath 2012: 319).

As defined by Halperin and Heath (2012),” Content analysis is concerned with the study of the text itself, rather than with the broad context within which it was produced. Qualitative content analysis is a more interpretive form of analysis concerned with uncovering meanings, motives, and purposes in textual content” (Halperin and Heath 2012: 310). As the intent of this thesis is to explore common themes in grievances that underly conflict between local communities, mining company and state, the select documents for analysis have been made up of news articles as it provides relevant evidence to answer the research question (Ibid: 319).

Content analysis is an unobtrusive method of data collection. It was primarily chosen due to the desk-based approach of study but comes along with several advantages over obtrusive data collection methods. A major advantage is the reduction of risk of biases which can be expected from obtrusive methods. As this thesis is interested in investigating common themes in conflicts, content analysis is helpful as it makes it possible to study a large number of documents and populations than would be possible though interviews or observation. (Halperin and Heath 2012, 318).

As the aim of the study is first to discover what concerns surrounds the grievances among the indigenous communities surrounding Las Bambas, and second to identify how the government and company has reacted, the method has been complemented with the analytical tools provided by the neo-Gramscian concepts of hegemony and counter-hegemony. When inquiring the research question, I searched for themes and recurrent latent content when determining what central concerns has shaped the indigenous communities’ grievances that underlies the

conflict, acknowledging the outspoken environmental claims and the general sense of mistrust, along with other, less visible potential concerns using an inductive approach.

Although a content analysis is preferable to this specific research, it should be noted that this method, as any other method, has its limitations. This particular research is limited by the fact that “a content analysis can only be as good as the documents on which the practitioner works” (Bryman, 2012, p.306). Further notes on the limitations of this study will be addressed below in the subsection titled Limitations. Likewise, in the last chapter of this thesis, titled Further Research, some suggestions for further research in line will be addressed, which will also suggest other modes and means of analysing the topic further in the future.

4.1 Data collection and analysis

The procedures for data collection and analysis were based on Halperin and Heath’s (2012) guidelines for qualitative content text analysis.

The coding of the material followed a logical chain of detecting under which domains the information was to be categorized. As to ensure internal validity and methodological accuracy, the analysis was conducted following Halperin and Heaths single case study analysis techniques. Within this framework, I looked for patterns in grievances and categorized my findings under two main concerns: *environmental concerns, land rights and mistrust*. These showed to be highly interconnected, notably as the conflict largely escalated due to a breach in contract regarding the environmental impacts of the mine, and subsequent protests deriving from concerns of rights to land, which led me to combine these categories into a general theme of broken promises. The analysis was then conducted upon the foundation of broken promises.

4.2 Empirical material

As this thesis has been conducted through the form of a desk study, the main empirical material serving as the base of the inquiry consists of news articles, which in this context can be regarded as primary sources as when newspaper articles written about a specific event immediately after it happened can be regarded as such. This has been complemented with secondary sources including interpretive news articles, academic literature, summaries and reports (Halperin and Heath 2012:329).

These documents have been produced by a several sources of a broad spectrum, providing a comprehensive understanding of events. As this thesis wish to understand the underlying grievances behind the Las Bambas conflict, it is necessary not to rely on a specific source as it would not provide the degree objectivity needed for this purpose.

Collection of material have been done through using, BHRRC's database of attacks on defenders working on businesses-related human rights abuses. This database was selected largely due to its extensive collection of data, its significance to the purpose of the study, its easy-to grasp search engine and that they offer transcripts in english, of what without this would have been difficult to comprehend, due to the researcher's limited knowledge of Spanish.

Due to the abundance of material, and the scope of the study I have selected articles from 2014 – 2019 to investigate and analyse, in total 44 articles and reports. (Halperin and Heath 2012, 320). Through the search engine I searched for "Incidents" and Country: Peru; Companies: Las Bambas (part of MMG); Sectors: Mining; Language: English.

It is possible to search for both articles and incidents; I have done both. As to map out the underlying grievances and subsequent reactions from the company and state, I have focused on the articles, though a qualitative content analysis.

As to confirm the incidents and the actors involved, I have downloaded all data on incidents into an excel sheet and there limited the results to "Las Bambas" "Mining" "Peru", "Las Bambas (part of MMG)". In the dataset, each individual affected in an incident makes up a separate incident. As to facilitate the analysis, I have grouped all individuals affected on a specific date / incident into the same box in the chart.

I double checked the data collected through all published newspaper and other media articles about the topic and location since 2015 to ensure that all incidents had been recorded and correctly classified.

4.3 Limitations

As with any study, the analytical approach chosen in this thesis has limitations, both on a theoretical level and on a methodological. Firstly, the Neo-Gramscian perspective originates from a Neo-Marxist school of thought, which has undoubtedly influenced the theoretical tools at hand. Likewise, the Neo-Gramscian approach is also, in itself, as any other theory, limited. For instance, Persaud (2016) argues that the Neo-Gramscian theory of hegemony may be applicable in examining relations among western state, but not as fruitful when applied to the global south.

As such, it would be advantageous for the Neo-Gramscian theory to be broadened as to include post-colonial thinking. However, for the purpose of this study, and to examine the case at hand, the Neo-Gramscian theory shines light on important dynamics and elements in a way that previous more state-centric theories cannot.

Despite this being a positivist thesis, there is always the risk of the theoretical leanings shining through and influencing the writer's process. This relates to a second limitation, namely in the positivist content analysis nature of this study. The positivist approach claims objectiveness, however, as with any study, this can be easily interrupted as the data at hand, newspaper and media articles, are not always objective. Analysing this data will require the researcher to carry in mind the selection bias and the reflexivity which is often used in the interpretivist approaches to ensure objectivity.

To overcome the limitations and facilitate a reliable and valid result and subsequent analysis, the ethics underpinning the positivist approach should be followed, to ensure the 'maximised objectivity'. The third limitation relates to the data collection phase, in which both the researcher's capabilities and the data at hand pose limitations. These include the linguistic skills of the researcher, the limited time for data collection, bias of the sampled material and data bias. Regarding the first point, much of the information is translated from Spanish but given the researcher's limited skills, some concepts are at risk of misconstruction. However, having consulted Spanish-speaking fellow students, this risk would be minimised. Likewise, the quality of the data sources, as these are newspaper articles and blog pages primarily, need to be considered.

It is worth mentioning that the size of sampled material was to some extent obscured due to limited linguistic skills. This thesis is aware of the extensive publications out there in form of blogs, declarations and forums in where indigenous peoples express political resistance in their native tongue, however, the material selection had to be delimited due to not being able to rightfully interpret these. Another limitation to assess in this section is the access to data, as the desk-based nature of this inquiry limits empirical sampling to online databases and thus sets restrictions to information that could have been sampled, had the nature of the thesis been different.

Due to the single-case nature of the study, it renders less generalisable conclusions, and as such, generalizability is arguably slightly compromised. However, the case of Las Bambas was chosen for its illustrative character of how MNCs interact with mineral-abundant nations with economic benefits for the state and the corporations, but with not great consequences for the local communities surrounding it. Thus, this case remains useful as it contains unique qualities for the study objectives (Halperin and Heath 2012, 177). Likewise, Las Bambas illustrates the development of social conflicts, and as these continue at an unabated rate in Peru, one can draw important conclusions from studying the case.

4.4 Quality of documents

Since most of the material used for this thesis has been sampled from an online platform (BHRRC), it is important to reflect on the quality of both the platform and documents for producing valid results. Therefore, Bryman's (2016) four criteria of quality assessment has been used. The criteria include authenticity, credibility, representativeness and meaning (2016:567-568).

In regard of authenticity and credibility the material is considered as semi-strong, as the sampled collection of data does not cover all of what has been written, and as with all journalistic content, one may wish for the reporters' objectivity, however it cannot be expected nor assumed as biases might play its part. Furthermore, the material sample was largely retrieved from a specific database, which inherently comes with its own line of interest, which also needs to be questioned. However, as the information retrieved through the database was double checked and complemented with additional articles, documents and reports from other sources detached from those of the database, the degree of authenticity and credibility renders high. As for representativeness, the inquiry considers whether the content can be regarded as reflective on all individuals living in the communities affected by the mine. As it is difficult to conduct 40 000 interviews and or surveys from the other side of the world, it cannot be confirmed whether the entire population agree with the assumptions made in the analysis. However, as some material include reports with in-depth interviews of community representatives along with interviews of other locals, it is at least so some degree representative. Furthermore, the sampled data shows clear trends in what seem to be the underlying grievances, I estimate the representativeness as comparatively high. Lastly, in terms of meaning the degree of comprehensibility render high as the language is good and the texts written in a comprehensible manner.

4.5 Case selection

There are several mines in Peru that could have been chosen in the study, including the much spoken of Tia Maria which has faced unprecedented amounts of unrest throughout 2019. However, Las Bambas is located in a highly politicized region and has been an interesting case for years for the protest perspective, and thus facilitates a longer-span analysis, and likewise has a unique Chinese ownership, which was the purpose of this study. Furthermore, The Las Bambas project is currently the fourth largest in the country but is by many regarded as the most important contemporary projects in Peru and will operate for approximately 20 years (MDO 2019) which motivates the choice.

5 Analysis

5.1 Table of results

The below table is the collection of data gathered to analyse the protest patterns, government response and company response to all developments in the Las Bambas mine since 2015.

The *community action column* shows the type of action taken by communities to act as a counter-hegemonic force. The *participation column* highlights the significance of the protest to capture the mobilisation of the local community, which in turn highlights the Neo-Gramscian concept of counter-hegemony. This has limitations as protests can be joined for a number of reasons, for instance, a common phenomenon that has developed in Peru in recent years is the concept of solidarity protests, as was the case subsequent to the killings of protesters in September 2015, as the November protests partly was spurred by resistance to polices' use of lethal force. This could mean a large outcome would only signal the solidarity movement of the participants; however, it still lends credibility to the *neo-Gramscian* concept of counter-hegemony.

The government response also relates to the notion of counter-hegemony and thus displacement. The government response column highlights a significant likelihood of crackdown by the government, signalling the Neo-Gramscian concept of a maintenance of hegemony through coercion. The outcome underpins the government response column, showing the magnitude of the response.

The company response relates to the first column as well as the one about government response, as these are all interlinked with the concept of broken promises. In several cases the company has interacted and negotiated with the community, often through the government. For example, in the 2015 protests, MMG agreed to negotiate with local community leaders regarding an environmental concern, to address socioeconomic issues and end protests.

However, in other cases, MMG did not intervene and blamed the state, which in turn has accused the company. This proves how the institutions within the historical bloc are interconnected but not function ideally when interrupted by protests, in this strand of thought, attempts to counter-hegemony. However, putting blame on each

other (and the communities) could serve as a distraction, as to remove focus from the actual violence of indigenous rights.

This highlights the potential for the company to have released a changing strategy to interact with the local communities, which could be explained as an attempt to preserve hegemony through consent. On the other hand, the government response has been very frequently violent, which from a Neo-Gramscian strand of thought could be explain through the protection of the hegemony by coercion.

Date	Community action	Participation	Outcome	Government response	Company response
18/3/2015	Mayor supported social protest movement in conflict with MMG was murdered by hitman	Indigenous peoples	One casualty	Unclear	Unclear
28/9/2015	Protest	Indigenous peoples	One casualty	Violent	Passive
29/09/2015	Protest	Indigenous peoples	Three casualties, several injured	Violent	Passive
29/11/2015	Protest	Indigenous peoples	Two casualties, several injured	Violent	Passive
14/10/2016	Protest	Indigenous peoples	One casualty	Violent	Passive
6/2/2017	Protest (roadblock)	Indigenous people	State of emergency	Active	Passive

6/8/2017	Protest (roadblock)	Indigenous people	State of emergency (as of Aug. 16)	Active	None
8/5/2018	Class action against authorities	Indigenous people	Participation in legal hearing	Active	Passive
Sep-Nov 2018	Protests	Indigenous people	State of emergency	Active	None
8/1/2019	Protest	Indigenous peoples	Eight protesters injured; police injured	Coercive (police violence)	Passive
Feb 2019	Protest (roadblock)	Indigenous peoples	MMG declared force majeure on its supply contracts	Active	Active –
21/3/2019	Arrest of community leaders	Affected communities' leaders	Arbitrary detention, Intimidation & threats	Active	Passive
7/4/2019	Meeting between stakeholders	Community leaders	Agreement reached	Active (agreement reached)	Active

5.2 Coercion, consent and broken promises

As laid out in the theoretical framework section above, the neo-Gramscian theory used as a lens through the content analysis data collection and study, will address the themes of broken promises, which underpins the social conflicts in the sector. The analysis was constructed and carried out in several ways to incorporate all alternatives for results. The data saw a recorded 19 incidents due to the unrest that is presented in the chart. Through analysing the articles found in the collection, Words and sentences relevant to the theme of *broken promises* were highlighted which is brought up in the analysis.

To analyse these, a tool can be borrowed from Cox (1981) who sees historical structures as consisting of “the first triangle” including ideas, material capabilities and institutions, and the “second triangle” as social forces, states and the world order. Robert Keohane is known as an important scholar in the institutional school of thought, and his definition of institutions will be used for its comprehensive scope. Keohane defined institutions (1989, in Martin and Simmons 2012) as “sets of rules”. This is important, as it highlights that all interactions in the quandary at hand can be analysed as an *institution* and that the hegemony has created and been created by institutions – such as the financial system, to uphold its power.

In terms of ‘broken promises’ there are several important events that relate to the concept. These relate to both the indigenous communities themselves as well as issues concerning environmental protection and other socio-economic grievances. From analysing the data, the story of the Las Bambas project starts and continues as follows: initially, nearby communities were consulted in the environmental assessment study. However, the ownership later changed, and the assessments were altered without consulting the affected communities. This started the initial protest in 2015, which subsequently led to clashes between local government forces and the indigenous communities. Changes in the project’s environmental impact assessment which the communities were not consulted on is a main motive for what initiated the recent years’ frequent conflicts in Las Bambas which has shaped the political landscape of the region ever since (Global Witness, 2015). Moreover, the exploitation of land from the mining companies has caused potential severe environmental impacts, notably regarding water pollution. The welfare sector was affected by inefficiency in public spending, with money put into building- and road maintenance rather than ensuring improving the livelihoods of all communities affected by Las Bambas. This highlights how the welfare sector as an institution has been influenced to favour the powerful hegemon.

In Neo-Gramscian thought, the notion of ‘power’ as discussed above again shows importance in this discussion. While it is not directly brought up, it can, in the case of Las Bambas, be used as a tool to shine light on the power structures between the hegemon and the ruled. The hegemonic ruler, here – the companies, exerts power onto those below not always in an outright coercive way but through the maintenance of structures that upholds the rule. With water pollution, displacement and the mere size of the company itself, communities are forced to the bottom with no alternative to raise their voices but to protest against the ruler.

Likewise, despite these broken promises, the community of Fuerabamba, was financially compensated and relocated for selling land to MMG. Subsequent to their relocation, MMG built a road on the communities’ territory which the transport ministry declared as a national road without the consent of the community (Andina.pe 2019). This likewise shows a continuation of the hegemonic power through using material means to appease those at the bottom. This highlights again that the power similarity which is key here is the relative poverty of the

communities' vis-a-vis the larger companies, and the power of the companies to 'buy their peace'.

5.3 Broken promises, displacement and counter-hegemony

In line with the Neo-Gramscian view, it is hardly surprising that the community of Fuerabamba which is located by the Las Bambas mine has staged protests to mobilise against MMG in a *counter-hegemony way*. As late as early 2019, as exemplified in the chart below, community members of Fuerabamba clashed with police when occupying the roads where the mine drives its vehicles, which incited the police to violent and abusive reactions against the protesters.

The government's reaction to the protests has often been to declare a state of emergency, which has been done several times before when facing mining conflicts, involving the militarization of entire province. Ahead of the September 2015 protests, approximately 1,500 police officers and 150 military officers had been sent to the zone. The government called for talks as to settle the dispute, and MMG claimed that they remained open to dialogue (Reuters 2015). This development highlights the Neo-Gramscian concept of state sovereignty as subjected to a global economic structure marred by the power and dynamics of the financial system and its way and means of production. The Peruvian government has on many occasions appeared to side with the companies through deploying security forces to calm protests, using excessive force. This would be explained through the Neo-Gramscian perspective perhaps both as a choice as and as a subjugation – in that the government of course *chooses* its course of action, but also as it is also a weaker player in relative sense in the global economic market, it is forced to listen to the influences of the market and do what would benefit this in the best possible way. This is in some ways discussed by Gill and Law (1989) who argue that in the discussion of hegemony, it is important to bring up analysis of the state both as 'production' and 'civil society'. Hence, the idea of how hegemony is sustained by coercion highlights the role of the government as perpetuating the circle, but also of it as a 'victim' to the market forces (Gill and Law 1989).

As can be seen, from a neo-Gramscian point of view, the government has in this case acted not only as a mediator between the company and community, but has, ultimately, often sided with the company. One could argue that the governments compliance with the communities demands implies its desperation of ensuring a maintained relationship with MMG, as a continuation of the conflict may indicate, to foreign investors, that Peru is unstable which could culminate in the country losing its status as the second largest copper exporter globally. The promise of withdrawing the police relates to the neo-Gramscian understanding of a transnational historic bloc, as it attempts to reclaim its authority through the implicit

consent of the governed, in this case the communities of Las Bambas, with a coercive technique of largely absent violence (Levy and Egan 2003).

Likewise, in a similar yet different way - on 21 March 2019 the President of Fuerabamba along with the vice president, the secretary and his legal councillors were arrested with charges of extortion and organized crime to the detriment of the Peruvian state and MMG. The president was subsequently released as the prosecutor found no proof of him being part of a criminal organization (BHRRC 2019). This development highlights the continuation of power as using all means, even 'legal coercion', not only physical coercion to maintain the structures of power. This highlights the obstacles to local communities as the forces of counter-hegemony in standing up and 'overthrowing' the system. Likewise, this could serve as another enforcer of grievances that could spark further protests, and resonates with the main argument that the solution of violence to calm protests will most likely only give rise to more and more. Especially, given the deadly outcome of many protests but that they still continue would suggest that the protesters are ready to fight for their cause 'at any cost', which would resonate with the more long-term Neo-Gramscian perspective of the process – that hegemony is not countered in a day but that it is a lengthier process. This likewise goes in line with the argument, that a continuation can be expected unless the grievances are properly resolved. However, resolving these grievances would require substantial work and it is unlikely that the companies would be willing to go to the extreme measures to do so, given the costs involved.

5.5 Interpretation

What can be seen from the results above is that the protests that started in 2015 relate largely to the protests held to date, highlighting the continuation of environmental and socio-economic grievances. This has been made clear from the content analysis, as the similar themes and almost identical terms have appeared since 2015. Another point that is important to elucidate is the issue of 'effect' that goes beyond mobilization or tangible events such as imprisonment which concerns the relocation and subsequent problems in the new settlement. As can thus be concluded is that the protests in Las Bambas continue, and have continued much due to the 'broken promises'. This corresponds with the counter-hegemony concept of mobilisation through raising awareness. Likewise, the interconnection between the government and company response resonates with the main argument of this thesis as well, that the power dynamics give rise to, and reinforce social grievances. This likewise goes in line with the argument of this thesis that the power structures give rise to grievances which spark protests, but given the continuation of these grievances, protests also continue.

Specifically, concerns over how the Las Bambas project affects the environment, welfare, land and violation of rights has created a general sense of mistrust among

the area's residents. It all comes down to broken promises and an underlying lack of trust. Communities are not necessarily against mining, but they do not want their decision-making capacity about their land taken away. When companies arrive with heavy promises that subsequently are broken, which in practise is accepted by the state as the economy is so dependent on the investment, tensions are created, and conflicts arise.

The state – company – community conflict of Las Bambas is an example of how the hegemonic model of globalism reinitiates pre-existing institutional alliances between the private and the public sectors; however, it can also open up new networks, as it is the case with the global South agenda.

6 Concluding remarks

The future of the Las Bambas conflict can be analysed from several perspectives. One could argue that the protests will calm down eventually – a much appreciated view of pro-market friendly observers. However, the Neo-Gramscian theory's most important explanatory power lies in its capability to explain the continuation of the conundrum at hand. This thesis has argued that the large disparities in the mining sector gives rise to large socio-economic grievances, primarily among the indigenous communities in the nearby areas. At the same time, the hegemony of the market, which here is represented by the large mining corporations, perpetuates the structures in place, which even the Peruvian government in many ways is complicit in maintaining. As brought up in one of the sections, the Peruvian government is increasingly finding itself in a situation of 'in the middle' of both favouring more investments but also realising the dangers it can pose (which can be seen by the suspension of the Tia Maria mine license to favour local communities in fall 2019). However, the government does ultimately reinforce the structures conducive to the hegemony and serves often not as a mediator, but as a biased supporter of the economically superior side: the mining companies. However, as the case of Las Bambas has also highlighted, the Neo-Gramscian theory, used in this thesis, explains the continuous community mobilisations as a *counter-hegemonic* force.

In the Neo-Gramscian school, the counter-hegemonic force often wants to rise up and dethrone the hegemon. This is arguably less applicable in the case of Las Bambas, as the communities, through reading their protest demands, emphasise their wish to return to the original position – not to become hegemons themselves. Of course, should the companies leave, the vacuum would in many ways make the community a local hegemon given the absence of another. However, as the Neo-Gramscian theory concerns itself with larger 'structures' more than individual cases, the mining community, even if overthrowing the hegemon would still be under the same global pressure structures as before, and vulnerable to another powerful hegemon moving into the area in the absence of the former one.

However, in line with the Neo-Gramscian school, this thesis has also argued that it is unlikely that the protests will seize, as the continuation of the hegemonic power perpetuates socio-economic grievances through the 'broken promises' and thus protests. Many companies have of course sought to appease protesters through CSR programs. While these have sometimes worked, it can also be argued that they are only a continuation of 'power' as they are mostly futile.

As such, more research in the future should be put into the question of *how* to address the local grievances, as this thesis has mainly tried to describe and analyse

the reasons behind the protests, through the Neo-Gramscian perspective. Using the Neo-Gramscian perspective to come up with innovative ways of addressing local community grievances while also trying to strike a balance with investment-friendly environment could be key. Some argue that investment-heavy environments with low-skilled labour are not compatible with a good protection of human or indigenous rights. However, realistically, Peru will continue to be reliant on investments, and will thus continue to favour foreign companies and their investments. Since the government is also subject to the forces of the market through the 'financial system', it is unlikely that the government would do so itself. Hence, an increased focus and pressure on the companies to in innovative ways protect communities, needs to be addressed.

6.1 Future Research

This thesis acknowledges its limitations. Further research could take several trajectories, some of which will now be mentioned. For instance, the perspective of how NGOs and human rights organizations politicizes mining have not been brought up in this thesis and the extant literature remains scarce. Future studies would add an interesting and arguably invaluable contribution by outlining how these actors influence the dynamics.

Furthermore, the political implications of the mining conflict have not been explored as the subject is too extensive to discuss in this thesis, more than in a purely normative way. This is an issue that could, in the future, be explored extensively in research made by able academics. An interesting research way could thus be to explore how the Peruvian government deals with and ought to deal with the onset and development of social conflicts in the mining sector and how the implications impact both the decisions to do business in Peru and how it is later done.

The Neo-Gramscian approach is relevant for the mining conflict analysis as it, as mentioned, moves beyond state-centric theories to analyse societal conflicts. As seen, it can explain the movements of local communities and how they try to balance the hegemony of the mining companies. However, future studies could go beyond this school to examine similar trajectories, the more different theoretical approaches used, the more comprehensive the understanding of the causes, developments, dynamics and implications of the conflicts to better understand how to go about solving them.

Not only could it be advantageous to move beyond the Neo-Gramscian approach to in the future have a collection of analytical pieces from several different schools of thought, but also would it be advisable that future research adopts other means of analysis. For instance, this thesis used a content analysis approach, which was favourably for the purpose of the study. However, in the future, analysing the

mining conflicts through for instance an interpretivist discourse analysis of newspaper coverage and how state-owned news sources discuss the topic could also shine light on the power dynamics such as hegemony and counter-hegemony as discussed here. On the other hand, there is little quantitative research overall on mining protests, mostly due to a lack of data. This could be explored as well. In doing so, it would be possible to move beyond the single-case analysis, which would complete the discussion with a more generalizable view of the protests in Peru.

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