Neoliberalism is NOT the issue
(quote from J. Martinez Alier)

- Although it is true that the Washington Consensus led to new laws on mining in Latin America, although it is also true that transnational US or European companies have much political power...

- the March of Social Metabolism towards the “commodity frontiers” would be similar under a Keynesian social-democratic economy

- and it does not matter very much if it is Petrobras or Repsol or Oxy or a Chinese company which takes up your oil from indigenous territories in Amazonia.

Bolivia experienced a strong expansion of mining
in the last decade

Cycle of high commodity prices
High demand, growing investments
Previous liberalisation (1985-2005)
Favourable conditions for foreign investors
Bolivia experienced a strong expansion of mining in the last decade

**Cycle of high commodity prices**
High demand, growing investments

**Previous liberalisation (1985-2005)**
Favourable conditions for foreign investors

Yet, plans to overcome mineral export dependency
Industrialisation, community-based production

Mining expansion caused a sharp increase in socio-environmental impacts and conflicts

**Intense water use and contamination**
Impacts on livelihood and health

**Case of the lake Poopó Basin**
Declared “environmental emergency” in 2009

**Unprecedented centrality of EJ-related issues**
E.g., indigenous-peasant territorial rights

The lake Poopó basin is one of the most mining-impacted areas in Bolivia

Analysing these contradictions carefully has important implications for political strategy

1. Why mining expanded
   Besides price incentives—why plans failed

2. Why socio-environmental impacts not reduced
   Despite centrality of new narratives and actors

3. How both relate to post-neoliberal turn
   Political economic and social reconfigurations
Results

1. Mining expansion related to limited reform of the sector

- Increased presence of the state—yet economically not significant
- Reinforced dominance of transnational firms
- Favourable conditions maintained
- Bourgeoning "cooperative" sector
- Class alliance with transnationals

2. Limiting measures for the promotion of EJ was necessary for mining expansion

- Environmental legislation not changed
  - Despite new principles and narratives
- Insufficient capacity for environmental controls
  - De facto "self-control" of firms
- "Two-way" relationship between EJ and mining
  - Not just an outcome of extraction, also a factor
3. Reform reflected changes in the social power balance, mediated by the state

Empowerment of “neoliberal” social sectors
Key role of “cooperatives” in opposing regulation

Recomposition of conflict with national right
Guarantees stability yet limits extent of reform

Indigenous movements increasingly demobilised
“Marginalisation of post-extractivist forces”

Conclusions

We need to understand environmental justice issues in relation to broader political economic processes

Post-neoliberalism is not “all of the same”
Yet not sufficient to reduce resource dependency

The state is a condensation of social relations
“Extractivism” is not just a choice of governments

Implications for environmental justice struggles?