

DOMESTICATING DEMOCRACY



*THE POLITICS OF
CONFLICT RESOLUTION
IN BOLIVIA*

SUSAN
HELEN
ELLISON

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Democracy The Politics of Conflict Resolution in Bolivia

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Cover art: Design and illustration by Matthew Tauch. A sewing
machine stitches the rainbow-checkered wiphala flag utilized
by indigenous movements in Bolivia and adopted as an official
national symbol under Evo Morales.

For my parents, HELEN STANLEY MCCLOY,
LINDA RAYMOND ELLISON, and WILLIAM L. ELLISON JR.

And for my *comadres, compadres, ahijadas y ahijados*.

*Les agradezco por hacerme parte de sus familias,
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INTRODUCTION

Given a choice between a boiling, violent and a freezing, apathetic society as reaction to massive needs-deprivation, topdogs tend to prefer the latter. They prefer “governability” to “trouble, anarchy.” They love “stability.” Indeed, a major form of cultural violence indulged in by ruling elites is to blame the victim of structural violence who throws the first stone, not in a glasshouse but to get out of the iron cage, stamping him as “aggressor.” —JOHAN GALTUNG, *Peace by Peaceful Means*

Luz v. Jhonny

Luz and her companion crouch in the front seat of the car, scanning the yogurt factory doorway for a familiar figure. They are watching for Luz’s estranged husband, Jhonny, who is coming off the night shift. We have been sitting like this, our breath barely visible in the inky darkness, since about 5:30 A.M. We are here to “serve” Jhonny with an invitation to conciliation—a form of voluntary, third-party mediation. In Bolivia, alternative dispute resolution (ADR) programs aim to transform the ways people like Jhonny and Luz handle their conflicts. But ADR programs also aim to transform Bolivians as citizens and, indeed, to transform Bolivian democracy.

Right now, however, we are focused on spotting Jhonny.

Trucks bearing the company logo are lined up awaiting entry. Minibuses periodically deliver workers for the early-morning shift. The sky turns rosy as a slow trickle of workers exits the factory, nodding to the security guards, shivering against the piercing cold.

We are not much warmer in the car Luz borrowed from her *compadre de matrimonio*—the godfather of her marriage to Jhonny. A male friend has accompanied her. I learn he works with Jhonny and supplied the information

about Jhonny's shift hours so that Luz could catch him as he left work. I never learn if he is Luz's friend, a relative, a lover, or merely a coworker of Jhonny's who is sympathetic to her plight.

We wait. And wait. On edge. As we continue to monitor the exit, Luz turns to me, eyes apprehensive, and pleads: "I'm too nervous! Can you do it? I don't want him to see me. Can you just do it?"

I waver, but agree to hand Jhonny the letter and explain conciliation to him when he emerges.

After several close calls, a lean, hunched man appears in the doorway. "It's him!" Luz and her friend yelp in unison.

I'm out the door, calling his name, walking briskly.

No response.

I call again, "Jhonny!" He turns his head slightly in my direction but continues walking down the block. "Jhonny!" I insist, trotting across the dusty, cobbled street. Jhonny stops, alarmed, and turns toward me. "*¡No te asustes, no te asustes!*" Do not be afraid, I try to reassure him.

I tell him, "My name is Susan and I am from an integrated justice center. Your wife came to the center asking for help inviting you to conciliation. Conciliation is not a court process. Conciliation is about trying to find a solution to our conflicts. The idea is to have the help of a conciliator, a mediator, create a space where the two of you can talk through your problems and arrive at a mutually beneficial agreement," I say, repeating my oft-rehearsed script.

As I speak, I run my finger along the lines in the letter that explains conciliation to invitees. I am parroting the short speeches I have heard center interns and staff deliver to potential clients when they inquire about legal aid and conciliation services.

Jhonny nods, hesitantly, his arms still outstretched as if anticipating a punch. He says, "You know my wife came here claiming I had abandoned her with five kids—making a scandal at work."¹

I respond, "Whatever your problems, with conciliation you can talk about the issues and try to reach an agreement that is satisfying to you both. Conciliation isn't reconciliation. Some people do decide to work things out, to give each other a second chance, but others want to separate definitively. Those are things you two can discuss and put in an accord, a written agreement."

Jhonny nods again. "I understand."

"You should really think about coming," I say, adding the little push I have learned from my colleagues: "It's a good way to avoid the courts."

I know that “the courts” will conjure many things for Jhonny, all of them negative. As many have insisted to me over the years, in Bolivia “there is no justice.” Invoking “the courts” is code for tortuous administrative formalities, costly lawyers, and state agents more often associated with bribes and insults than fairness and succor. “Justice” is something that is mocked, or something that is manipulated, many Bolivians lament.

And that’s the point of the extrajudicial conciliation services offered at the integrated justice center (IJC): it’s the easier, faster, more economical option, meant to appeal to Bolivians fed up with state bureaucracies and skeptical of the state legal system’s ability to deliver justice.

I do not mention the fact that Luz may simultaneously pursue a criminal case against him for domestic violence. After months at the center, I know many women like her will not.

“Yes, yes, I understand,” Jhonny repeats. “I will come [to the center].”

And he does.

This little stakeout was unusual. Most clients at Bolivia’s IJCS were expected to deliver their invitations to conciliation on their own. It is, after all, an *invitation* for a voluntary process, not a court summons. Conciliation is meant to be a friendly means to resolve disputes.

But Luz was afraid.²

I had met Luz the previous day, when she approached the desk I was sharing with Angelica, the newest intern at the IJC in District 6 of El Alto, Bolivia. Luz had come to the center to ask for advice on a problem she had with her husband who, she claimed, was violent and had been hiding out at his sister’s house, trying to escape her requests for financial support. Luz explained to Angelica that some years earlier, Jhonny had shoved her down a deep ravine, shattering her leg. She was hoping to bring him to the center so that he would promise to use his medical insurance to pay for the removal of several screws that were causing her discomfort.

But Luz’s more pressing concern, she explained, was a debt she owed. She was due to make a quota payment on a loan from BancoSol that she took out at Jhonny’s request, and she needed her husband to help her cover the quota payment.

Angelica discussed with Luz her options for initiating a domestic violence case against her estranged husband, and she drafted letters of referral to the forensic medical examiner and a nongovernmental organization (NGO) offering psychological services where she could obtain the documentation she would need as evidence. But Luz still insisted that she wanted to bring her

husband to the center sooner, to try conciliation first. She suggested, however, that she was afraid to go alone, so she begged me to accompany her. “If I go to his sister’s house, she’ll just refuse to open the door,” Luz explained. “I want to catch him at work so that he can’t escape.” I happened to live close to the factory where Jhonny worked, and I agreed to go with her.

As I wrote up my field notes the following day, I could hear Luz sobbing through the conciliator’s glass window. She sat next to Jhonny, who had—despite my doubts—shown up for the session. Luz gasped for breath and the conciliator held an X-ray up to the light. The metal screws in her leg were visible even to my untrained eye. Whether the injury occurred as Luz described it, I cannot verify, but Jhonny sat next to her looking sullen. I did not enter the conciliation session since I delivered the invitation letter and did not want to create any feelings of partiality (a recurring preoccupation among conciliation practitioners).

An hour later, the couple emerged. Jhonny ran across the street to make copies of the conciliation accord, which outlined the agreement they had apparently reached. Surprised and impressed that things had seemingly worked out, I wished Luz good luck.

Later that evening, however, I received a call from a very upset Luz. “Doctorita,” she moaned, “he falsified his signature!”³

“On the accord?” I asked.

“Yes,” Luz responded mournfully. “He used a fake signature.”

HOW DID LUZ end up crouching outside a yogurt factory at 5:30 A.M.? Why turn to ADR rather than take her abusive husband to court for domestic violence? Understanding how she got there—and the choices she made—requires knowing a bit more about Luz’s case and the ways it reflects broader patterns of economic insecurity linked to violence and debt. But it also requires a deeper historical and political analysis of programs like those operating out of Bolivia’s IJCs and how they reflect broader foreign-funded efforts to transform conflict and, indeed, politics in Bolivia. Knowing that history, we might also ask, how could a conflict-resolution program aiming to help women like Luz become swept up in a larger debate over Bolivian democracy?

ADR programs like the one where I met Luz have become a commonsense platform for judicial reformers, democracy promoters, and good governance advocates worldwide.⁴ In the United States, ADR is now taken for granted as the first resort for many civil and domestic disputes, including divorce

proceedings. In addition to court-annexed conciliation—which is directly affiliated with courts and aimed at facilitating settlements between disputing parties—ADR encompasses a broader range of platforms. These include *extrajudicial* community mediation (often facilitated by volunteers) and commercial arbitration for business disputes.

Beyond these institutional mechanisms for resolving conflict, the language of ADR is likely familiar to readers. How many of us have learned to reframe our feelings in “I” statements (rather than accusatory ones beginning with “you”), to practice “active listening” techniques, and to identify the best alternative to a negotiated agreement (BATNA) of our counterpart in a business negotiation?⁵ ADR is the stuff of corporate meetings, handbooks, and international symposia on better negotiation tactics. Recognizing the gendered dimensions of employment negotiations, female academics are encouraged to adopt negotiation techniques to improve their salary offers and to resist the socially ingrained tendency to *not* negotiate better packages. These are skills, toolkits, and methods often celebrated for improving communication and facilitating cooperation with outcomes that are beneficial to all parties.

But throughout the world, the micropractices of negotiating a better salary offer or child support in the wake of divorce cannot be uncoupled from the macro-politics of ADR as a tool of democracy promotion and good governance platforms. These methods have spawned interdisciplinary fields of study concerned with peacemaking, academic journals, and NGOs specializing in transitional justice.⁶ International NGOs and the United Nations deploy conflict-resolution programs in the wake of genocide and civil unrest. Canadian donors have encouraged indigenous communities downstream from multinational mining operations to utilize ADR to settle complaints over ecological degradation and its remediation with company officials. German-funded projects have deployed ADR-trained analysts to rural communities beset by conflicts over territory ripe for agricultural production and export. Thus ADR encompasses a multiscalar set of theories about conflict and its resolution, as well as techniques that travel from bedrooms to boardrooms, and from court-annexed conciliation services to commissions on truth and reconciliation.

In Bolivia, a network of IJCS enables women like Luz to access pro bono legal aid and conciliation services in order to resolve disputes with domestic partners and neighbors. Originally funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), these ADR programs encourage the urban poor to circumvent the courts and avoid overburdened state institutions,

thereby assuming personal responsibility for the resolution of their problems rather than relying on frustrating legal bureaucracies. Broader conflict-resolution programs also have targeted the more combative, confrontational organizing tactics of the city's "militant" labor/trade unions and neighborhood associations. These "conflictual" movements, critics argue, threaten to destabilize Bolivian democracy and inhibit economic growth through unrelenting street protests.

Donors have advanced ADR as both a substitute to backlogged courts and as a means to instill Alteños—residents of El Alto—with more deliberative democratic temperaments.⁷ In so doing, this constellation of programs yokes intimate conflict to political upheaval, and overburdened courts to stunted economic development. Bolivian ADR programs profess to improve access to justice, deepen democracy, improve governance, and create the conditions under which private enterprise might flourish.

Yet ADR and allied democracy-promotion programs have become entangled in a much larger national debate over who sets the terms of democracy and what justice should look like in a plurinational Bolivia (that is, a multicultural society with a large indigenous majority). Foreign-funded judicial reform and democracy-assistance programs date back to the 1990s, when legal experts introduced ADR alongside larger modernization and economic reform projects. But conflict-resolution programs took on new resonance in October 2003 following massive protests that rocked the city of El Alto and surrounding hamlets (see the "Uprising" interlude in this book). The government of Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada responded with military force. As Bolivia grappled with the aftermath, foreign donors renewed their efforts to reform Bolivian democracy and to deescalate simmering tensions through conflict-resolution programs.

In 2008, the Morales administration put USAID under the microscope, accusing the American mission of funding his right-wing opposition and seeking to undermine his leftist government. Morales, Bolivia's first indigenous president, rallied his base of support—the coca growers' unions in the Chapare and Yungas regions—and accused USAID of political meddling (*ingerencia*), later severing diplomatic relations with the United States. The accusations sent existing programs into a period of prolonged uncertainty about whether their projects would continue or face imminent closure. The United States eventually suspended its democracy-assistance programs, and in 2013, the Morales administration expelled USAID from the country. USAID had already transferred full control of its ADR programs to the Bolivian Ministry of

Justice, while other European-funded conflict-resolution projects continued to operate through the work of Bolivian NGOs and through bilateral aid to the government.⁸

Regardless of who is executing them, however, conflict resolution, development, and related democracy-assistance programs continue to spark debate over the aims and strategic interests behind foreign aid—the ubiquitous *cooperación internacional*.⁹ Critics argue that Bolivia has become a kind of “project-protectorate” (Rodríguez-Carmona 2009), colonized by NGOs and good intentions. Or, in Steven Sampson’s terms (2002), one of many “project societies,” in which aid structures simply reproduce themselves as local elites and NGOs struggle over scarce resources.

This book examines how foreign aid ideologies, about legitimate democratic personhood, participation, and justice, chafe against local meanings of social relations, political engagement, and conflict in the city of El Alto. In particular, I follow donor efforts to promote ADR through workshops, public forums, and especially through the creation of a national program of IJCS meant to pull Bolivians out of the formal/state legal system. I show how the unfolding (geo)politics of foreign-funded conflict-resolution programs have become entangled with Andean kinship practices, local political tactics, and postcolonial governance projects. In the process, these ostensibly apolitical technocratic aid programs have been *hyperpoliticized* in Bolivia—as they have in other countries targeted by U.S. democracy assistance, such as Egypt and Russia.¹⁰

The stated aim of El Alto’s IJCS—like the one where I met Luz—has been to help Bolivians find relief for their everyday disputes outside the state legal system. Yet ADR experts sometimes blanched when I described cases like hers because they seemed to undercut the very reasons that advocates celebrate conciliation: informality, mutuality, voluntariness, and a more satisfying alternative than the courts. ADR advocates praise these qualities as particularly valuable in countries like Bolivia, where the justice system is notoriously despised. But this book is less about how ADR *should* be enacted than what actually happens when foreign aid programs hit the ground—in conciliation appointments, in the streets, outside yogurt factories, and in people’s homes. The following chapters link intimate experience of violence and economic insecurity to globally circulating aid programs that seek to transform democratic institutions and influence political behavior.

Alteños’ use of ADR offers insights into broader questions of conflict, violence, and economic precariousness in a booming Latin American city. It

also reveals how intimate violence and economic vulnerability are entangled with larger efforts to transform democratic institutions and practices. In contrast to conciliation's small-scale, technocratic, and therapeutic intervention, Alteños clamor for a broader conceptualization of justice—and a democratic system capable of redressing structural forms of violence and economic insecurity—even as they utilize these stopgap measures to make do in the meantime.

ADR in an Era of Plurinationalism

Anthropologists have long studied dispute-resolution mechanisms in the communities where they work.¹¹ Legal scholars once characterized the kinds of third-party mediation that anthropologists studied in “traditional” communities as “primitive” and premodern forms of law.¹² Those practices have since been recast as thoroughly modern and even more “civilized” than formal courts; indeed, many “Western”-style ADR programs initially took their inspiration from indigenous and popular justice practices from South African Tswana to rural Mexican villages—and from the writings of anthropologists working there.¹³ ADR first gained widespread recognition during the 1970s and 1980s during the American community mediation movement, with its most famous program being the Community Boards of San Francisco.¹⁴ Professional mediation is now widely used at the level of international relations and between private corporations.¹⁵ In the Bolivian context, ADR gained traction during the 1990s, as donors promoted commercial arbitration, a history I explore further in chapter 1. The *appeal* of informal dispute-resolution mechanisms in Bolivia, however, owes much to two major factors.

The first was—and continues to be—the widespread distrust many Bolivians feel toward the state legal system, as well as other state bureaucracies.¹⁶ As the anthropologist Daniel Goldstein has argued, many Bolivians living in marginalized neighborhoods experience the law *not* as “a force for ordering things and making them knowable and predictable . . . but [rather] something that in local perspective is barely distinguishable from illegality” (2012: 7). Bolivians endure endless *trámites* (paperwork) and accompanying *coima* (small bribes) as they navigate labyrinthine bureaucracies; poor and especially indigenous Bolivians report subtle disregard and outright humiliation at the hands of European-descendent and *mestizo* bureaucrats. Goldstein has characterized the arbitrary application of Bolivian laws and regulations as a process of “disregulation,” a “manufacture of organized disorder that is fun-

damental to contemporary urban governance” (2016: 237). Disregulation is not just a matter of state institutions lacking the technical skills or resources to more systematically apply existing laws or to ensure that their agents are informed about proper protocol. Municipal authorities *benefit* from keeping poor Bolivians in a state of permanent “suspended animation,” extracting fines and fees from poor itinerant vendors who circulate without proper registration (237). By allowing the urban poor to continue to operate outside formal regulation, government authorities never have to resolve the root causes of their precarious livelihoods—or offer real alternatives.

Horror stories about Bolivian bureaucracy are so notorious and widespread that while I conducted fieldwork in 2011 the *government* sponsored a competition for “el peor trámite de mi vida,” or “the worst bureaucratic paperwork experience of my life.”¹⁷ Among Bolivia’s many bureaucracies, it is the legal system and its accomplices—police, lawyers, and related institutions—that elicit the most anger and fear. The Morales administration made “de-colonizing public administration” part of its political platform: simplifying bureaucratic formalities, prosecuting public officials for corruption, ensuring services are available in Aymara, Quechua, and Guarani. Nevertheless, many Bolivians remain deeply skeptical of the state legal system’s ability to secure justice or treat them with fairness and respect. This is especially true for Bolivians whose vulnerability to bureaucratic mistreatment is amplified by scarce financial resources, darker complexions, or other markers betraying their lower-class status. It is in this context that informal conflict resolution and pro bono legal services hold such appeal.

The second factor contributing to ADR’s appeal is the historical confluence of donor platforms and social movement demands. The push for legal pluralism in Bolivia intensified in the 1990s as social movements and public intellectuals agitated for the recognition of cultural difference and indigenous autonomy.¹⁸ To stake their claims, activists built on the intellectual work of the Katarista movement, and drew on globally circulating rights language rooted in international treaties such as the International Labour Organization’s Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention (169), adopted in 1989.¹⁹ During this same period, Bolivia embarked on a series of reforms aiming to decentralize state administration and budgeting practices (see chapter 1).²⁰ Critics such as Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui (2012) have argued that state reforms adopted a superficial, folkloric/ornamental, and essentialist mode of multiculturalism that masked continued social, political, and economic inequalities and softened the effects of stringent

economic reforms. Nevertheless, these policies formally embraced the co-existence of multiple legal orders and created new avenues for political mobilization.²¹

In 2009, Bolivia's Constituent Assembly redrafted the political constitution of the state, launching the Plurinational State of Bolivia: one country, many nations contained within. Often glossed as *usos y costumbres* (customary law), indigenous, aboriginal, and peasant justice is now codified, alongside indigenous autonomy.²² In the years since its adoption, however, social movements, anthropologists, and government ministries have wrestled with how to meaningfully enact the constitution's promise of indigenous sovereignty: where are those borders? Are there limits to indigenous jurisdiction for crimes like rape and murder? What does decolonization mean for the many millions of Aymara, Quechua, and Guarani Bolivians who make their primary residence in urban centers, and who are embedded within multiple social networks and associations—ranging from urban trade unions to rural *cabildos* (indigenous councils)?²³

When I first began researching foreign-funded ADR and affiliated “access to justice” programs, a number of people suggested I should be studying indigenous conflict-resolution mechanisms if I wanted to see authentic forms of popular justice and understand Bolivia's effort to put that much-promised legal pluralism into practice. They pointed to the flexibility of community justice. These oral, dynamic, and nonrigid practices, they argued, resist stable definitions and institutionalization, raising questions about the effects of codifying such practices. Scholars and activists I met were busy cataloguing the variety of conflict-resolution practices in rural hamlets. Such projects paralleled efforts to promote “Western-style” ADR in cities like El Alto, Santa Cruz, and La Paz.²⁴

Advocates have dubbed these twin efforts MORCS (metodos *originarios*, or *aboriginal/indigenous* methods) and MARCS (“metodos *alternativos*,” or *alternative* dispute resolution methods), presenting them as parallel—if distinctive—frameworks. Both approaches aim to decenter the state legal system from people's lives. As I show in the second half of the book, popular understandings of legal pluralism enacted through autonomous regions may reproduce a billiard-ball image of legal processes, where “Western” and “indigenous” practices are seen as disconnected systems allowed to coexist. By contrast, I demonstrate how these legal systems and practices are in fact deeply interpenetrated.²⁵ Nevertheless, the appeal of informal dispute resolution—in institutional settings like the IJCS or movements for indigenous sovereignty—owes much to this larger historical context.

After several years working with Bolivian activists and social movements (see “Uprising”), and in conversation with Bolivian scholars such as Rivera Cusicanqui and Pamela Calla, I decided not to focus my attention on movements for indigenous autonomy and legal pluralism. Instead, I turned my analytic lens to programs that have supported those movements—and sometimes aimed to change them, or, that have provoked their ire. I turned to the donor-backed projects targeting the city of El Alto—and Bolivian democracy more generally—through the promotion of ADR.

Debates over the aims and effects of ADR are not unique to Bolivia. Much of the vast practitioner literature describes ADR techniques and theorizes best practices for achieving good outcomes.²⁶ By contrast, early critical analyses of ADR centered on whether informalism extended the reach of state power into the lives of citizens via nonstate forms, while others pointed to the ways that practitioners and community mediation programs resisted that state-expansionist project.²⁷ A number of ADR’s early critics argued that it merely serves to control and channel other possible (and perhaps more radical) expressions of community organization and political dissent while producing a hegemonic “ideology of mediator neutrality” or “harmony ideology.”²⁸

Indeed, early critics of informalism maintained that neighborhood justice centers like those operating in El Alto or San Francisco were not innocent of political aims. Richard Hofrichter (1982), for example, suggested that private dispute resolution served to “dampen class conflict” by redirecting people away from class-based organizing and collective action. Rather than seeing themselves as aggrieved groups demanding redress as a collective, people come to see themselves as private consumers pursuing the satisfaction of their individual complaints (1982: 240). What ADR advocates celebrated as a decentralized, participatory approach to resolving conflict, detractors saw as a managerial scheme that obscured broader patterns—erasing politics entirely. As Christine Harrington concurred, “The origins of these problems are depoliticized or ignored, and the resolutions are internalized by the individualized form of participation. Conflict in this setting is absorbed into a rehabilitative model of minor dispute resolution” (1982: 62). Ugo Mattei and Laura Nader (2008) have pushed the critiques further. They argue that the entire “rule of law” paradigm—including the international export of ADR—enables elite actors to *plunder* poor nations.²⁹ It does so by encouraging poor countries to “harmonize” commercial laws with international standards and enact privatization schemes that serve the interests of foreign investors and national elites, while undercutting more antagonistic forms of seeking justice, such as street protest.

These assessments point to the multiple meanings of key terms in conflict analysis and resolution. How something is defined—as a means of resistance or a mechanism of control—is deeply political and historically contingent, revealing the diversity of approaches taken by people and organizations appealing to informalism. Yet donor platforms advocating ADR often obscure those contingencies by presenting ADR as a natural outgrowth of native traditions and more humanistic approaches to achieving justice. These debates and accusations are particularly pertinent to the Bolivian context, where recurring political upheaval is coupled with distrust of legal bureaucracies—as well as skepticism over foreign-funded projects aiming to displace them with substitutes such as ADR.

The legal scholar Amy Cohen (2006) has criticized the debate over ADR in the United States for its emphasis on abstract aims—focusing on what ADR is *meant* to do, whether it is a tool of liberation and empowerment or purely one of social control. By contrast, Cohen argues for focusing primarily on ADR *in practice* around the world. In many ways this project responds to Cohen’s call. I would argue, however, that separating the two questions—abstract aims versus local applications—fails to account for the full picture of how these concepts and practices travel as development models. It also misses the ways that abstract donor aims come to circumscribe the terms of the debate by determining which kinds of work get funded.

Failing to attend to the intentionality behind these programs and the ways local practices sometimes converge with donor agendas can err on the side of celebrating complexity at the expense of recognizing hegemony. How has informal dispute resolution become, to borrow a concept from Kay Warren and David Leheny (2010), an “inescapable solution”? How did such conflict-resolution programs emerge as a component of democracy-assistance programs more broadly—in Bolivia and other “conflict-prone” parts of the world? What impact have they had on political struggles and the lives of the people they touch? What do they reveal about efforts to shape democracy in Bolivia? I propose we approach these questions through the lens of what it means to “domesticate democracy.”

Domesticating Democracy

Democracy means a lot of different things to different people, be they electoral observers in Venezuela or neighborhood activists in Detroit. As a system of government, democracy is, at its core, the ability of people to exercise power over the decisions that affect their lives. Accounts of *liberal* de-

mocracies frequently stress the countervailing forces of individual freedoms and institutionalized constraints: what puts liberal in liberal democracy is the preoccupation with protecting liberty—and the grounding of that liberty in rights-bearing individuals. But these commitments, liberals argue, must be accompanied by mechanisms for protecting minority groups from the potential abuses of majority rule. Although democracies are frequently assumed to extend universal suffrage to all citizens, voting rights have been a hard-won battle for many groups in formal democratic states. In Bolivia, questions of *substantive* democracy have pivoted around the exclusion and later managed—or what Rivera Cusicanqui calls a “conditional”—inclusion of the country’s indigenous majority; historically, political and economic power has been consolidated in the hands of ruling Euro-descendent and mestizo elites.

In describing liberal democracy, many people cite a litany of characteristics, ranging from free and fair elections, to mechanisms that prevent the consolidation of power in any one governing branch (“checks and balances”), to particular values such as tolerance and pluralism as reflective of a democratic ethos. Democracy also is associated with a whole host of rights, including freedom of the press and of association; freedom of information, speech, and movement; private property ownership; and religious freedom.

Rather than taking categories like “democracy” or typologies of democratic governance for granted, anthropologists frequently emphasize that political forms and practices are not so easily segregated into democratic or *not democratic*. We learn more, perhaps, by understanding how and under what conditions people who are “differently situated in relations of power” characterize something as democratic or not (Paley 2002: 471). As I found while conducting research in El Alto, the same political tactics some activists described to me as undeniably and even radically democratic, others characterized as grossly antidemocratic, authoritarian, and a violation of individual rights (Ellison 2015). Similarly, Matthew Gutmann reflects, “Democracy’s very multivalence is a key reason for the zeal with which so many people have employed the term to dramatically different ends in recent history.”³⁰ Paying attention to the micropolitics through which these meanings are consolidated, negotiated, or disputed provides insight into what democracy means to people in practice.³¹ Timothy Mitchell has taken the argument about democracy’s multiple meanings further, stating that

it can refer to ways of making effective claims for a more just and egalitarian world. Or, it can refer to a mode of governing populations

that employs popular consent as a means of limiting claims for greater equality and justice by dividing up the common world. Such limits are formed by acknowledging certain areas as matters of public concern subject to popular decision while establishing other fields to be administered under alternative methods of control . . . (2011: 9)

As component parts of larger democracy-assistance programs, the practices of judicial reform, good governance projects, training workshops targeting civil society, and ADR programs are enmeshed in these struggles.³²

Research on U.S. democracy assistance has tended to focus on (1) the intellectual and institutional history of democracy promotion as a form of U.S. foreign policy and aid intervention;³³ (2) both the declared and the strategic (that is, undeclared) *intent* behind individual American administrations and particular democracy-promotion paradigms;³⁴ (3) lessons learned or “best practices” in the field of democracy-assistance implementation;³⁵ and (4) the challenges of *quantifying and measuring* the impact of democracy-promotion interventions.³⁶ Many of these projects reflect a normative commitment to liberal democracy as a project worthy of refinement and dissemination.

By contrast, critics of U.S. democracy assistance in Bolivia have tended to analyze it almost exclusively as a tool of imperial expansion. They see the United States as a puppeteer that uses covert mechanisms to direct local NGOs and government ministries toward ends that are amenable to U.S. strategic interests—in collaboration with national elites.³⁷ Such analyses criticize the liberal ideologies and strategic objectives expressed in declassified (or WikiLeaks) cables between the American mission and the U.S. State Department, but they offer little sense of how democracy-promotion programs operate on the ground or what effect, if any, they produce. Instead, they frequently remain at the level of intentionality and ideology. Doing so, however, flattens the complicated history and political terrain of NGO work and development-assistance programs in Bolivia—as in other parts of the world.³⁸

Democracy promotion, judicial reform, and ADR are not the sole property of the United States or USAID. Conflict-resolution programs share a number of assumptions that crosscut other kinds of development aid (i.e., women’s empowerment projects or participatory budgeting), whether they are run by USAID or funded by other donors on friendlier terms with the Morales administration. Further, it would be a mistake to conflate participation in these programs with being right-wing or anti-Morales, given Bolivia’s

long-standing reliance on foreign aid and NGOs. As a consequence, many Bolivians across the political spectrum have found work with foreign-funded development projects, whether they were program designers, water engineers, or drivers of jeeps that transported German aid workers to remote outposts.³⁹

Focusing exclusively on U.S. strategic interests, while understandable given the pattern of interventionism spanning from the Monroe Doctrine to the Cold War and beyond, may miss the subtle ways these programs operate as techniques of governance. It also tends to narrow our focus to aid directed to groups that Morales identifies as his opposition (even if that is a shifting category). It further narrows our analysis of informalism to U.S. foreign aid, rather than reckoning with the larger constellation of donor institutions that share similar approaches and assumptions about the social, economic, and political good produced through ADR. Much like debates over informalism in the United States, the challenge remains the linking of critical analyses of operating ideologies with the lived effects of these projects. I suggest we might think about ADR as one technique of domesticating democracy. *Domestication* helps us get at the stated and strategic aid objectives of democracy-assistance programs, the suspicions they generate, and the effects they produce in people's lives.

Domesticate is a politically charged verb. It suggests an effort to control, tame, break, or train. For political activists wary of co-optation, it suggests an attempt to neutralize opposition. Within the Morales administration, it's about subterranean efforts to subjugate Bolivians to imperialist projects. Indeed, donors and local contractors sometimes articulated their objectives to me through the equally charged language of pacification (*apaciguar*, or to calm, appease, pacify, or mollify an angry population). Ironically, critics have accused the Morales administration of operating with a similar disciplinary attitude toward its internal critics.

I use the term because it captures something of the operating logic behind democracy-assistance programs, but also the ways critics *perceive* them—on several registers. Both donors and ADR advocates characterized their efforts as cultivating not *docile* populations (that is, subjugated to external control), but rather more *constructive* ones (agentive, autonomous citizens who make their/the nation's future). They insist they don't want tame Bolivians, but rather Bolivians capable of negotiating their demands through established democratic channels and toward productive ends, promoting the common good rather than divisive sectorial interests. But that is the point of my argument about domestication's many valences. ADR programs fit within a larger

assemblage of institutions and reformers seeking to mold *particular* kinds of citizens out of “conflictual” Bolivians.

The question is not whether democracy-assistance programs encourage Bolivians to *have a say*, it’s what *kind* of voice they should use to articulate those claims. Donor representatives with whom I spoke lamented not Bolivian apathy before politics—frequently the object of political empowerment projects—but rather *overly bellicose* modes of political participation.⁴⁰ That is, a recurring concern among democracy-assistance programs is not about a lack of political engagement, but rather about a tendency to engage in forms of political action that critics deem destabilizing, illiberal, or authoritarian.

Those critiques sometimes conflate street protest and property destruction with physical violence, characterizing all three as threats to a functioning, stable democracy. Yet ADR advocates point to the very real physical violence that erupts during both political disputes and intimate ones. Domestication, therefore, refers to the processes through which conflict-resolution programs seek to discipline disruptive political tactics in the service of democratic governability, as well as to deescalate and displace physical violence as a means of resolving disputes.

Thinking about what it means to domesticate democracy further invokes ideals of national sovereignty: the domestic as dominion over one’s own country. To what extent do Bolivian political leaders and citizens choose their own path, and to what extent have multilateral donors, foreign governments, and corporations shaped domestic policies? These questions have haunted development aid in Bolivia since the 1950s, when tensions arose, for example, over the “inherent asymmetry” of U.S.-Bolivia cooperation in the healthcare sector (Pacino 2016: 30). As the historian Nicole Pacino argues, during the Cold War era, the Bolivian “Health Ministry’s reliance on U.S. financial and technical assistance for developing a national health program was a source of wounded Bolivian pride and internal organizational friction” even as both governments benefited from the relationship (2016: 30).

Under the Morales administration, Bolivia has confronted the role that various international donors and multilateral agencies have played in shaping (some would say dictating) its national policies: remaking Bolivia’s economy, funding basic infrastructure and social services—often in the wake of those same economic reforms—and prosecuting the drug war. Whether through plans to export lithium reserves to China, talk of nuclear power plants with Russia, or close diplomatic relations with Venezuela’s Hugo Chávez (before his death), Morales has sought to displace U.S. sway. Yet these new political

alignments do not release Bolivia from foreign economic investments and political influence, but rather reconfigure how these international relations shape national development projects and political debates.⁴¹

Domestication can also refer to how liberal democracy is “translated,” “vernacularized,” “hybridized,” or “refracted” in particular contexts.⁴² Maxwell Owusu (1997), for example, characterizes the process of domesticating democracy as the ongoing work required to transplant democracy into a new cultural-political context; democracy is domesticated, Owusu argues, as it is adapted to a new national or cultural “soil.” By contrast to botanical metaphors, Shoko Yamada (2014) emphasizes how shifting conceptualizations of citizenship and democracy reflect the interests of political elites at particular junctures, and how such elites inscribe those politically useful definitions into textbooks and other civic education materials.⁴³ For Yamada, domestic or national elites frame democracy in terms amenable to their continued rule.

Thinking domestically also draws attention to ADR’s entanglements with *other* domestics, that is, *domestic* policy debates *internal* to the United States and other foreign donors. Declassified documents convey the anxieties that leftist leaders like Evo Morales provoke in Washington—as internal reports characterize Morales as a *cuadillo* and narco-terrorist/guerrilla. However, as Winifred Tate (2015) has shown in her ethnography of Plan Colombia and U.S. policymaking, those strategic interests are often as much about turf battles between Republicans and Democrats at “home” in the United States as they are about a perceived communist (or terrorist) threat. As Tate argues, the moniker “narco-guerrilla” emerged as a particularly useful category to justify continued institutional funding in the post–Cold War era, as military agencies fretted over shrinking budgets.⁴⁴

Further, in her study of Finnish humanitarian efforts, the anthropologist Liisa Malkki explores the “domestic arts” of volunteers knitting trauma teddies distributed to children in war zones—projects often undertaken to deal with the volunteer’s own loneliness. Rather than dismiss these arts as inconsequential, Malkki insists they are revelatory of how “the practices of aiding ‘distant others’ . . . are as domestic as they are foreign—as much about ‘the home’ . . . as they are about any foreign elsewhere” (2015: 10). Thus multiple, embedded “domestics” inhere in any analysis of postconflict or democracy-assistance programs. These include the operating ideologies and the power struggles that occur, for example, on the floor of U.S. Congress or in political think tanks *prior* to becoming entangled with questions of national sovereignty in places like Bolivia. But they also include the ways lonely knitters find solace in the moral figure of distant suffering children.

Finally, we might also think about domestic relations as a target for democracy-assistance programs. Feminist scholars have long argued that “the separation of domestic (kinship) and public (political and economic) relations should not be presupposed but rather should be a matter of historical and ethnographic inquiry” (McKinnon and Cannell 2013: 13).⁴⁵ Here, I want to underscore how aid programs imagine this relationship, as the so-called private realm becomes an object of intervention seeking to remake citizens and their relationship to state institutions—and to each other. And this is where much of my own focus centers, particularly in the second half of the book. That is, how have intimate, household relations, like the conflict between Luz and Jhonny, become the stuff of democracy-assistance programs and related entrepreneurial citizenship projects, and with what effects? How are political economic relations erased in the process? These are multiscalar moves—by me, but also by democracy-assistance programs themselves.

For many ADR advocates, the grinding experiences of conflict and violence that characterize intimate relations in El Alto are matched only by the routine abuses of state bureaucracies. Alteños find themselves enduring interminable lines and bureaucratic red tape in order to obtain basic public services for their homes and to exercise their citizenship rights.⁴⁶ By contrast, ADR advocates argue that informal dispute resolution can spare the urban poor from the recurring indignities, frustrations, and abuses of legal bureaucracies as they cope with domestic tensions. ADR allows clients to repair intimate relations, but it also indirectly aims to repair relations between states and their citizens—who have been estranged by bureaucratic mistreatment.

Domestication also draws our attention to ongoing efforts to redirect the solutions that people seek for their problems further inward, toward the intimate, interpersonal realm—with the expectation that friendlier techniques of conflict resolution might transform Bolivian citizens in addition to liberating them from abusive and neglectful state institutions. Thus *domestic-ate* gestures toward the ways that democracy-promotion efforts strive to rehabilitate “conflictual” Bolivians as political actors *and* as husbands, wives, neighbors, parents, and in-laws. By learning how to listen to one another, how to negotiate, how to work through problems via better communication techniques, advocates hope ADR will relieve tensions both in the home and in the country as a whole. This approach reflects a postulation about how conflict *and its resolution* scale up between intimate disputes and larger political ones. Taken together, these interventions reflect an ongoing effort to foster modes of citizenship I characterize as “entrepreneurial” and “counterinsurgent” in the service of democratic governance and economic development.

Entrepreneurial and Counterinsurgent Citizens

Definitions of citizenship frequently center on legal status—tied to particular states, premised on certain requirements, and endowed with particular rights and duties. Much as they do with “democracy,” however, anthropological approaches to citizenship move beyond legal categories to instead consider a broader array of emotions, practices, ethics, and claims making.⁴⁷ Citizenship might be understood, as James Holston (2009) suggests, as a method of distributing *inequalities* rather than rights. Among the Mohawk of Kahnawà:ke, Audra Simpson speaks of *feeling* citizenship; under conditions of settler colonialism, *feeling* citizenship “may not be institutionally recognized, but [is] socially and politically recognized in the everyday life of the community” (2014: 175). These are emotionally charged and shared frames of reference for particular communities, “and people get called out on them” on street corners and in tribal council meetings all the time (175). These more expansive understandings of citizenship include the ways people declare their belonging to a variety of sociopolitical bodies, assert rights, stake claims to entitlements, and fashion themselves as political actors, whether or not they are officially recognized as the legal members of a particular polity. These approaches also provide avenues for analyzing how people articulate what belonging or inclusion mean to them—in contradistinction to “top-down” efforts to produce particular kinds of citizen-subjects.⁴⁸

My approach here pivots around analyzing the *kind* of citizen that democracy-assistance programs envision—explicitly, but more often implicitly—and how ADR is implicated. When articulated through the vocabulary of citizenship, those framings often center on the unresponsiveness of state agents to citizen demands, the need to cultivate healthy expressions of political dissent, and debates over whether people’s rights are respected. However, I argue that ADR is enmeshed in larger development paradigms and political-economic reforms that link self-fashioning, economically mobile, and financially “empowered” subjects with the rights, obligations, and proper conduct of good citizens. These broader citizenship projects connect the actions of protesters to those of ambulant market vendors, and the behavior of women blockading traffic during national strikes to those starting small businesses.

What I want to emphasize here are the ways that individual liberty, political participation, and entrepreneurship get lashed up together under the umbrella of democracy-assistance programs and allied development projects. I describe these framings—and the standards of behavior they entail—as the hallmarks of entrepreneurial and counterinsurgent citizenship.

Democracy-promotion programs have roots in liberal preoccupations with protecting individual liberty, as well as cultivating and unleashing active citizens, “transforming the apathetic into the politically active, the indolent into the productive, and the dependent into the independent” (Cruikshank 1999: 25).⁴⁹ Many democracy-assistance programs couple this concern for safeguarding individual liberty (i.e., in weighing and exercising one’s conscience in political matters) with ideals of entrepreneurial autonomy. Over the last three decades an assemblage of institutions, including foreign donors, has encouraged Bolivians to adopt market solutions to social welfare and as an expression of individual freedom. In many parts of the world, Bolivia included, this orientation toward the entwining of political and economic liberalism is often associated with “neoliberal” economic reforms. Neoliberalism, as the political geographer David Harvey succinctly explains, is “a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets and free trade. The role of the state is to create and preserve an institutional framework appropriate to such practices” (2005: 2). Beyond specific policy measures, however, scholars such as the political philosopher Wendy Brown argue that neoliberalism “imposes a market rationale for decision making on all spheres” of life (2005: 42).⁵⁰ People “who are ‘entrepreneurs of themselves,’” the anthropologist Elizabeth Dunn explains, “flexibly alter their bundles of skills and manage their careers, but they also become the bearers of risk, thus shifting the burden of risk from the state to the individual” (2004: 22).⁵¹

One of the most ubiquitous expressions of entrepreneurial citizenship has been the effort to extend “financial inclusion” through small loans to the poor. Microfinance is a diverse and shifting sector; broadly, it entails “the sale of standardized financial services in small quantities at high volumes. The basic product is credit, running on cycles that are usually shorter than one year, offered on a cost-covering-to-profitable basis, normally with successively larger loans being issued in each cycle” (Mader 2016: 8).⁵² Much like the enormous variety of actors involved in democracy-assistance programs, actors composing the microfinance sector include multilateral aid agencies, NGOs, for-profit financial institutions, think tanks, and private donors—from Bill Gates to your aunt who made a loan to a woman she saw listed on the Kiva website. The microfinance industry now cites numbers ranging from 91.4 to 195 million borrowers to \$100.7 billion distributed in loans worldwide

(Mader 2016: 10). The enormity of these numbers has been matched only by the impacts they have claimed to make.

Microfinance programs have frequently targeted women through the language of empowerment, promoting *national* development through individual women's increased autonomy over their bodies, livelihoods, and life choices.⁵³ Lending programs include loans to small groups, as well as individual loan recipients, and accompanying budgeting and business-plan training sessions. But they also have encompassed often-mandated workshops aimed at encouraging particular bodily orientations toward self-care, reproductive health, and hygiene.⁵⁴ Financial inclusion through access to credit is thus attached to other projects aiming to promote women's empowerment through education, birth control, and courses on political leadership.

As Sian Lazar argues, in the Bolivia context the question was not *whether* residents have a “credit culture” but rather *what kind* and the extent to which it is linked up with formal financial institutions (2004: 305). In El Alto, widespread practices of interpersonal lending once served as a primary source for credit—whether through moneylenders, friends, or kin. Many of the stories explored in this book follow center clients who are enmeshed in complex webs of debt owed to intimate social relations *and* banking institutions. Women like Luz. What microfinance has done is connect more people to financial institutions and to encourage particular kinds of behavior associated with being creditworthy and achieving “more efficient self-help through credit” (Mader 2016: 2).⁵⁵ Subsequent studies of microfinance have been far less enthusiastic, finding little evidence to support optimistic proclamations, or finding the impact it has made downright insidious.⁵⁶ Nevertheless, those doubts have not slowed the expansion of the field. Indeed, Mader argues that the microfinance sector has largely come unmoored from the antipoverty, women's empowerment goals that once motivated it; instead, “the process of expanding microfinance becomes the end in itself,” a process Mader characterizes as the “financialization of poverty,” a mechanism for expanding the frontier of finance and extracting surplus from the poor (2016: 19).

“Entrepreneurial citizenship” is thus promoted through microfinance agencies encouraging women to pursue credit as a means for personal and family uplift. It is promoted through donor institutions like the International Republican Institute, inviting small business owners to Washington, D.C., as “model citizens,” explicitly linking economic liberalism and the individual entrepreneurship of small business owners to a performance of virtuous citizenship. To borrow from Hannah Appel, entrepreneurial citizenship expresses a “neoliberal

imagination of democracy-as-market-efficiency-and-access” (2014: 620). As I show in this book, it is further operationalized when Bolivians adopt tools of negotiation to privately manage conflicts tied to indebtedness, allowing them to repay their institutional bank loans according to schedule.

In this context, programs promoting citizen-entrepreneurs act within nodes of what the philosopher Michel Foucault (1995 [1979]) called “governmentality”: state agencies and NGOs entice people to adopt new techniques of self-reliance and self-discipline. One of the most concrete ways to think about neoliberal governmentality is through the everyday ways we internalize norms of behavior measured through performance indicators, quality assurance monitoring systems, evaluation reports, and other benchmarks of success.⁵⁷ These appear to be neutral mechanisms aimed at ensuring we get things we value: transparency, accountability, and quality assurance. Yet critics have been particularly attuned to the ways that these audit techniques have encouraged people to “identify with the goals of . . . increased market fitness through efficiency, empowerment, and self-improvement” *to the exclusion of other possible life projects or values* (Vannier 2010: 284). And this is the crux of the tensions I explore in the chapters that follow.

Alongside these efforts to promote an empowered, entrepreneurial citizenry, donors, NGOs, and government agencies alike have also sought to shape a mode of political engagement that I characterize as “*counterinsurgent*.” Holston (2009) coined the term “insurgent citizenship” to describe the ways marginalized Brazilians make incursions on urban space as a means of claiming citizenship rights they had been denied. By contrast to the formal inclusion expected for citizens, historically what many Brazilians have experienced instead is “differentiated.” Differentiated citizenship refers to the gradations in rights that people are actually able to enjoy in practice, given the persistence of exclusions based on race, class, gender, and other markers of social difference. These are gradations familiar to many Bolivians, particularly the country’s indigenous majority.⁵⁸ Yet Holston argues that urban squatters on São Paulo’s peripheries make claims to their “right to the city” through the very legal frameworks that were used to marginalize them, deploying rights discourses, bureaucratic strategies, and the occupation of urban space to build their homes.

Alteños frequently celebrate the 2003 uprising as a reflection of their rebellious and *insurgent* character: a willingness to put their bodies on the line for justice. Anthropologists and historians too have pointed to Bolivia’s “culture of rebellion and political turmoil” (McNeish 2008: 92; Lazar 2008). This form of insurgency includes the ways indigenous Bolivians have made

incursions into urban space marked “white” through legal and discursive tactics similar to those described by Holston, but also through embodied, transgressive spectacles of dance and protest that make claims on political power beyond institutional frames.⁵⁹ From social movements to the election of Evo Morales, Alteños and other indigenous Bolivians have indeed made inroads on the exercise of power, within the city and on the national stage. By contrast, I put the *counter* in counterinsurgent to characterize ongoing, top-down efforts to transform political tactics deemed too conflictual amid these battles.

Counterinsurgent citizens turn inward for the resolution of their problems rather than toward confrontation, and toward the negotiation table rather than street protest. In some ways, these approaches parallel Holston’s Paulistas, who creatively deploy land titles, liberal rights discourses, and proper bureaucratic channels to achieve substantive rights. Holston himself takes issue with the persistent “incivilities” that haunt Brazilian sociopolitical life, including graffiti and other signs of urban disorder and hostility. In the Bolivian context, reform projects often distinguish between good citizenship practices and bad sectarianism, trying to steer people toward the former. The latter includes those political tactics utilized by many social organizations—often criticized as authoritarian and illiberal threats to individual liberty and democratic stability.⁶⁰

My aim here is to analyze how these programs *construe* citizenship beyond legal definitions of membership, obligations, and rights to include appropriate modes of political participation, moderated communication, as well as economic self-sufficiency. Many democracy-assistance programs explicitly understand their work as remaking Bolivians from the inside out, transforming first their dispositions toward conflict, their interpersonal relationships, and, finally, broader patterns of social conflict in the country.

An entrepreneurial and counterinsurgent citizen demonstrates her enterprising spirit as she pursues credit and achieves economic independence. She also demonstrates her responsibility as a citizen and a person in the ways she manages her interpersonal disputes. She doesn’t wait on the state to intervene, and when she does need to air her grievance on political matters, she channels her frustrations through designated institutional mechanisms and not street protests. She is a fully active and mature citizen not only in the realm of political participation (in elections, in neighborhood associations) but also in her livelihood strategies and the way she manages home economics. It is at the intersection of these twin efforts to promote an entrepreneurial and counterinsurgent citizenry that I locate my analysis of ADR. ADR

operates as one “technology of citizenship” among many others (Cruikshank 1999). This technology of citizenship links notions of active participation in democratic processes and institutions with self-governance, entrepreneurial modes of uplift, and peaceful means of conflict resolution.

Yet neoliberal logics of individual “responsibilization” always exist alongside other competing ideas about what it means to be a moral person, and how moral personhood relates to social responsibility (Trnka and Trundle 2014) and economic justice (Lazar 2012). So too competing ideas about what kinds of political action are legitimate, including more confrontational tactics (Ellison 2015). What happens, then, when these modes of entrepreneurial and counterinsurgent citizenship bump up against other meanings of belonging and justice?

The people who came to the IJCS rarely talked about “citizenship” in the ways that ADR advocates, donors, political scientists, and anthropologists did. Instead, they invoked dilemmas and disappointments couched in the language of justice and responsibility. The intersection of these two concepts might be better captured by the English word *accountability*. Their invocation of responsibility—applied to kin and state agents alike—hails these modes of entrepreneurial and counterinsurgent citizenship, finding them deficient.

In the IJCS, Alteños spent a lot of time talking about debts. As they sought to hold each other to account during conciliation sessions, the tabulations they made were frequently quite explicit. They entailed debts owed, both moral and material, to neighbors, kin, and banking institutions. Clients often contrasted themselves with “irresponsible” kin, or commended others for being *responsible* in the face of economic duress, fulfilling their social and economic commitments to others.

In a context of widespread neoliberalization, it would be easy to interpret Alteños’ appeals to responsibility through a similar frame of “responsibilization”—an indication that people have internalized this orientation.⁶¹ Yet as I show in the latter half of the book, IJC clients hitched notions of responsibility to a broader understanding of social obligation that entails a sustained relationship—even if it is one that has fallen into asymmetrical disrepair.

The value expressed through the language of responsibility was not about greater market efficiency but rather the ways people’s entrepreneurial aspirations had warped and strained their ability to meet their obligations *to others*. These debts, calculated on the backs of smudged envelopes or counted off on their fingers, were less about the rational management of financial resources (though that too was a concern) than an expression of disillusionment and growing distrust. Local idioms of responsibility also point to the

ways that intimate relations can become grindingly burdensome when they are subject to prolonged economic vulnerability. As friends and kin struggle to cope with precarious incomes and physical insecurity behind the walls of their *domicilios*—the multigenerational compounds that shelter extended families—they grapple with the fallout produced by their participation in entrepreneurial modes of citizenship.

Mitchell has argued that, increasingly, “democratic struggles become a battle over the distribution of issues, attempting to establish as matters of public concern questions that others claim as private” (2011: 9). Following Mitchell, what happens in ADR sessions is revelatory of how simple technical interventions aiming to improve access to (extra)legal services can redistribute public concerns as private ones. But ADR projects also draw our attention to another dimension of this “battle over the distribution of issues”: ADR frames the acceptable communicative parameters for how people might thrust those concerns back across the imagined private/public divide.

ADR in Action

This book seeks to connect the geopolitical to the intimate and national struggles over justice to the everyday experiences of people targeted by aid programs, as well as those responsible for implementing them. I do so by moving from the design of donor-funded projects to the practices of people hired in Bolivia to administer them, to the people whose lives are impacted by ADR programs in El Alto.⁶² For fifteen months (2010–2011), I worked in foreign-funded legal aid centers and conflict-resolution programs, and I visited the criminal courts in El Alto and La Paz.⁶³ As I did so, I tracked two broadly defined categories of aid interventions targeting social and interpersonal conflict in Bolivia. The first includes ADR programs intended to help the general public, particularly social movements, to adopt negotiation strategies and communication tools for deescalating social and political conflict. The second includes the specific work of the IJCS, which offer pro bono legal aid services, but promote extrajudicial mediation as an alternative to the state legal system.⁶⁴ Both approaches endow ADR with the power to facilitate personal and social transformation.

Many ADR programs promote conflict-resolution methods through training workshops, public forums, model debates (*conversatorios*), radio programs, and national ad campaigns. Their audiences included everyone from schoolchildren to union leaders and state officials. I attended many such events, as well as book launches, the National Summit on Alternative

and Indigenous Dispute Resolution, and, most recently, the 2016 Justice Summit (Cumbre de Justicia). I interviewed jurists and policymakers, donor representatives and aid recipients, NGO staff and workshop participants, and Bolivian officials at the Ministry of Justice. I also enrolled in a two-month-long diploma course to understand (and receive) the training that was shaping a new generation of conflict-resolution experts (*conflictologos*) in Bolivia.

Among participants, I witnessed passionate debates about the usefulness or inappropriateness of ADR models that have traveled from Harvard University's Program on Negotiation, foreign law schools, and international donors. Those conversations further revealed the ways local aid "translators" or development "brokers" are putting ADR programs and resources in conversation with Bolivian debates about legal pluralism and indigenous modes of conflict resolution.⁶⁵ I also spent four months attending one of the criminal courts in La Paz—with the aim of better understanding the challenges facing the formal legal system and motivating appeals to informalism.

The bulk of my time, however, was spent working in one of El Alto's six IJCS. I served in an official capacity as an intern with formal affiliation with the Vice Ministry of Justice and Fundamental Rights. I worked alongside public servants, student interns, and the few volunteers who continued to return to the center even after the volunteer program had been officially phased out. Alongside interns like Angelica, who was attending to Luz's case, I registered detailed histories of domestic violence, interpersonal conflicts, and various other problems that brought residents to the center—from formalizing land titles to fights over inheritance. Our day-to-day tasks included orienting clients about their legal and nonlegal options, setting up conciliation appointments, and drafting transfer letters to other agencies (e.g., the forensic medical examiner, child protective services).

I observed the work of center staff and sat in on conciliation sessions. Attending conciliation sessions allowed me to observe the ways staff utilized ADR, how clients responded to those methods, and to catch the turns of phrase and complaints that were written out of the succinct, bullet-pointed final accords. With the permission of all parties, I conducted in-depth follow-up interviews with clients about domestic violence, debt conflicts, and corruption in the justice system, among other recurring themes. Through those interviews, I could further situate conciliation sessions within a broader array of conflict-management strategies people in El Alto employ *outside* such institutions, including the use of kin, neighborhood associations, and rural indigenous community leaders (*Mallkus*).

Because I was working as an intern at the center, the position posed unique ethical challenges for how to best approach people whose stories and experiences I wanted to follow more closely through follow-up interviews. People often approached the intern desk where I sat with difficult issues on their minds—and I never wanted anyone to feel that they had to assent to participating in my study before getting access to center resources or other help. As a consequence, I would approach people after their intake sessions were over, after they had their conciliation invitations and other necessary documents arranged, and sometimes weeks after we had first met, to ask whether I might interview them further about their experiences.

Nearly everyone I asked said yes, as long as I could work around their busy lives rearing children, selling produce in the market, or traveling long distances hauling merchandise for other vendors. I interviewed women butchers outside their corner shops and *prestamistas* (moneylenders) as they leafed through bits of collateral in their homes. I spent many hours sharing tea and flaky empanadas as women mapped out their debts and detailed histories of violence in their lives. I flipped through cosmetic magazines as Mary Kay vendors tabulated sales and recounted struggles to obtain child support from estranged husbands. I listened in as brothers and sisters quietly debated how best to care for a disabled sibling after their elderly parents died.

These men and women were incredibly generous in allowing me to ask questions about difficult and sometimes embarrassing topics, and they offered their own theories of and insights into the challenges they were facing. I hope that chapters 4, 5, and 6 in particular help put some flesh, sweat, and tears into an otherwise abstract debate about ADR, foreign aid, and crumbling U.S.-Bolivia relations.

In addition to the clients of ADR, however, I also spent a great deal of time speaking with its practitioners. ADR is, for its advocates, an ethical field, a concrete means to contribute to the social good, a practice that enables intimate partnerships and large social movements to transform violence into constructive solutions, and a valuable mechanism to rescue potential victims from abusive legal bureaucracies. The people I met working as conciliators, running conversatorios on peaceful conflict resolution, and training NGO workers and public servants in negotiation tactics were a varied bunch, politically and socioeconomically. They came to their work in ADR along different paths. Some were *militantes* of the Movement Towards Socialism (MAS) party and others were university students eager to gain experience for their résumés. Some were lawyers, and others were housewives eager to cultivate

dimensions of themselves beyond childrearing. But they almost all articulated *proyectos de vida* (life projects) rooted in “making a living, while doing some good” (see chapter 3).

Take, for example, Dr. Paloma Gil and the law intern Azucena, whose story opens chapter 1. The enormous respect that Paloma inspired in neighborhood residents, leaders, former volunteers, and center staff was palpable. Paloma began working with the IJCS as a volunteer while they were under the auspices of USAID. She was later hired as a center director, and I met her as a public servant of the Morales administration. Paloma was driven by a fierce commitment to stopping the endless cycle of bureaucratic inertia that left residents of El Alto fumbling their ways between legal and administrative offices with no relief in sight. She wanted to be that relief.

Like Dr. Paloma, the staff and interns at the center where I spent my days were often empathetic with their clients, outraged at the institutional deficiencies and discrimination they faced, and troubled by the grim family situations they encountered. They also were service providers who made mistakes, grew weary with difficult clients (and prodding anthropologists), and engaged in routine office politics and gossip. Some reproduced racialized ideologies about “conflictual” Indians, while others were active leaders in the effort to implement indigenous legal sovereignty in places like Jesús de Machaca. Many of them were facing struggles not unlike those of their clients: they grappled with family conflicts and debt burdens and sought professional opportunities for career advancement.

They also generously shared with me the ambivalence they felt toward donor objectives. They struggled with uncertainty regarding their real contributions to their clients’ lives. And they reflected on their aspirations for the justice system, the country, and their own families. For all that and more, I am enormously grateful. It is my hope that in turn, my critical analysis of the workings of ADR is recognizable to the people who are featured here. They may disagree with my conclusions—or find that the issues I choose to highlight are irrelevant to their own purposes.⁶⁶ But it is my hope that they feel I have represented them as multidimensional people wrestling with multidimensional dilemmas.

A note on my use of pseudonyms: all the names of center clientele have been changed, as have those of bureaucratic staff, interns, and volunteers. The same goes for the names of most NGOs appearing in the book, although they will likely be recognizable to a Bolivian audience familiar with their well-known work on these themes. The names of public intellectuals and prominent activists speaking at public events, as well as government officials

and foreign aid representatives speaking in their institutional capacities, remain unchanged.

Organization of the Book

The book that follows is divided into two parts. In the first, I focus on the history, politics, and practices of foreign aid programs, and I follow the experiences of the people tasked with implementing them: aid workers, development professionals, and volunteers responsible for the spread of ADR in Bolivia. I open the second half of the book with a short “Recess,” in which I describe life in the Alto Lima neighborhood and point to the ways the IJC operating there exemplifies struggles over legal pluralism in Bolivia. Following this brief, scene-setting interlude, the second half of the book focuses on the everyday work of one center; the efforts of volunteers, professional staff, and interns; and, especially, the experiences of its clientele. While my research was primarily located in District 6, I conducted interviews with the directors, staff, and interns working at both El Alto’s and La Paz’s centers, and I draw on their perspectives for comparative purposes.

Their stories illuminate a significant tension between the causal relationship that ADR advocates ascribe to interpersonal and social conflict in El Alto and the ways Alteños themselves experience that causal relationship. As I show in these final three chapters, many ADR advocates I spoke with saw conflict as “scaling up” from the interpersonal to the social—that is, social conflict was generated by people’s failure to find redress for everyday experiences of interpersonal conflict. In this conceptualization of conflict, if we fix the micro dimensions of conflict (e.g., by teaching people interpersonal conflict-resolution skills), we can fix the macro (widespread protests, blockades, and other disruptive approaches to demanding redress).

ADR programs have accompanied ongoing waves of aid intervention that have sought to produce what I characterize as entrepreneurial and counter-insurgent citizens in Bolivia, as in many other parts of the world. These broader development platforms do so by conflating market access and efficiency with democracy, and good citizenship with orderly political participation and entrepreneurship.⁶⁷ Against this narrowing of political-economic imaginations, social movements have occupied streets and redrawn constitutions, to varying degrees of “success.”⁶⁸ And yet, in the meantime, people like Luz and Justa, Manuela, and Lourdes—whom you will meet—frequently turn to these very same donor projects to deal with the fallout produced by their participation in development projects’ entrepreneurial invitations.

Indeed, conciliation programs allow Alteños like Luz to manage the intimate conflicts and economic uncertainty that neoliberalism has wrought in their lives, to find some redress for their grievances. But their use of ADR does not blind them to the political-economic roots of their woes. Instead, residents of El Alto regularly point to the macro political-economic dimensions of those conflicts, repoliticizing intimate disputes—even as they seek immediate relief through the resources that ADR offers in the meantime.

NOTES

Introduction

1. Luz and Jhonny had only one child, who died as a baby. Jhonny is implying that Luz lied in order to humiliate him at his workplace.

2. Interns regularly suggest that clients take neighborhood police along to deliver invitations to conciliation to intimidate the other party, to convince them that conciliation was serious business and not to be mocked (see chapter 6). On several occasions, center clients asked whether I could accompany them to deliver invitations and explain the process to the other party. I informed the center director, who told me I was welcome to do so as long as I felt comfortable. I only did so once, with Luz.

3. Bolivians use the term “doctor/a” to address lawyers. Even when I explained I was not myself a lawyer, that I was an anthropologist, they often reverted to the term to show deference (to acknowledge my “professional” status), as they did with other interns and staff.

4. Erbe 2006.

5. Fisher, Ury, and Patton (2011) coined the BATNA concept in their book, *Getting to Yes: Negotiating Agreement without Giving In* (originally published in 1981), and developed it through their work with the Harvard Program on Negotiation (PON).

6. Bercovitch et al. 2008; Deutsch et al. 2011; Finnegan and Hackley 2008; Menkel-Meadow 2013, 2015; Sharp 2002; Wanis-St. John and Rosen 2017, to name just a few.

7. As Muhlberger (2011) has shown, there are a number of affinities (and rivalries) between theories of ADR and deliberative democracy. However, the distinctive philosophical genealogies of these fields were not neatly drawn in practice, as donor representatives and NGO staff spoke broadly about promoting methods that would enable cooperation toward “mutually acceptable” solutions to disputes and facilitate conflict transformation—and indeed social transformation—in the country. See, for example, Fundación UNIR (2005).

8. Under the Morales administration, the Ministry of Justice has expanded conciliation services and commercial arbitration under new legal codes.

9. See the recently published “BoliviaLeaks: La injerencia política de Estados Unidos contra el proceso de cambio (2006–2010).” Juan Ramón Quintana Taborga

coordinated the publication, which was published by the Bolivian Ministerio de la Presidencia in 2016.

10. Since James Ferguson's *Anti-Politics Machine* (1990), it has become common sense in anthropology to speak of development projects as "depoliticizing," and indeed I examine processes of depoliticization here. And yet donor platforms—especially funding tied to the United States—have become a hot-button political issue. Understanding how and with what effects requires distinguishing between the hyper-politicization of aid programs at the level of national political debates, local struggles over *obras* (public works), and the micropolitical dimensions of NGO work from the ways that these programs strip the issues facing residents of El Alto of their political-economic content, reframing them as either issues requiring technical intervention or as interpersonal problems in need of private resolution.

11. Nader and Metzger 1963; Collier 1979; Greenhouse 1985.

12. Nader 2005.

13. Comaroff and Roberts 1981; Nader and Metzger 1963. For a critical appraisal of ADR export to African countries, see Nader and Grande 2002, and Milner 2002 for a rejoinder.

14. Abel 1982; Harrington and Merry 1988; Merry and Milner 1995.

15. Dezelay and Garth 1996.

16. Calla et al. 2005; Huanca Quispe 2015; Goldstein 2012, 2016; Risør 2010; Wandlerley 2009.

17. "El peor trámite de mi vida" was jointly sponsored by the Bolivian Ministry of Institutional Transparency and Fight against Corruption, and the Inter-American Development Bank.

18. On legal pluralism: Merry 1988; in Bolivia, Rivera Cusicanqui 1990 and Stephen-son 2002.

19. The Katarista movement was named after the eighteenth-century indigenous rebellion leader Túpac Katari.

20. Kohl 2003; Medeiros 2001.

21. Postero 2007; Van Cott 2000.

22. Customary law is codified in the Bolivian constitution as Jurisdicción Indígena Originaria Campesina. *Campesino/a* is a complex category in Bolivia, as indigenous Bolivians were reframed as peasants during the 1950s. The term often glosses rural, small-scale agriculture and indexes rural unionization schemes associated with Bolivia's 1952 agrarian reform.

23. Albro 2010; Rivera Cusicanqui 2012.

24. Examples of Western-style ADR practices are commercial arbitration, extrajudicial mediation, and court-annexed conciliation.

25. Santos 1995.

26. Wall et al. 2001; Bercovitch et al. 1991; Bush et al. 1994.

27. Some of these earlier debates can be found in Abel 1982. See Hensler 2003 and Harrington and Merry 1988 for overviews.

28. Nader 1990, 2005. See also Pavlich 1996; Cobb and Rifkin 1991; Hofrichter 1982; Silbey 1993.

29. See Sternlight 2006 for a summary of the ways ADR has been characterized as either antithetical to “the rule of law” (in the U.S. context) or supportive of it (i.e., when exported abroad by USAID and the American Bar Association).

30. Quoted in Paley 2002: 476.

31. In Bolivia, see Albó 2008; Albro 2010; Ellison 2015; Gill 1997; Goodale 2008; Aguilar 2014; Lazar 2008; Postero 2007; Medeiros 2001; Rivera Cusicanqui 1990.

32. Brown 2006; Coles 2004; Paley 2009; Sampson 2002.

33. Gills 2000; Cox et al. 2000; Carothers 2007.

34. Carothers 2007.

35. Hoben 1989; Carothers 1999.

36. Finkel et al. 2006. See also work on the causal relationship—or lack thereof—between democracy and economic development: Ikenberry 2000; Lipset 1959; Oxhorn and Starr 1999.

37. Quintana Taborga 2016. See also Zunes 2001, which argued that the U.S. strategy of substituting development aid for military operations in Bolivia immediately following its 1952 revolution was not an “enlightened” policy alternative to military intervention (as was enacted elsewhere in the Americas), but rather represented “interventionism by other means” (34), seeking to moderate or “tame” the 1952 revolution.

38. Ellison 2015; Pacino 2016.

39. Gill 1997; Rodríguez Carmona 2009.

40. Cruikshank 1999.

41. Conflicts over a Brazil-backed road project through lowland indigenous territory (TIPNIS) makes this clear.

42. “Translated”: Merry 2006. “Vernacularized”: Goodale 2008; Postero 2007. “Hybridized”: Shakow 2011. “Refracted”: Ellison 2015.

43. Coles 2007; Brown 2006.

44. See also Schuller 2012 for an extended look at the relationship between U.S. aid to Haiti and power struggles between Republicans and Democrats.

45. Feminist scholars and activists have critiqued categorical public/private divides in liberal conceptualizations of politics and citizenship. See McKinnon and Cannell 2013 for an overview of anthropology’s engagement with these issues. See also Cattelino 2008 on the home economics movement and the politics of Seminole chickees (houses), and Stoler 1995 on the sexual politics and regulations of intimacy in empire.

46. See Auyero’s (2012) “tempography” of political domination, or, “the ways in which waiting, behavior, and submission are connected” in Argentina (5).

47. See “differentiated citizenship” (Holston 2009); “sexual citizenship” (Castle 2008), “proxy citizenship” (Tate 2015), and “cultural citizenship” (Rosaldo 1994; Albro 2010), among many others.

48. Lazar and Nuijeten 2013: 4. Among Bolivianists, see Albro 2010; Canessa 2014; Ellison 2015; Aguilar 2014; Lazar 2004b, 2008; Postero 2007; Shakow 2014.

49. Of course, effort to produce “new citizens” is not peculiar to American- or European-backed democracy-assistance programming. See Dunn 2004; Sharma 2008.

50. Peck and Tickell 2002.

51. Elyachar 2005; Goodale and Postero 2013; Greenhouse 2009; Ong 2006; Schild 2000.

52. Following Mader 2016, I use the encompassing term “microfinance” instead of “microcredit,” although my focus here is on microlending projects and not other kinds of services (i.e., insurance or savings).

53. In recent decades, a wide array of organizations has relied on the language of “empowerment” to characterize their efforts. See Sharma 2008.

54. Lazar 2004.

55. See Kar 2013; Karim 2011; Lazar 2004a.

56. See Duvendack et al. 2011; Karim 2011.

57. Biehl and Eskerod 2007; Dunn 2004; Rose 2006; Shore 2010; Shore and Wright 1999; Vannier 2010.

58. Rivera Cusicanqui 2012.

59. See Fabricant 2009; Guss 2006; Gustafson 2006, on the relationship between race, space, and struggles over political belonging in Bolivia, including the transgressive use of dance parades to puncture white space, and the use of physical violence to shore it up.

60. See Ellison 2015 on *multas*, or fines.

61. Dunn 2004; Shore 2010; Vannier 2010.

62. See Wedel 2005 on “studying through,” or “tracking policy discourses, prescriptions and programs and then linking them to those affected by the policies” (37).

63. In addition to three months of exploratory research, as well as return trips during the summers of 2014, 2016, and 2017 to follow up with people who appear in this book.

64. The centers have since been renamed *centros de servicios integrados de justicia plurinacional* (centers for integrated plurinational justice). However, I retain their original name from my fieldwork period throughout.

65. “Translators”: Merry 2006; see also Brown 2006. For “brokers,” see Lewis and Mosse 2006.

66. On several occasions, at the behest of the organizations where I was researching, I wrote internal reports about my observations. Those documents focused on more immediate issues facing the people who worked in these different institutional spaces. They were distinct genres of writing, written internally for audiences with different purposes and needs. I do not reproduce any of that material here.

67. See Appel 2014.

68. Appel 2014.

Uprising

1. Kohl and Farthing 2006; Lazar 2008.

2. Including along the single major highway in and out of La Paz, and in the bustling *ceja* (brow), a commercial district in El Alto that derives its name—like the brow of a hill or cliff—from its location along the edges of the steep descent into La Paz. Until very recently, La Paz was accessible only by sharp switchback roads descending from El Alto. The installation of a new cable car system is reconfiguring transporta-