


S T A N D A R D FORSIDE  
TIL  
EKSAMENSOPGAVER

Udfyldes af den/de studerende

Prøvens form (sæt kryds):	Projekt	Synopsis	Portfolio	Speciale X	Skriftlig hjemmeopgave
---------------------------	---------	----------	-----------	---------------	---------------------------

Uddannelsens navn	Culture, Communication and Globalization	
Semester	10	
Prøvens navn (i studieordningen)	Master Thesis	
Navn(e) og fødselsdato(er)	Navn	Fødselsdato
	Christine Michelsen	9. marts 1991
Afleveringsdato	15. September 2023	
Projekttitel/Synopsistitel/Speciale-titel	The discourses surrounding the lithium deal, between the Plurinational State of Bolivia, and the Chinese consortium CBC.	
I henhold til studieordningen må opgaven i alt maks. fylde antal tegn	192.000	
Den afleverede opgave fylder (antal tegn med mellemrum i den afleverede opgave) (indholdfortegnelse, litteraturliste og bilag medregnes ikke)*	128.633	
Vejleder (projekt/synopsis/speciale)	Lill Rastad Bjørst	
<p>Jeg/vi bekræfter hermed, at dette er mit/vores originale arbejde, og at jeg/vi alene er ansvarlig(e) for indholdet. Alle anvendte referencer er tydeligt anført. Jeg/Vi er informeret om, at plagiering ikke er lovligt og medfører sanktioner.</p> <p>Regler om disciplinære foranstaltninger over for studerende ved Aalborg Universitet (plagiatregler): <a href="http://plagiat.aau.dk/GetAsset.action?contentId=4117331&amp;assetId=4117338">http://plagiat.aau.dk/GetAsset.action?contentId=4117331&amp;assetId=4117338</a></p> <p>Dato og underskrift</p> <p style="text-align: center;"></p> <p>14/9-23</p>		

## **Abstract**

Through critical discourse analysis, coupled with environmental discourse, this thesis sets out to answer; How does the Government of Bolivia address the environmental aspect of lithium mining? How do other participating actors describe the event; which discourses do they employ? in the press conference, held the 23<sup>rd</sup> of January, in the presidential palace in La Paz, Bolivia. It regards the business agreement between the state of Bolivia, and the Chinese consortium CBC, to industrialize the lithium found in the salt flats of Uyuni, and Coipasa. The thesis works from an interpretive epistemology, and social constructivist ontology, both of which supports critical discourse analysis. The main data is a transcript of a video, taken of the press conference, which then was translated to English, by the author. Both the original Spanish, and the English version, can be found as appendixes to this thesis.

The earlier government, under Evo Morales, also attempted to initiate lithium mining, with the German company ACI Systems, but was unsuccessful, due to protests. The new president, Luis Arce is conscious about this, and makes sure that he, and his administration, utilizes all the discourses, that might persuade the people to support this industrialization. He does this through nationalism, by linking lithium to the national identity, thus creating a new identity for Bolivia, as a lithium-producing nation. Also, through development, and socialism, with which he displays the societal benefits, that can be accomplished, with the revenue from selling the lithium. This leads to another important discourse, namely, economics, which CBC also uses. Lithium mining is portrayed as a lucrative business, with a great future, thanks to the green transition agenda, and the related boom in electrical vehicles. Additionally, the discourse of globalization is employed to state, that the industrialization is not only an attempt to increase the Bolivians' standards of living, but is indeed a means to save the world, from climate change.

However, the discourse of water is omitted, which is interesting, seeing as lithium mining is a very water dependent process, but that is exactly why the speakers are so careful about evoking it. Together with other issues (royalties, transparency, and participation) water was part of the protest campaign of COMCIPO, that ended the previous attempt of lithium industrialization in Bolivia.

**Keywords:** CDA, Bolivia, Lithium, sustainability.

**Table of Contents**

Abbreviations.....4

Introduction.....5

Problem Formulation.....6

Literature Review.....7

Methods.....8

Theory.....10

Case Description.....20

Analysis.....21

Conclusion.....65

Bibliography.....66

## **Abbreviations**

CBC – Chinese consortium of three companies; CATL, BRUNP, and CMOC.

COMCIPO – Comité Cívico Potosinista (civil committee of Potosí).

ESG – Environmental, Social, and Governance.

FRUTCAS - Federación Regional Única de Trabajadores y Campesinos del Altiplano Sur  
(organization of workers and peasants of the Southern Highlands).

YLB - Yacimientos de Litio Bolivianos (state-owned mining company of Bolivia).

UN – United Nations.

## **Introduction**

Climate change is a phenomenon that affects the whole planet. Therefore, it is only natural that it takes up much space in news, popular culture, science etc. People are constantly searching for ways to mitigate it, for example, by changing their habits, or buying a more sustainable option, when needing a product. One such decision can happen at an auto dealership; where the customer might choose the electrical vehicle, instead of a model that runs on fossil fuel. However, these vehicles also rely on extracted raw materials, one of which is lithium, and its extraction is heavily water reliant. Lithium is an important component of the battery, but there are only a few places on the planet where the light metal can be found. Bolivia is the country with the greatest estimated reserves, yet it has not succeeded in establishing an industry to produce it. There have been attempts in the past, the closest to fruition being the deal with German ACI Systems, which was annulled in 2019, because of protests based on concerns regarding transparency, water scarcity, and royalties. The newest attempt is a business deal with a Chinese consortium, and the press conference, where the two parties sign the contract, is the focus of this thesis.

## **Problem Formulation**

Lithium is one of the most important metals for the global green transition agenda, but its extraction can have various effects on the local environment. In January 2023, the government of Bolivia signed the contract with CBC, a Chinese mining consortium, to begin the industrialization of Bolivia's lithium reserves. How does the Government of Bolivia address the environmental aspect of lithium mining? How do other participating actors describe the event; which discourses do they employ?

## Literature Review

There has been research on the historical progress of lithium mining, from the early 1970s, where the first estimate of lithium in Uyuni took place, and up to the failed attempt at industrialization under Evo Morales in 2019, which Fernando Aguirre B. has written about in his article *The lithium triangle – the importance of Bolivia* (Aguirre B., 2022). It has also been researched how the three countries, constituting the so-called “lithium triangle” (Chile, Argentina, and Bolivia), attract, or discourage investment, through their policies, regarding lithium mining (Seefeldt, 2020).

Additionally, studies from the natural sciences, where the chemical composition of the brine beneath the salt flats is determined, along with the geological composition (soil, water, minerals etc.), and finally, the environmental impact of the lithium extraction (Vera, et al., 2023). However, discourse, that is to say the way people talk about subjects, has a constructing effect on our social world. Therefore, it matters how lithium mining is characterized discursively, and meanings can change over time, so it is also fruitful to conduct contemporary research. This thesis aims to work with these parameters, by analyzing the press conference, mentioned earlier.

## Methods

The data for this thesis has been collected by looking at “*panels of people who are in some significant relation to the social practice in focus*” (Fairclough, 1992, p. 227). In practice, this was carried out through search of news articles, on the internet, which revealed a lot more actors involved in the lithium industrialization, than the press conference implies, e.g., COMCIPO. However, some sources were inaccessible, seeing as the author resides in Denmark, and some news sites were only accessible for Bolivians. Granted, giving enough resources, this could have been solved with a VPN. This inaccessibility resulted in resorting to a Youtube video of the press conference, which meant that the press conference was only partly covered. This leaves the limitation that the beginning, and the end, of the press conference is unknown to the author, which of course, is a weakness of this thesis. Nonetheless, the mentioned video covers some very prominent speakers, hence the use of the video, despite the weakness.

The video was then transcribed, by the author, in the video’s original Spanish, and then the author translated it to English. Fairclough says about transcription; “[...] *transcription necessarily imposes an interpretation on speech [...]*” (Fairclough, 1992, p. 229). The author found this to be true, under the process of transcribing; for example, when does a break in speaking equals a period, or a comma? It was something that was solved afterwards, by looking at the context.

Another weakness of the data is that it is translated by the author, who is not trained in translation, so there is a risk of meanings being “lost in translation” as the popular phrase goes. That being said, the author has translated the transcription to the best of her ability.

In order to analyze the press conference Fairclough’s critical discourse analysis has been chosen, as it enables the author to answer the research question. There is used two books, to uncover this theory; Fairclough’s own (Fairclough, 1992), and one by Jørgensen and Phillips (Jørgensen and Phillips, 1999). The reason, for not relying solely on Fairclough’s own writing, is that he can become a bit cryptic at times, and at such instances, Jørgensen and Philips can support understanding. Another reason, is that he jumps back and forth between subjects, throughout his book, whereas Jørgensen and Philips keep a more chronological system.

In addition to Fairclough, this thesis employs environmental discourse from Dryzek (Dryzek, 2022). The idea is to strengthen the ability to uncover any environmental discourses utilized in the data.



Dryzek says that he positions himself, and his work, near Fairclough's critical discourse analysis (Dryzek, 2022, p. 22), which underlines the applicability.

The most salient limitation of critical discourse analysis is that it does not provide tools to analyze the social practice, so it is up to the analyst to decide which elements are the most conducive for the work.

This thesis is a case study, as it treats a single event, namely, the press conference. Furthermore, it is a unique case, as this specific event only has taken place once (Bryman, 2016, p. 60-62).

Additionally, the event will differ from similar events taken place in, e.g., neighboring Chile, when the industrialization began there, because of factors like, geology, culture, economy etc.

This thesis will employ social constructivist ontology, which entails that social reality is constructed, and under continuous changing, through language, and social interaction (Bryman, 2016). This corresponds with Fairclough "*I would also argue that members' practice has outcomes and effects upon social structures, social relations, and social struggles [ ...]*" (Fairclough, 1992, p. 72).

Additionally, this work will include interpretive epistemology, which also fits with Fairclough "*I accept the interpretivist claim that we must try to understand how members of social communities produce their 'orderly' or 'accountable' worlds*" (Fairclough, 1992, p. 72). Interpretivism is a fitting match for critical discourse analysis, as it has to do with understanding the subjective meanings of social action (Bryman, 2016, p. 26).

This thesis sets out from an inductive approach, as the press conference revealed that the Bolivian government utilizes different discourses, when talking about lithium. Therefore, the choice of theory landed on critical discourse analysis, and the added environmental discourse.

As evident, by the employment of the inductive approach, interpretivism, and constructionism, this case study is a qualitative one. This is fitting for an in-depth analysis of the communicative event; the press conference in La Paz, the 23<sup>rd</sup> of January 2023.

## Theory

Norman Fairclough's three-dimensional model.

Fairclough defines discourse as a way of speaking, that gives meaning to experiences, from a certain perspective. Which is to say, a discourse that is separate from others, e.g., a health discourse, an economic discourse, an entertainment discourse etc. Discourse, according to Fairclough, also contributes to the construction of social identities, social relations, and systems of knowledge and meanings (Jørgensen and Phillips, 1999, p. 79). Therefore, discourse through language use is also seen as action, where actors can affect the world around them, as well as other actors. Additionally, as a way to represent the actor's worldview. To Fairclough, discourse means seeing language use as a form of social practice (Fairclough, 1992, pp. 63-64).

There are two main aspects to focus on, while analyzing discourse. The first is the *communicative event*, which is the object being analyzed. In other words, any medium in which people may use language to communicate, whether it be through a speech, a news article, a video etc. The second aspect is the *order of discourse*, which treats the sum of *discourse types*, that are utilized within a social institution, or a social domain. Discourse types consist of discourses, styles, and genres (Jørgensen and Phillips, 1999, pp. 79-80) and (Fairclough, 1992, p. 125). Genre covers a use of language, that is connected to a certain social practice, the examples provided by Jørgensen and Phillips are; interview genre, news genre, and advertisement genre (Ibid.). An example, of an order of discourse, could be the education system's order of discourse, or a specific school's order of discourse. Within an order of discourse operates different *discursive practices*, through which language, both written and spoken, is produced, consumed, and analyzed (Jørgensen and Phillips, 1999, p. 80). The discourse practices one would expect to find in a school include; parent/teacher meetings, lectures, written messages from the institution to the students' homes, collegiate talk between the staff members, the principal's address to the entire school etc.

It is a communicative event, whenever language is used, and can be sorted into three dimensions. The first is the *text*, and while it can be understood literally as written language, it can also be the spoken word, a picture, or even an amalgamation of the linguistic and the pictorial. The second is the discursive practice, which (as mentioned above) has to do with the production, and consumption of texts. The third, and last, dimension is the social practice, which provides the scene, where the communicative event takes place. All three dimensions must be included, when a discourse analysis

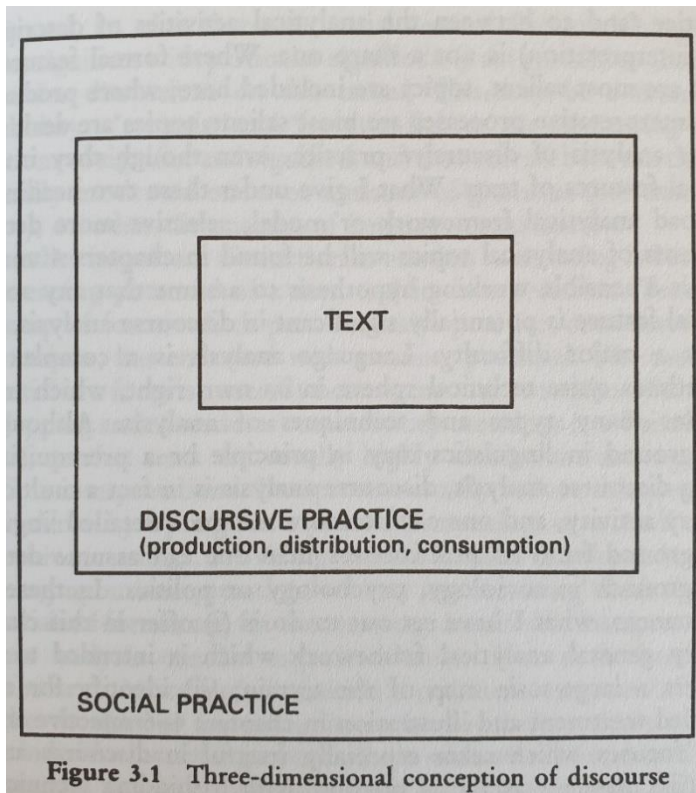


Figure 3.1 Three-dimensional conception of discourse

is being conducted (Ibid.).

(Fairclough, 1992, p. 73)

The first and second dimension are interconnected, meaning by working with one, you also work with the other, and vice versa. Therefore, it can seem curious that they are two separate dimensions, but according to Fairclough they must be analyzed as such (Jørgensen and Phillips, 1999, pp. 80-81). He does not provide an explanation, but he admits “*Because of this overlap, the division of analytical topics between text analysis and analysis of discursive practice [...] is not a sharp one.*”, consequently the analyst must rely on their own ability to identify which box is the best suited to analyze a given topic (Fairclough, 1992, pp. 73-74). An example of a text feature that can be placed in the ‘overlap’ is speech acts, or “force of utterance”, which entails promises, requests, threats, wishes etc. (Fairclough, 1992, p. 75).

The analysis of the text treats vocabulary, grammar, metaphors, and the connection between sentences. These text properties are the elements, that linguistically construct discourses, and genres. Texts and the social practice can only affect each other through the discursive practice. This means that while people are using language to produce and consume texts, the texts can shape and/or be shaped by the social practice. Meanwhile, the text's linguistic properties affect the processes of production, and consumption (Jørgensen and Phillips, 1999, p. 82). Vocabulary covers more than can be found in an official dictionary, as it also entails cultural aspects; people will choose different words depending on multiple factors, e.g., which group they belong to, their place both in life and geographically, their values, the time and society they live in, and so on (Fairclough, 1992, pp. 76-77).

The analysis of discursive practice is focused on how the actor utilizes existing discourses, and genres. Additionally, how receivers of the text use already known discourses, and genres, to decode and consume the text (Jørgensen and Phillips, 1999, pp. 80-81). Genre is a great example of the interconnectedness between the first and second dimension; genre covers more than simply a type of text, it also has to do with production, distribution, and consumption. Fairclough compare a poem to a newspaper to exemplify how texts can differ in these areas. The poem is typically written by an individual, whereas the newspaper is a team effort. Distribution of the two differs in the way that poems are often printed in mediums that are meant to last, such as hardback books, where newspapers, in contrast, are printed on less durable paper, with only a few staples to keep it together. However, today both can be distributed as electronic copies, which was not an option when Fairclough wrote his book in 1992. The layout of the two types of text is vastly different from one another, e.g., the length, and how the text is divided into smaller sections. Finally, the texts demand different skills from the reader, in terms of interpretation (Fairclough, 1992, p. 126). The production of a text might not be obvious, as the text producer could be sorted into three subcategories. The first is the *animator*, the actor who commits the speech acts, or types the words. The second is the *author*, who is in charge of arranging the words. The third is the *principal*, who is the one being represented by the words. These three roles can be enacted by an individual, or a group (Fairclough, 1992, p. 78). To exemplify, a staff representative could act as an animator, while speaking to the CEO at a firm, while the workers take the roles of authors, and principals.

The definition of discourse types is a loose one, as Fairclough explains “[...] *it is by no means always easy to decide whether one is dealing with genres, styles, discourses, or whatever.*” (Fairclough, 1992, p. 125). Furthermore, when Fairclough later suggests “*Feel free to use the*

*general term 'discourse type' if it is not clear whether something is a genre, activity type, style, or discourse.*" (Fairclough, 1992, p. 232) the reader might wonder what purpose it serves to split discourse type into subcategories. The advantage, according to Fairclough, is that these distinctions enable the analyst to find important nuances, that might otherwise be overlooked. A certain genre will limit an actor's agency, as each genre entails a set of expectations, and if the actor operates outside of these there is a risk of being misunderstood, or not taken seriously. However, a fixed list of genres, styles, and discourses does not exist, and the analyst is left to their own best judgement, when attempting to separate these types from one another (Fairclough, 1992, pp. 124-125). Therefore, a definition of the last two types (style and activity type), is needed in order to create a foundation for such judgement.

Activity type covers a kind of roleplay, it is everyday interactions between people, where there are given roles, and an expected script, that guides how the interaction is supposed to progress (Fairclough, 1992, pp. 126). An example, of an activity type, dining in a restaurant; the guest, and the waiter are two of the roles, and there is a clear procedure to follow – the guest is seated at a table, the waiter finds the menu, the guest takes some time to decide, the waiter asks what the guest wishes to order, the guest might ask for advice e.g., if the "soup of the day" is recommendable, and so on. Some actions can be optional, e.g., the guest could be greeted by a hostess, who would find a table, or the waiter might deliver a separate wine menu. As such, the activity type does not dictate a single 'right' path, but rather limits the participating actors' possibilities of action in a certain direction.

Style can be classified within three domains; *tenor*, *mode*, and *rhetorical mode*. Tenor deals with the relationship between actors, which can be formal, informal, official, casual, intimate, etc. Mode differentiates between written, and spoken, or a combination of the two, e.g., written-to-be-spoken, written-as-if-spoken, spoken-as-if-written. Finally, rhetorical mode reveals if the style is, for example, narrative, descriptive, argumentative, and so on (Fairclough, 1992, pp. 127).

The main objective with critical discourse analysis is to discover the connections between language use, and the social practice. The focal point is the role that discursive practices play in either maintaining, or changing, the social order. Every communicative event works as a form of social practice, which can be seen by the way it either reproduce, or challenge, the order of discourse. Consequently, through the relationship with the order of discourse, the communicative event is shaping, and is shaped by, the broader social practice (Jørgensen and Phillips, 1999, pp. 82-83).

The order of discourse can also be subject to change, if the actor uses discourses, and genres, in a new way, or incorporates discourses, and genres, from another order of discourse. The latter creates a scenario, where the order of discourse is particularly open to change. Jørgensen and Phillips bring an excellent example of this in their book, namely, the Danish healthcare system after the Second World War (Jørgensen and Phillips, 1999, p. 83). The most dominating discourse was the welfare discourse, but in the recent decades the neoliberal discourse has entered the healthcare system's order of discourse, and thus changing it. This means that patients are increasingly treated as individual consumers, and the healthcare services as products, to be promoted. This trend, in the post-modern society, where market and trade discourse are entering the public institutions, has been coined *marketization of discourse* by Fairclough (Jørgensen and Phillips, 1999, pp. 83-84).

The term *interdiscursivity* covers the usage of different discourses, both within, and between orders of discourses. When discourses are utilized in innovative manners it pushes the limits of the order of discourses, which can happen within a single order of discourse, or between several. In turn, this can lead to changes in the sovereign social order. However, when the opposite is true, that discourses are mixed in a conventional way, the result is that the dominating order of discourse, and social order, is maintained (Jørgensen and Phillips, 1999, p. 84).

Additionally, interdiscursivity is a form of *intertextuality*, which dictates that all communicative events draw on earlier events. *Manifest intertextuality* is the most direct example of intertextuality, where the actor refers to the used text, or texts (Jørgensen and Phillips, 1999, pp. 84-85). In contrast, the least tangible case of intertextuality happens when an actor draws on earlier speech from another actor. This can be done deliberately, or subconsciously, but any actor's text will contain pieces of others' utterances. The extent, to which an actor may repeat another's speech, will vary from complete sentences to fragments. The result is that texts are always an amalgamation of the actor's own words, and the words of others. The actor's awareness of the usage of other's utterances can range from quoting directly, to having assimilated a phrase to such a point that the actor believes it to be their own (Fairclough, 1992, p. 102). Any text can be viewed as a part of an intertextual chain, where each text contains pieces from one, or more texts. Consequently, intertextuality is a means for history to affect texts, and for texts to affect history. In other words, intertextuality contributes to historical development, and change. Fairclough views intertextuality as both stability, and instability; continuity, and change. The possibilities for change, however, is not seen as endless, but rather curbed by power relations, which e.g., might limit the access to certain discourses for some actors (Jørgensen and Phillips, 1999, pp. 84-85). Fairclough says about

intertextuality “*The rapid transformation and restructuring of textual traditions and orders of discourse is a striking contemporary phenomenon, which suggests that intertextuality ought to be a major focus in discourse analysis.*” (Fairclough, 1992, p. 102). This is a brilliant quote, even today, more than 30 years after Fairclough published his book, it is truly relevant; humanity has never had greater access to others’ texts as we do now, as the internet connects us to most of the world. Those with the power to decide which texts should continue down the historic intertextual chain, will have the ability to shape how the future remembers us, but also affect their texts, and usage of discourses.

Discourses can be powerful, or weak, but they can also be ideological in varying degrees. According to Fairclough, ideologies are constructions of meaning, that contribute to the production, reproduction, and transformation of power relations. Ideologies stem from societies, where power is distributed unequally, based on factors like class, or gender. The ideological discourses can be identified, by examining whether they maintain, or transform power relations. However, Jørgensen and Phillips wonder about the usability of this definition, as it will be difficult to determine what is ideology, and what is not. According to them, the question is whether there exists a discursive expression that can be said to not have an effect on power relations (Jørgensen and Phillips, 1999, p. 86).

Another aspect, that can be challenged, is meaning. Texts are often open to interpretation, and can have several possibilities of meaning, according to Fairclough. These meanings can be competing, and this can empower people to resist the practices, and structures, that surround them.

Consequently, Fairclough views hegemony as a process of negotiation, where the oppositional elements enable people to challenge the dominating meanings. Thus, hegemony is seen as unstable, and ever changing. Discursive practice is a part of the hegemonic battle, as it contributes to either reproducing, or transforming, the dominant order of discourse (Jørgensen and Phillips, 1999, pp. 87-88).

Returning to the text analysis, as there are two grammatical elements, that are of particular importance; *transitivity*, and *modality*.

Transitivity attempts to discover the ideologic consequences that can arise from different versions of a sentence. This can be explored, by investigating how events and processes connect (or disconnect), with subjects and objects. A sentence can be passive, without the agent, e.g., “the cats were fed this afternoon”, the action seemingly happens on its own, as by a natural phenomenon, and there is no agent to take responsibility. Another way to downplay agency, and place focus on the

effects, is *nominalization*. Here a noun replaces the whole process, e.g., “there was a feeding this afternoon” (Jørgensen and Phillips, 1999, p. 95).

Modality has to do with the actor’s degree of *affinity* towards what they are expressing. Continuing with the cat examples, here are three different degrees of affinity: “the cat is fat”, “I think the cat is fat”, and “maybe the cat is a bit fat”. The first sentence is factual, or rather it is presented as the truth. This means that the actor supports their statement completely. The second sentence displays a lower affinity, as the observation is presented as subjective, and there is room for the possibility that someone else would judge it differently. The third sentence shows an even lower affinity, which is evident by the use of a *hedge*, in this case “a bit”. Hedges can be used to change a sentence’s statement, in order to express a lower affinity. This can also be accomplished by intonation, e.g., through a hesitating tone (Jørgensen and Phillips, 1999, pp. 95-96).

When the text, and the discursive practice, has been covered, then it is time to place them in their social practice. There are two aspects to this contextualization. Firstly, the relations need to be uncovered between the discursive practice, and the order of discourse. The discursive practice resides within the order of discourse, in a net of discourses. It should be examined, how these discourses are distributed, and regulated. Secondly, the *discourse’s social matrix* has to be uncovered. It treats the mapping of the non-discursive social and cultural relations and structures, which constitutes the frame for the discursive practice. This can be found by looking at the conditions for the given discursive practice; institutional, economic, etc. (Jørgensen and Phillips, 1999, p. 98).

### Environmental Discourses by John S. Dryzek

Dryzek enumerates four main categories within environmental discourses; *environmental problem solving*, *limits and survival*, *sustainability*, and *green radicalism*. Additionally, he names two categories that act against, or even completely disputes the ideas of the original four; *the promethean response*, and *gray radicalism* (Dryzek, 2022, pp. 14-17).

Environmental problem solving works within the frame set by industrial society, with its political and economic landscape. Therefore, it does not seek to create a new type of society, but rather aims to enable the given society to deal with environmental problems, usually through public policies. These policies can take effect in a variety of areas, e.g., in the regular problem-solving institutions



of liberal democratic countries, by adding environmentalist perspectives to the toolbox, or in the market, by introducing fines for environmental damages and rewards for restoration, or in administration, “*by institutionalizing environmental concern and expertise in its operating procedures*” (Dryzek, 2022, p. 15). Advocates for environmental problem solving do not always agree on the best course of action. According to Dryzek, there has been a discussion for a long time between the supporters of administrative solutions, and those who believe in the market options, on which is better suited to treat pollution control. Here Dryzek claims that the market adherents are “gradually gaining ground” (Ibid.). The key metaphors utilized in environmental problem solving include; navigating, steering, horror stories (when governmental involvement goes wrong, e.g., making situations more damaging, or costly) (Dryzek, 2022, pp. 91, 139-140).

Limits and survival, in contrast to environmental problem solving, wishes to change the given industrial society. Not in the terms of replacing it with a new system, but radically redistribute power, and shift focus away from continuous economic growth. Uncontrolled growth, in both population, and economic expansion, is seen as the threat to the Earth’s limited resources. Should the growth pass the Earth’s capacity the fear is that ecosystems will collapse, and can no longer support the agricultural, and industrial needs of humans. For adherents to limits and survival, the solutions are found in the systems constructed by the industrial society, especially in the leaders of these; administrators, scientist, politicians etc. (Dryzek, 2022, p. 15). The supporters of limits and survival might also be revealed by the metaphors they employ, which include; spaceship Earth, overshoot and collapse, cancer or virus (humans being the sickness of Earth), and population bomb/explosion (Dryzek, 2022, pp. 42-43).

Sustainability became popular in the 1980s, most notably after the release of the Brundtland Report in 1987. This makes sustainability around a decade younger than limits and survival. The aim of sustainability is to find a common ground between the environmental, and economic concerns, or perhaps rather a peace treaty between environmental problem solving, and limits and survival. Sustainability advocates do not view the environment and the economy as opposites, but instead as two sides of a coin; the economic growth, and environmental protection can coexist symbiotically (Dryzek, 2022, p. 16). At the heart of sustainability is the idea that not all countries can develop in the same path as industrialized countries have done. As this would exceed the capacity of the Earth’s ecosystems. Instead, economic growth should be managed in such a way, that it is environmentally sound, and socially just. This justice must be for the present, as well as future, generations. These beliefs are most tangibly represented in UN’s 17 Sustainable Development

Goals (Dryzek, 2022, p. 157). The metaphors employed in sustainability include; organic growth “*Organisms grow, and develop; as can societies.*” (Dryzek, 2022, p. 160) nature as natural capital, reassurance (we can have it all; economic growth, environmental protection, social justice etc.) (Dryzek, 2022, p. 162).

Green radicalism, and its supporters, reject industrial society’s structure, and its portrait of environment. However, this baseline seems to be the only common agreement. Adherents of green radicalism have a range of alternative worldviews, with each depicting humans, society, and their place in the world differently. Social ecologists wish for social justice, e.g., indigenous people’s right to their land, while deep ecologists would rather see nature without human influence. The methods for achieving their goals also differ, some believe in change of lifestyle, while others prefer the political route. Nonetheless, these different groups still have more in common with each other, than they do with the three other categories mentioned above (Dryzek, 2022, p. 16). For example, all kinds of green radicalism emphasizes that the solution to climate and environmental issues should be found in the individuals’ actions, while collective actors, such as governments, and corporations, only are called upon to be condemned. Meanwhile, the different types of green radicalism also utilize the same metaphors. They are mostly less tangible than the ones found in the other categories, and consist of a great variety of biological, and organic metaphors. However, one specific metaphor is often used, it’s the idea of the Earth as a single organism “Gaia”, or “Mother Earth” (Dryzek, 2022, pp. 201-202).

The promethean response builds on the idea that human ingenuity will solve the issues of limits, and planetary boundaries, if such limits even exist. Evidently, the promethean response is directed against the limits and survival category (Dryzek, 2022, pp. 25-26). Prometheans deny the very existence of ‘nature’, ‘natural resources’, and ‘ecosystems’, and view the natural world as nothing more than ‘brute matter’. As such, it is when humans transform this brute matter that natural resources are made, they do not occur in nature by themselves. Furthermore, pollution is seen as matter in either the wrong form, or the wrong place, and through human activity this can be changed – given enough energy, and funds. Therefore, in order to be able to ‘afford’ to care about the environment, humanity must first accumulate enough wealth (Dryzek, 2022, p. 60). Humans are believed to be the dominating species, that can and should rule the Earth system, in what Prometheans coin the *good Anthropocene*. The market is trusted to regulate scarcity, as companies will develop innovations, while competing for customers, and these technologies will solve any problems with limited material. In regards to government, Prometheans want it to interfere as little

as possible, as it might curb innovation with unnecessary restrictions (Dryzek, 2022, p. 61). When it comes to climate change the preferred tactic is casting doubt into the minds of the public, rather than providing any tangible proof (Dryzek, 2022, p. 67). The most important rhetorical device, for the supporters of the promethean response, is *trend*, as Dryzek describes “*Prometheans are at their happiest when presenting graphs depicting declining resource prices, increasing parklands, croplands, and forests, increasing life expectancy [...]*” (Dryzek, 2022, p. 63). Trends are ‘cherry-picked’, which means they are chosen for their usefulness for the actor. These trends are then used to support the actor’s claims, e.g., the declining resource prices can be (mis)used to argue that there cannot be scarcity, if the prices are dropping, as it clashes with the common knowledge of economics. The main metaphor is mechanistic; the Earth, and its systems, is seen as a machine that works for, and is maintained by, the human race (Ibid.).

Gray radicalism completely rejects environmentalism of any kind. For Dryzek ‘Gray’ in this context connotes with smoke, and ash, as well as the washing out of any nuance of green. The difference between the promethean response, and gray radicalism, is that while Prometheans believe technology and the market will solve the environmental problems, the adherents of gray radicalism downright deny the existence of such troubles, and even prefer the old technology of the industrial society, such as coal plants. Gray radicalism is often coupled with nationalism, as international agreements, such as the Paris Agreement, can be seen as a threat to a country’s sovereignty. Meaning that the United Nations aim to rule its member states (Dryzek, 2022, pp. 233-236). Gray radicalism can become the foundation of their identity for the followers, which can lead to a form of ‘culture war’ against anyone, or anything, outside the group. This division in in-group, and out-group, increases the risk of reducing individuals, or their group, to stereotypes, which fuels, and legitimizes, the war for the in-group (Dryzek, 2022, p. 240).

## **Case Description**

Bolivia has large naturally occurring deposits of lithium, an estimate from the U.S. Geological Survey sets the reserves to be 21 million metric tons. The lithium is located under the salt flats of Uyuni, and Coipasa. Until now there has not been an industrialized extraction of the mineral, but in January 2023 the Bolivian government made a deal with the Chinese consortium CBC to embark on this undertaking. The consortium has agreed to an initial investment of 1,4 billion dollars to build a plant in each of the salt flats, and in exchange the consortium will receive exclusive rights to the extracted lithium. It is expected that each plant will produce up to 25,000 metric tons per year, of battery-grade lithium carbonate. This is crucial for the consortium, as the plan is to transform the lithium into lithium-ion batteries, in an attempt to meet the increasing demand for electrical vehicles (Ramos, and Elliott, 2023).

However, it is not the first time that Bolivia has attempted to initialize the industrialization of its lithium. A previous government, under president Evo Morales, tried back in 2019, with an agreement with the German company ACI Systems. The plans were foiled by protests from the locals, many of whom were organized in the COMCIPO and FRUTCAS groups. They had many concerns, including; participation in decisions, development, but most especially environmental concerns about water. The reason for this is that the regions, where the lithium is located, have experienced increasing drought, and many locals' livelihood is based on farming, and animal husbandry. Furthermore, they have seen how water availability (both ground and surface water) has been affected in neighboring Chile, after the industrialization of lithium was completed there (Jemio, 2020).

The communicative event, for this thesis, is the press conference held the 20th January 2023, in Casa Grande del Pueblo (Great House of the People), which is the presidential palace in La Paz, Bolivia. The press conference announced the successful negotiation between the government of Bolivia, and the Chinese consortium CBC, as well as revealed the plans for the industrialization of the lithium in Bolivia (Bolivia Tv, 2023).

## Analysis

The video, covering the press conference, begins suddenly with Carlos Ramos Mamani already talking. He is the president of the Bolivian state-owned mining company Yacimientos de Litio Boliviano (YLB). It is not possible to say how much of the press conference has passed, when the video begins, but since the activity type is a governmental press conference, it is likely that there are several acts that have been omitted. One would expect the press conference to begin with the hostess greeting the audience, and then presenting the speakers. However, the video has a length of 40 minutes, so perhaps the omission of the beginning serves to shorten the video, by trimming it for unnecessary pleasantries. One consequence is, though, that it is not immediately obvious which company he is talking about, when he begins “*The company’s fundamental objective [...]*”<sup>1</sup> (Appendix 1, p. 1, l. 2). It is later revealed that the company in question is the Chinese consortium CBC. Mamani continues “*[...] the process of industrialization of this strategic resource [...]*”<sup>2</sup> (Ibid. l. 3), ‘industrialization’ leads the thoughts to capitalism, and conventional economic growth, but also the promethean response, where technology is seen as the solution to environmental concerns. The ‘strategic resource’ is, of course, lithium, and the word choice of ‘strategic’ reveals that Mamani is conscious about how decisions regarding this light metal can leave serious impacts on Bolivia.

When Mamani claims that CBC will bring “*[...] better yields, above 80%, optimization of water use [...]*”<sup>3</sup> (Appendix 1, p. 1, l. 3-4), the audience need to know beforehand, that Bolivia already has lithium extraction plants. Therefore, it is an example of intertextuality, since without this information the audience would not understand what is being compared, and being left wondering ‘better yields? Better than what?’. However, as information goes this is fairly vague, especially ‘optimization of water use’, as there is no metric added to the argument. The reason it is mentioned at all is probably in order to appease the opposition, who might have concerns about the water usage of lithium mining. Furthermore, Mamani states that the CBC has had its qualities “*[...] assessed in a transparent way and for which the company has obtained the highest rating.*”<sup>4</sup> (Appendix 1, p. 1, l. 4-5), he does not reveal who has undertaken this assessment, nor where it was published – if at all, or which organization, or institution, has awarded the company with the ‘highest rating’. These

---

<sup>1</sup> Translated by the author, from Appendix 2, p. 1, l. 2.

<sup>2</sup> Translated by the author, from Appendix 2, p. 1, l. 3.

<sup>3</sup> Translated by the author, from Appendix 2, p. 1, l. 3-4.

<sup>4</sup> Translated by the author, from Appendix 2, p. 1, l. 4-5.

word choices, ‘transparency’, and ‘high rating’, have positive connotations. Transparency is held in high regard within the order of discourse of democracy, and have the notions of openness, and proper conduct. Whereas highest rating is something often found within capitalist vocabulary, as it has to do with the competitiveness of the market; consumers will rate products and companies, e.g., on Trustpilot, on a scale from 1 to 5. The higher the rating, the better. Mamani attempts to apply these positive connotations to CBC in the audience’s minds, because if they believe that CBC is a ‘good’ company, then the industrialization will be easier to realize. Furthermore, he is rationalizing building the plants in the salt flats, by talking about their vastness “*Our salt flat in Uyuni has more than 10,000 square kilometers. The salt flat in Coipasa has more than 2,000 square kilometers.*”<sup>5</sup> (Appendix 1, p. 1, l. 10-12). Meanwhile, the lithium plants are going to be built as “[...] *solutions [...] at a custom level [...]*” and in “[...] *specific areas [...]*”<sup>6</sup> (Appendix 1, p. 1, l. 13-14), with this comparison Mamani tries to downplay the affect the plants might have on the surrounding environment. In other words, not only are the plants going to be small, compared to the salt flats, but they are going to be adapted to the area, and the location is carefully selected. However, if seen through the scope of green radicalism the argument looks rather different; the salt flats are so enormous, it does not matter that a small part of it is ruined. The promethean response would be that the locations is chosen based on where the lithium reserves are most concentrated. At the same time, adherents to gray radicalism might wonder why Mamani even bothers with this rationalization. Therefore, this argument’s meaning depends on the consumption of the receiver, and which previous texts they have had access to.

‘Our salt flat’ is also interesting, because the salt flat is presented as a collective ‘backyard’ for all Bolivians, and as such it is a collective decision how it’s going to be used. It also underscores that the government wouldn’t want to ruin it, because who would want to spoil their own garden? Nonetheless, it is not environmental protection that is the main focus for Mamani, but rather economic development, which becomes apparent when he states “[...] *the development of lithium that our country needs.*”<sup>7</sup> (Appendix 1, p. 1, l. 16). It is presented as a ‘need’, not as a want, or something that would be nice to have, the result is that it becomes harder to refuse. A need has to be fulfilled, if, e.g., a creature is to thrive, whereas a want can be dismissed without too severe consequences. Another point is the ‘demander’ of this need; Mamani says the ‘country’ needs the

---

<sup>5</sup> Translated by the author, from Appendix 2, p. 1, l. 11-13.

<sup>6</sup> Translated by the author, from Appendix 2, p. 1, l. 14-16.

<sup>7</sup> Translated by the author, from Appendix 2, p. 1, l. 18.

development, but more specifically it could mean the society of Bolivia, or perhaps just the economy. The provider, whose responsibility it is to comply with this need, is the people, represented by the word ‘our’. So, the people have the responsibility to tend to the country’s need(s), this is a very patriotic approach reminiscent of the words by John F. Kennedy, at his Inaugural Address, January 20th 1961 “[...] *ask not what your country can do for you — ask what you can do for your country.*” (Kennedy, 1961). Mamani ends his speech with a rhetorical device; repetition “[...] *to have that income we need and establish the lithium industry [...] that is needed for our country.*”<sup>8</sup> (Appendix 1, p. 1, l. 22-23). This serves to underline his point further, and increases the chance of it being stored in the memory of the receiver.

The next participant to speak is the hostess, who is not introduced directly, but she could be Mery Rosalía Choque, as President Luis Arce later says “*We greet sister Mery Rosalía Choque, National Senator for the Region of Oruro, who is with us*”<sup>9</sup> (Appendix 1, p. 6, l. 28-29). ‘Who is with us’ could be interpreted as ‘who is with us on stage’, sadly it has not been possible to verify that it is Mery Choque, in part because the video is too low quality, and the hostess is never portrayed close-up. Additionally, she wears a wide brimmed hat, which obscures her face further. Especially, because the video is filmed from a bird’s-eye view, whenever she appears. The picture below illustrates how Choque is seen for the first time in the video, which is also how she is portrayed throughout the press conference. Choque is the figure to the left, standing at the podium.

---

<sup>8</sup> Translated by the author, from Appendix 2, p. 1, l. 24-25.

<sup>9</sup> Translated by the author, from Appendix 2, p. 7, l. 5-6.



(Bolivia Tv, 2023).

It is only the two ministers, the president, the Chinese diplomat, and the representative for CBC, who is deemed important enough to be displayed with a portrait. This cinematic device uncovers the power relations between the participants, in the social practice. President Arce is the one who has the most screen time, mainly through close-ups, which signifies that he is an important figure to remember, and recognize later. He is also named on the screen, with a bar that clearly states his name, and title. This can be seen in the picture below.





(Bolivia Tv, 2023).

Another piece of evidence, that places Choque in the lower end of the hierarchy, is that she does not deliver a dedicated speech of her own, despite being a senator in one of the regions affected by the deal. A reason, for this exclusion, could be her gender, according to Freedom House “*Formally, Bolivia has progressive legislation that guarantees equal political representation for women and seeks to protect them from political violence. While women are well represented in politics, holding 46 percent of seats in the Chamber of Deputies and nearly 56 percent of those in the Senate, sexism and patriarchal attitudes undermine their work, particularly at local levels.*” (Freedom House, 2022). This coincides with the fact that the speakers, in the press conference, are all men.

Instead, Choque’s role in this activity type ‘press conference’ is playing hostess. In her first appearance she supports Mamani’s authority, when she says “*We thank you for the words engineer Carlos Ramos Mamani, executive of Yacimientos de Litio Boliviano.*”<sup>10</sup> (Appendix 1, p. 1, l. 27-28). By calling him ‘engineer’ she strengthens his image, as someone who is capable of making decisions regarding technical issues, such as mining. Meanwhile, ‘executive’ tells the audience that he is the leader of YLB, and as such must be the most fitted candidate within YLB to deliver a speech on its behalf, which makes Mamani the animator of the text, and YLB the principal. This use of professional discourse can be viewed as an attempt to maintain the order of discourse, as she implicitly states that Mamani is qualified for his job, and therefore is entitled to the authority he wields. Then, following the script as hostess, Choque presents the video, which introduces CBC.

The video has a length of approximately 2 minutes and 45 seconds. In that time the word ‘world’ is mentioned 9 times. It is the rhetorical device of repetition being enacted. The number 9 is often seen in myths, and folktales, e.g., the nine muses in Greek mythology, or cats having nine lives (Stefánsson, 2012). In this video it could be a coincidence, but it could also be a sign that CBC has employed some talented storytellers. Increasingly, when looking at the use of the word ‘global’, which appears 3 times, which is also a number that is frequently used in fairytales (Ibid.). The effect of this is that the presentation is easy digestible, and the many repetitions of ‘world’ and ‘global’ is an attempt to, discursively, transform lithium mining in Bolivia into a planetary issue. This main message is that CBC is an unrivalled global company, that has partners, and access to markets all

---

<sup>10</sup> Translated by the author, from Appendix 2, p. 1, l. 28-29.

over the world, e.g., “*Nearly 4 million electric vehicles in 53 countries and regions around the world use CATL batteries.*”<sup>11</sup> (Appendix 1, p. 2, l. 8-9) and “*Mineral resources are found on six continents.*”<sup>12</sup> (Ibid. l. 13). These evoke the economic discourse, and the capitalistic ideology, which is a logical strategy when courting a potential business partner. CBC obviously wishes to flaunt its achievements, in order to convince Bolivia that it is a reliable, and ambitious company. Indeed, these achievements sound impressive, when backed up by numbers, e.g., “*CMOC [...] has a market value of \$20 billion and the global employee (group) is 11.000.*”<sup>13</sup> (Appendix 1, p. 2, l. 11-13). However, when treating the subject of environmentalism, the numbers disappear, and the claims become vaguer, e.g., “*All mining areas have an environmental safety management system that protects the environment when prospecting.*”<sup>14</sup> (Appendix 1, p. 2, l. 15-16). It is up to the audience to interpret what ‘environmental safety management system’ entails, since it is not disclosed, not even later in the presentation. However, by having evoked the environmentalism discourse the less vigilant members of the audience might feel reassured that the company *does* concern itself with environmental issues. Additionally, the word ‘safety’ has many positive connotations; security, peace of mind, comfort. It is a word that is impossible to object to, as it is common sense, and a basic need, to want to feel safe. Nonetheless, this unspecified environmental protocol also means that it is easy to comply with, as there are no tangible promises that have to be upheld. Here, the discursive practice serves to support the status-quo in the social practice, as it does not incite the need for change. Furthermore, no vigilant listener can confront CBC later using the words of this presentation against them, as it is up to interpretation, and CBC can just claim, in face of any environmental damage, that their system was not equipped to that specific situation. Finally, unspecified environmental protocol as a genre is often employed by companies (or institutions, or organizations), that want to appear (more) environmentally conscious, and vagueness is at the core of this particular genre. The goal is achieved through, e.g., usage of buzz words, such as ‘environmentally friendly’, ‘sustainable’, ‘green’, ‘natural’ etc. This serve to persuade consumers, and potential business partners, that a company has a ‘green’ profile, without that necessarily happens to be the case. Therefore, unspecified environmental protocols fit into the order of discourse called *greenwashing*. Generally, greenwashing can be defined as misleading communication, that results in people having an exceedingly positive view of a company’s

---

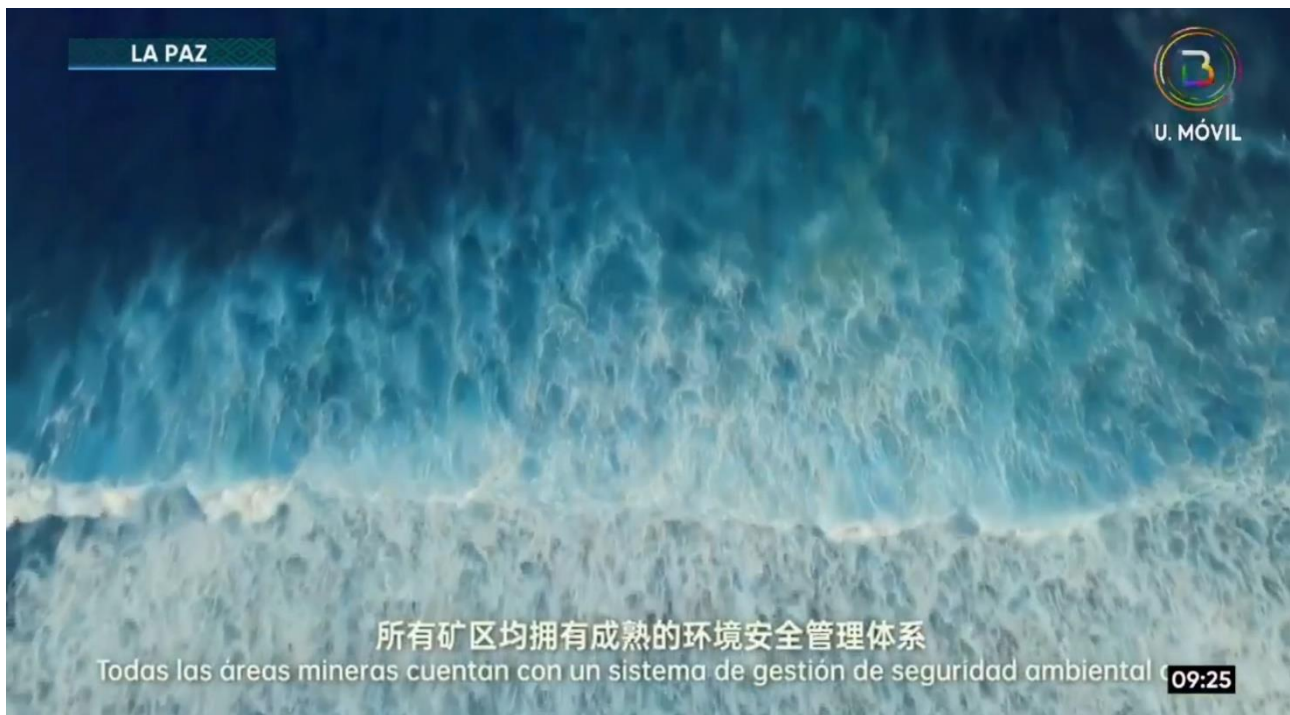
<sup>11</sup> Translated by the author, from Appendix 2, p. 2, l. 9-10.

<sup>12</sup> Translated by the author, from Appendix 2, p. 2, l. 14.

<sup>13</sup> Translated by the author, from Appendix 2, p. 2, l. 12-14.

<sup>14</sup> Translated by the author, from Appendix 2, p. 2, l. 16-17.

environmental profile, products, or practices. The communication can be in any form, e.g., written text, pictures, choice of color, sounds etc. (Castree, et al. 2018, p. 689). CBC utilizes a mixture of text and picture in its video. In the picture below, which is a still from the video, the words ‘environmental safety’ (seguridad ambiental) is accompanied by a recording of clear blue ocean (Bolivia Tv, 2023).



(Bolivia Tv, 2023).

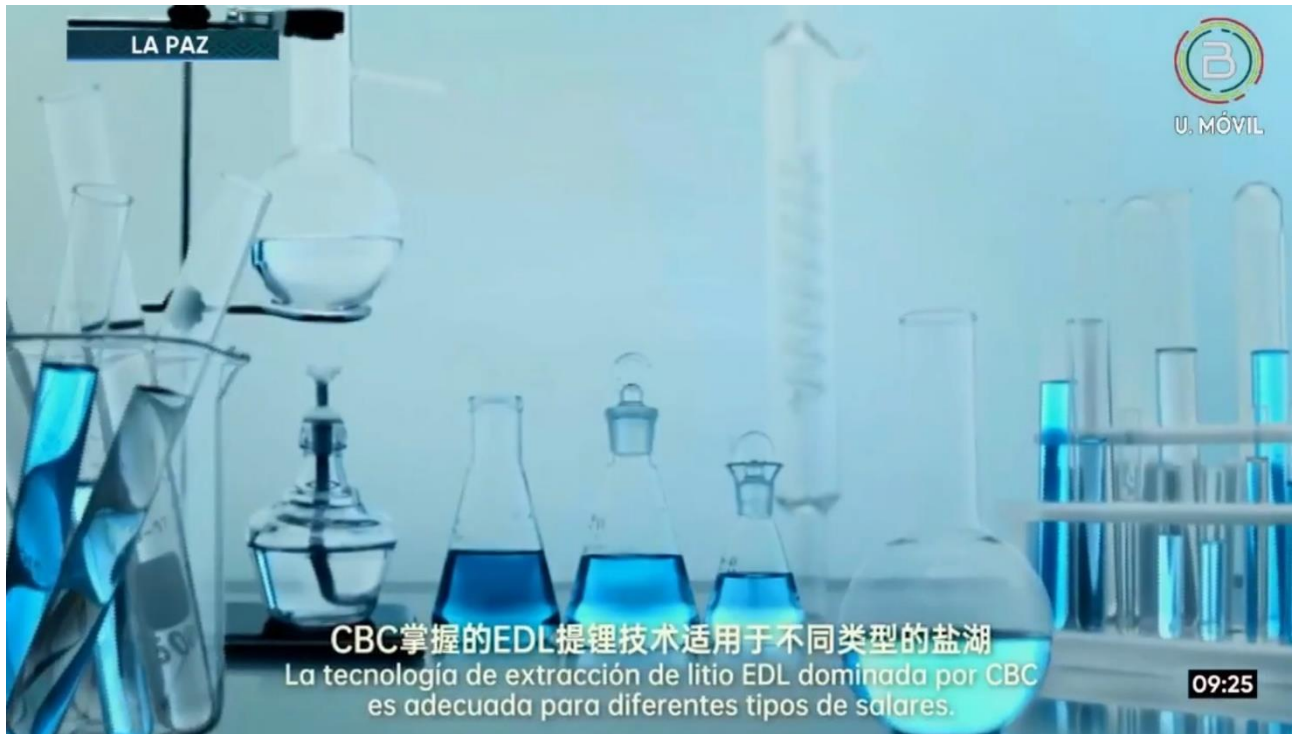
The sound of waves has a calming effect on the human mind (University of Exeter, 2018), and, at the same time, the color blue often connotes with tranquility, security, and relaxation (Cherry, 2022). It has a disarming effect on the viewer, and provides CBC with an image of being environmentally conscious, while having made no specific claims of this. Calming effect aside, a recording of ocean is an odd choice, seeing as lithium mining is not conducted in the ocean, but in salt flats. However, had CBC employed a recording of the Uyuni salt flat, the experience would

have been quite another. Consider the following picture.



(Durrfeld, 2019).

There are two similarities, between the two pictures; they are of nature, and the color blue is present, but otherwise, there is nothing but differences. The salt flat is immobile and dry, whereas the ocean is moving and wet. This makes the ocean feel alive, whereas the salt flat appears dead. CBC does not want the audience to think about water scarcity, as lithium mining is incredibly water reliant (more information on this later), and these salt deserts are, naturally, arid (Vera, et al, 2023). The ocean is more abundant, so it is not interpreted as a problem, when the next frame shows the water in beakers, in a lab.



(Bolivia Tv, 2023).

The blue color of the water, in the beakers, creates a connection to the ocean showed earlier. Also, the small amount of water in the beakers, compared to the vastness of the ocean implies that CBC practices sustainable extraction. When the salt flat is displayed, it appears in its inundated form, which occurs occasionally during the rainy season from December to March (Arnade, and McFarren, 2023).



(Bolivia Tv, 2023).

Having the word ‘puro’, which means pure, on the screen with a video of clear, light blue water is no coincidence. Purity is one of the symbolisms that is connected to water (Hayman, 2012, p.23). From this an implicit speech act immerses, namely, the promise that the salt flats will retain their characteristics. It is also a reassurance that the salt flats will stay the same after the industrialization of the lithium.

The CBC presentation continues by talking about the direct lithium extraction (DLE) “*The impurity separation effect is excellent [...] At the same time it also has excellent environmental protection advantages. No toxic and harmful substances are added or produced [...] which keeps the salt flats pure.*”<sup>15</sup> (Appendix 1, p. 2, l. 17-20). The first eye-catcher of the paragraph is that they want to remove ‘impurities’ from ‘pure’ salt flats, but it is a question of how the word purity is used within the two different orders of discourse, that are in use here, namely, an engineering discourse, and an environmental discourse. For the engineering discourse purity has been achieved, when the wanted material exceeds a certain percentage in a given sample, e.g., the case of the brine from the salt flats, where the wanted material is lithium carbonate, and the desired percentage according to CBC

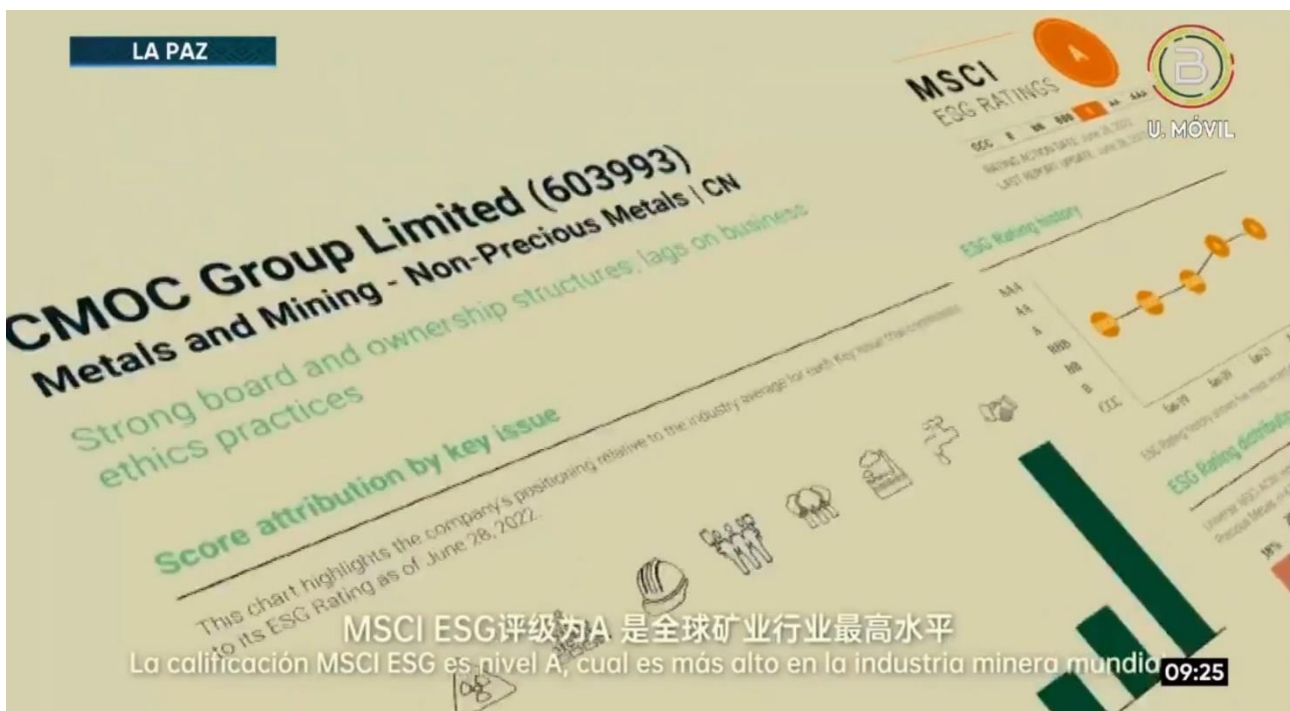
---

<sup>15</sup> Translated by the author, from Appendix 2, p. 2, l. 18-21.



is 90%<sup>16</sup>, or above (Appendix 1, p. 2, l. 18). Meanwhile, for the environmental discourse purity can be claimed in an area, if it has not been altered by human activity. Therefore, it is difficult to imagine that this definition of purity is compatible with extraction of minerals, as such prospecting must disturb a locality, at least somewhat in the vicinity of the mining site. The second aspect, that draws the attention, is the use of ‘excellent’ to describe both ‘the impurity separation effect’, and the ‘environmental protection advantages’. The adjective serves to give the impression that both of these fields are of equal importance to CBC, and also implies that these two areas hardly can be perfected any further, as ‘excellence’ is difficult, or even impossible, to surpass.

The most tangible benchmark that CBC mentions in relation to environmentalism is “*The MSCI ESG rating is level A, which is the highest in the global mining industry.*”<sup>17</sup> (Appendix 1, p. 2, l. 14-15). This rating is of CMOC, not the collective consortium of CBC, which can be seen in the video, shown in the picture below.



(Bolivia Tv, 2023).

Notice as well, in the top right corner, that there are two higher ratings, ‘AA’ and ‘AAA’. The claim, that no other mining company has achieved either an AA or AAA rating, would be very time

<sup>16</sup> Appendix 2, p. 2, l. 19.

<sup>17</sup> Translated by the author, from Appendix 2, p. 2, l. 15-16.

consuming to verify. Especially, since MSCI has rated ESG scores for around 2.800 companies (MSCI, 2023, app), granted not all of them from the mining business. However, an ‘A’ rating places CMOC within the average group, as can be seen in the chart below.



(MSCI, 2023, *What is an MSCI ESG Rating?*).

The content of the yellow box in the overview above, does not line up with the earlier claims of ‘excellence’ in their field. Although, CMOC could argue that it is a question of recognition, as the ESG rating awarded in May 2023 is AA, which can be viewed below.



CMOC was upgraded in May, 2023.

### ESG Rating history

MSCI ESG Rating history data over the last five years or since records began.





(MSCI,2023, CMOC Group Limited).

CATL, on the other hand, has not received a rating for 2023, yet at least, and its rating from September 2022 is ‘A’ (MSCI, 2022). Meanwhile, BRUNP has never been evaluated by MSCI. The reason for this could be that BRUNP has not made its data publicly available, which is the type of data that constitutes the foundation of MSCI’s work (MSCI, 2023, *What is an MSCI ESG Rating?*). This can seem a bit suspicious, but perhaps it has to do with BRUNP being “[...] a holding subsidiary of CATL.”<sup>18</sup> (Appendix 1, p. 2, l. 10), and as such, its activities are calculated into those of CATL.

In discourse analysis it can often be prudent to pay attention to what is being left out, just as much as what is actually being said. In the case of CBC’s presentational video water is never mentioned by the voice-over. This is interesting, as lithium mining is heavily water reliant. In fact, it is estimated that it takes up to 2 million liters of water in order to produce 1 ton of lithium (UNCTAD, 2020). Granted, this estimate is based on benchmarks from conventional evaporitic technology, and the idea of using DLE is that it should bring “[...] optimization of water use [...]”<sup>19</sup> (Appendix 1, p. 1, l. 3), as Mamani said, in the beginning of the press conference. However, a study published in March 2023, researched 57 reports from 2017 to 2022, regarding freshwater usage in DLE, and found “A quarter of these reports do not provide freshwater consumption data, 13 use lower amounts than current practice<sup>20</sup> and 9 require similar amounts. A quarter [...] over 10 times greater than that used in current practice.” (Vera, et al. 2023, p. 157). Sadly, the precise amount in the 13 cases with ‘lower amount’ is not disclosed, but it remains quite the gamble, to bet on DLE in order to mitigate any current, or future, water scarcity.

Now, returning to CBC’s video presentation. “We always follow a high-level ESG philosophy based on the principle of gratitude to mother earth and protection of mother earth with effective use of renewable energies such as wind and solar and striving to maintain a good ecology for present and future generations.”<sup>21</sup> (Appendix 1, p.2, l. 20-23). The ‘high-level ESG’ has already been covered, when treating the MSCI rating. Although, it should be added that ESG belongs to sustainability, within the environmental discourses, as it builds on the core idea that economic growth, and

---

<sup>18</sup> Translated by the author, from Appendix 2, p. 2, l. 11.

<sup>19</sup> Translated by the author, from Appendix 2, p. 1, l. 4.

<sup>20</sup> ‘Current practice’ refers to the conventional evaporitic method, where the brine is poured into vast basins, and left to dehydrate in the sun (Vera, et al. 2023, p. 150).

<sup>21</sup> Translated by the author, from Appendix 2, p. 2, l. 21-24.

environmental protection can coexist. Therefore, it can be viewed as a mix of discourses when ‘mother earth’ is called upon, in the same sentence, because that metaphor resides within the green radicalism discourse. The effect of this is that CBC appear more environmentally friendly, than they would have done if they had only talked about ESG rating. Increasingly, because they pair ‘mother earth’ with imagery of dense forest, which can be seen in the picture below.



(Bolivia Tv, 2023).

Additionally, naming the planet ‘mother’ also evokes the family discourse; family members take care of each other, and a mother is someone we owe gratitude for our life, and whom we protect, when we are grown, as she is dear to us. This further underlines the point that CBC wishes to make, namely, that the company would never do anything to harm the planet, or the environment.

However, there could be another reason for CBC to mention ‘mother earth’. A cultural reason, because in the Andean area, in which Bolivia is located, there is a way of living, a world-view, called “buen vivir”, or “vivir bien”, depending on the country. It means to ‘live well’, but not in the way that the conventional Western mindset would determine living well. Instead, it is an alternative to neoliberalism, massive consumption, and the marketization of nature. All in all, a rejection of capitalism. As such, vivir bien is sorted under the discourse of green radicalism. To live well, in the scope of this world-view, is to live in balance with nature, and to acknowledge that nature has rights. Nature is often depicted as “Madre Tierra” or “Pachamama” aka mother earth, this

personification makes it easier to advocate for nature's rights, as most laws in nation states are built on individualistic ideas (Solón, 2017). Therefore, it could be an attempt for CBC to connect with the Bolivian people, especially those who might be opposed to the lithium mining, and reassure them that the company has good intentions. Reassurance is a speech act that is employed by the sustainability discourse, and CBC uses it often, which can be seen when they talk about 'renewable energies' and 'maintain a good ecology' in the sentence above. The mention of renewable energies serves to indicate that CBC will not be using fossil fuels to power the lithium plants, and, therefore, the locals can feel reassured that the air quality will not be affected by the industrialization. The other reassurance, maintain a good ecology, seems to promise that the mining activity will not disrupt the ecosystem in the salt flats, but as mentioned earlier, the water usage can be enormous. CBC goes further by claiming the 'good ecology' will be there, not only for present, but for future generations as well, meaning that the promise covers both in short term, and in the long term. This 'maintaining' of an ecosystem has a mechanistic quality to it, as seen in the Promethean response, where the planet, and natural systems in general, is viewed as a machine that can be repaired, and maintained by humans. So, even if CBC has an effect on the environment, they can solve these possible issues through their technology. The next metaphor, used by CBC, appears harder to sort into a single environmental discourse; "*The new wave of the global energy revolution is raging.*"<sup>22</sup> (Appendix 1, p. 2, l. 23). A 'wave' that is 'raging' fits with the doom and gloom of limits and survival's metaphors, meanwhile the 'energy revolution' fit both the promethean response (energy), and green radicalism (revolution). Indeed, the only possible opponents to this sentence, is the adherents to gray radicalism, as they don't support new kinds of energy sources, but would rather keep sources like oil and coal, as they view them as reliable. Therefore, this sentence is an attempt at a 'catch-all mechanic', as most can agree on wanting cleaner energy. Additionally, CBC makes it discursively impossible to resist this development, as it is described as a raging wave, evoking the order of discourse of natural disasters, which humans are largely powerless to stop, or prevent. However, the metaphor does not incite a feeling of tragedy, or hopelessness, rather the opposite; a feeling of opportunity, and hope. This is accomplished by the mixture of three orders of discourses, natural disasters, development, and community. What is created is an order of discourse of the future, with a positive outlook; humanity is working together for cleaner energy in the future. Moreover, by using natural phenomenon (raging wave) to describe technology (new energy) gives

---

<sup>22</sup> Translated by the author, from Appendix 2, p. 2, l. 24-25.

the sense that this technology is a part of nature, which further limits the possibilities to resist the plans for building the lithium plants.

The next sentence in the CBC video is “*We are going to cooperate and move forward hand in hand and build together a beautiful house for our future.*”<sup>23</sup> (Appendix 1, p. 2, l. 23-24). By using the metaphor ‘hand in hand’ CBC wishes to signal that this partnership’s power relation is equal, thus eliminating the idea that CBC is going to exploit Bolivia for its resources. When the next metaphor is said, ‘build together a beautiful house’, it gives the impression that this is a romantic fairytale, where the hero finally gets the girl, and they live happily ever after. This can be supported by looking at the video as a whole, as it starts with pictures of the CBC factories, an example is shown below.



(Bolivia Tv, 2023).

Then the pictures change to mining sites, and nature.

---

<sup>23</sup> Translated by the author, from Appendix 2, p. 2, l. 25-26.





(Bolivia Tv, 2023).



(Bolivia Tv, 2023).

After these pictures, the factories return to the screen.



(Bolivia Tv, 2023).

This type of storytelling ‘hero-journey’ can be found in fairytales, where the protagonist is home at the beginning of the story, then travels out in the world, and finally returns home (Stefánsson, 2012). ‘Home’ in this story is the factory, where lithium is transformed into batteries, meanwhile ‘out’ is the mining sites, and nature in general. This means that CBC is the hero of the story, and Bolivia is the princess. Just like in fairytales the audience get to know the hero the best; his many talents, and accomplishments – which CBC accounted for with percentages, ratings etc. However, the princess’s character is less rounded, all the audience knows is two things. One, that she is beautiful – which is shown through the pictures of nature, and two, that she is rich – which is displayed by the mining sites. The trouble is that the princess is cut off from her riches, but with the hero’s help she can gain access, and with the riches in hand they can save the world (through the green transition agenda). Using a fairytale style creates a tenor that is more intimate, and informal, seeing as the chosen rhetorical mode is narrative. This might be opposite of what the audience expected to witness from CBC, and such a surprise can be conducive of attention, and make the company appear more grounded, and interesting. However, the fairytale style is subtle, as CBC wishes to give the audience the impression that it is a competent, and serious company.

CBC ends the video with the words “*CBC, Create Better Community.*”<sup>24</sup> (Appendix 1, p. 2, l. 24-25). Actually, CBC is an abbreviation of the three companies; CATL, BRUNP, and CMOC, but that is not something that is easy to recall for the audience. A short sentence with the three letters is more memorable, and it also serves as a last testament to CBC’s team spirit, and benevolence. The animator of the CBC video is an unknown actor, who only appears as a faceless voice, while the principal is CBC, but the author (screenwriter/director) is unknown.

After the video presentation the hostess, Mery Choque, takes the stage again. She tells the audience what will happen next “*Subsequently, dear brothers and sisters, the joint investment framework agreement will be signed between the president of YLB, brother Carlos Ramos Mamani, and the representative of the CBC company, brother Qinghua Zhou.*”<sup>25</sup> (Appendix 1, pp. 2-3, l. 29-1).

Choque calls the audience ‘dear brothers and sisters’, thus evoking the order of discourse of family, and with the word choice of ‘dear’ it is clear that it is a loving one of that. Mamani is also ‘brother’, which is to say he is part of the family. Seeing as Bolivia is a “*plurinational state*”, with Spanish, and 36 indigenous official languages (Arnade, and, McFarren, 2023), the country might need discursive practices that can create a strong sense of community, in the social practice.

Communitarianism is a pillar in the world-view *vivir bien*, which also helps explain the use of family labels in the public sphere. However, when Zhou is also included into the family, with a ‘brother’ in front of his name, it becomes interesting. It is no longer just the citizens of Bolivia, who constitutes this big ‘family’, but also this Chinese representative of CBC. The effect is that it is discursively difficult, if not impossible, to object to the industrialization, because it would mean moving against family. In this depiction Zhou is not ‘just’ a business partner, who could find someone else to do business with, he is a family member, and not some distant cousin, but a brother, who needs this mutual beneficial agreement to go through. Another effect is that any cultural differences is toned down; in every culture exists family, and siblings, which means calling Zhou ‘brother’ makes him less foreign, and/or intimidating. Moreover, it sends the signal that CBC will not violate the business terms, as a brother would not exploit his family.

After the signing of the documents, Choque gives thanks to the signing parties, and then says “*Congratulations to the regions of Oruro and Potosí and to the Plurinational State of Bolivia.*”

---

<sup>24</sup> Translated by the author, from Appendix 2, p. 2, l. 26.

<sup>25</sup> Translated by the author, from Appendix 2, pp. 2-3, l. 29-1.

*Many thanks to our authorities.*”<sup>26</sup> (Appendix 1, p. 3, l. 18-19). Through the word choice of ‘congratulations’ Choque is implying that this industrialization is something that the inhabitants of the two regions should be thankful for; that it is a great opportunity for them. At the same time, the congratulatory message is aimed at the nation, meaning that Bolivia, as a whole, stands to benefit from this business deal. The notion of sharing ownership of natural resources, and wealth, is essential for the ideology of socialism (Ball, and Dagger, 2023). However, as Fairclough states; meaning can always be challenged, and another way to consume, and interpret, this sentence is through the scope of dependency theory. This entails viewing Oruro and Potosí as the periphery, the weakest point in the value chain, which extracts raw materials, and sells them to semi-periphery, or core countries, in order for them to process them into products (Kvangraven, 2020). Therefore, the interpretation depends on the audience’s view on the industrialization; collective good, or exploitation, perhaps formed by experiences in the social practice. If a citizen of Oruro feels left out of participation, e.g., in decisions regarding placement of the lithium plants, then they might be persuaded by the exploitation point of view. Whereas, if the citizen experienced encouraged involvement, and plans for, e.g., improved infrastructure, they might take the stance of collective good. This foundation will also determine how the audience perceive ‘many thanks to our authorities’, as the authorities can either be the ones to thank, or to blame, for this outcome. However, by naming them ‘authorities’ it is also underlined that it is a group, and potentially large group, of people to ‘blame’ and oppose, which might discourage insubordination.

Then Choque presents a video called “*Bolivia, hope of the planet*”<sup>27</sup>, a cooperation between the Bolivian government, and YLB (Bolivia Tv, 2023). The opening sentence in the video is “*Destiny wanted our land to have countless treasures, some hidden, some in the sight of heaven, others in the soul of its people.*”<sup>28</sup> (Appendix 1, p. 3, l. 22-23). ‘Destiny’ is personified in this metaphor, which is apparent by it wanting something; implicitly gifting these ‘treasures’ to Bolivia. ‘Our land’ connotes with the ideology of socialism, because of collective ownership. Meanwhile, ‘countless treasures’ is a metaphor for all the different types of resources, that YLB, and the government, believe to be found in Bolivia. The ‘hidden’ resources are the metals and minerals in the ground, such as lithium in the salt flats. The ones ‘in the sight of heaven’ are likely any resource that can be observed from a bird’s-eye-view, e.g., forest, river, fields etc. Whereas, the resources in ‘the soul of

---

<sup>26</sup> Translated by the author, from Appendix 2, p. 3, l. 19-20.

<sup>27</sup> Translated by the author, from Appendix 2, p. 3, l. 21.

<sup>28</sup> Translated by the author, from Appendix 2, p. 3, l. 24-25.



its people' refer to the people's good qualities, e.g., industriousness, tenacity, generosity, kindness etc. This is flattery, a speech act, which is intended to create a positive image of the flatterer, in the mind of the receiver (Eylon, and Heyd, 2008, p. 686). Moreover, "*An act of flattery, then, is an act of deception designed to win over the flatteree.*" (Eylon, and, Heyd, 2008, p. 687). This has to do with the relationship between actors; namely, the authorities vs. the public, as such, it is the style, and more specifically the tenor, that is being uncovered here. It is an attempt of an intimate tenor, as complimenting someone must be some degree of intimate in order to be interpreted as sincere, and, thereby, effective. However, it is also an example of a casual tenor, as this flattery is not spelled out, but merely 'treasures' in 'the soul of its people'. The effect is that each receiver can decide what this 'treasure' is within themselves, and in turn no one can experience this flattery as insincere. The subject, on which the government and YLB wishes to win over the people, is of course, the lithium industrialization, and more specifically, the deal with CBC.

The video continues "*Sometimes it was improper who made use of them. But that's over.*"<sup>29</sup> (Appendix 1, p. 3, l. 23). The first statement refers to the colonial time, when Spain extracted more than 40.000 tons of silver from the mountain Cerro Potosí, next to which the Spanish founded the mining town Potosí in 1546 (Jackson, et al. 2011). This is an example of intertextuality, as it requires knowledge of Bolivia's history in order to fully appreciate the extend of the sentence. The next statement 'But that's over', is the speech act of reassurance, telling the audience, that this type of exploitation, where a foreign country extracts natural resources and then ships them out, has ended. However, opponents to the lithium industrialization could argue that *that* is exactly what is happening again; CBC is a Chinese consortium that plans to extract lithium, which will be brought to China for processing. Nonetheless, it signals that the government, and YLB, is conscious of the colonial past, and the inherited anxiety within the society, while also indicating that there are policies in place to prevent it from happening again. Supporters of the industrialization could further defend it, by claiming that it is a south-to-south deal, thus avoiding the connotation of exploitation that is often connected to global north-global south agreements.

Following, the video says "*Our treasures are for our children.*"<sup>30</sup> (Appendix 1, p. 3, l. 24). Yet another speech act of reassurance, which aims to convey that the earnings from this industrialization is going to benefit the people of Bolivia, and not end up in foreign pockets. Simultaneously, it

---

<sup>29</sup> Translated by the author, from Appendix 2, p. 3, l. 25-26.

<sup>30</sup> Translated by the author, from Appendix 2, p. 3, l. 26.

evokes the order of discourse of family, which aids to say that people will not only help themselves, by supporting this industrialization, but will also be investing in their children's future, and wellbeing. Discursively, if a person were to reject the industrialization in this light, they would appear as a cold hearted, and selfish parent, a most dreaded hallmark. Politically, a citizen would be viewed as standing against the common good, and progress, thus making it discursively difficult to resist. However, it is completely left out how these 'treasures' will be unearthed, and especially, the potential consequences thereof, which also will be inherited down to the following generations. The word choice of 'treasures' itself, leads the mind towards positive connotations, and imagery, such as the stereotypical treasure chest in romanticized pirate stories, or simply an abundance of financial resources.

The next sentence is a long one "*History gives us the chance to take our destiny and unleash the transformation of the world because Bolivia has the world's largest reservoir of hope to produce the energy evolution that will change the destiny of the planet.*"<sup>31</sup> (Appendix 1, p. 3, l. 24-26). When it is said 'history gives us the chance to take our destiny', history is personified in a metaphor, as someone who can bestow something unto others, in this case 'us', which refers to Bolivians in general. Then 'the chance to take our destiny' portrays the industrialization of lithium as an opportunity to bring the country, and its people, on the 'right' path. Which means to say that this is an opportunity they can't turn down, as doing that would entail embarking on an uncertain future, and therefore be unable to achieve their full potential. However, it is not only Bolivia, and its people, who has a stake in this, but the whole globe, which can be seen in the next part of the sentence; 'unleash the transformation of the world'. This is not just a question of national development, but of global development, namely, the green transition agenda, to which Bolivia, discursively, holds the key. This claim is further supported by the next piece of the sentence; 'Bolivia has the world's largest reservoir of hope'. It is lithium, which is being represented by 'hope', and hope is sorted under the order of discourse of the future, as it treats wishes, and dreams, which might come true. However, lithium will remain 'hope' as long as it is left in the brine, under the salt flats, which underlines the need for the industrialization, so this hope can become a reality. Factually, it is true that Bolivia has the largest deposits of lithium in the world. The US Geological Survey estimates that Bolivia's salt flats contain 21 million tons, which make up 23,7% of the world's identified lithium reserves (Ellerbeck, 2023). This piece of information serves as a

---

<sup>31</sup> Translated by the author, from Appendix 2, p. 3, l. 26-28.

contextualization, which places the discursive practice in the social practice. The next bit of text ‘produce the energy evolution’ evokes the order of discourse of the natural world by the word choice of ‘evolution’, which portrays the industrialization as the natural next step, and also as something that is better than the current energy technology, seeing as evolution usually leads to better fitted organisms. The last part of the sentence ‘that will change the destiny of the planet’ reveals that the industrialization will have global consequences. Additionally, ‘destiny’ in this part is different than the two first uses of the word in this video. Here destiny is not personified, or representing great potential, but rather a dystopian future, as ‘the destiny of the planet’ refers to the current trajectory of climate change. Going against as formidable an adversary as climate change is a huge undertaking, but discursively, Bolivia is presented as the strongest candidate for the task. The video ends with “*Bolivia is hope. Bolivia is lithium. Bolivia is an energy revolution.*”<sup>32</sup> (Appendix 1, p. 3, l. 26-27). What is happening here is an attempt to recreate Bolivia’s identity, and if it is successful, it will be an example of the discourse practice affecting the social practice, seeing as such an identity can be a strong political tool to support the lithium extraction. Mining operations will therefore be seen as a natural activity, because the extracted metal is intrinsic to the national identity. Furthermore, any opponent to the industrialization will run the risk of being labeled as unpatriotic, when voicing their opinion. The nationalism is also visible during the video, with the Bolivian flag displayed 3 times, which supports the creation of lithium being part of the national identity. This is achieved through association, by showing the flag and the salt flats simultaneously, which creates a link between the two.

This video utilizes the rhetorical device of numbers, as seen in fairytales (Stefánsson, 2012), quite a lot, for such a short video (just under a minute long), e.g., the flag that appears 3 times, the ‘countless treasures’ divided into 3 categories, and destiny being said 3 times. Another fairytale device used in this video is the hero journey, where ‘home’ is the salt flat, as seen in the screen shot below.

---

<sup>32</sup> Translated by the author, from Appendix 2, p. 3, l. 29.



(Bolivia Tv, 2023).

‘Out’ is when the video talks about the colonial time, and its end, which is symbolized by the discarded train seen below.



(Bolivia Tv, 2023).

Then the return 'home' again in the end of the video.



(Bolivia Tv, 2023).

It is worth noticing, that 'home' is pictured in sunlight, while 'out' is pictured in the night. Discursively, good and evil has assigned light and darkness respectively, but the night shown in the picture is not bleak, there is 'hope' seen in the many stars, shining above the forlorn instrument of exploitation. It also serves to say that the hard times will pass, and hope will prevail, because the train is rusting away, while the salt flat remains pristine.

The 'hero' of the story is the Bolivian people, who endures, just like the salt flat, and this is conveyed by pictures of Bolivians, before and after the pictures that represent the colonial time.

Below is the picture before.



(Bolivia Tv, 2023).

Then the picture after, shown below by two screen shots.



(Bolivia Tv, 2023).





(Bolivia Tv, 2023).

The picture of the ‘hero before’ shows a Bolivian in an indigenous dressing, seemingly cheering at the picturesque salt flat. Whereas, the ‘hero after’ appear less joyous, and not as connected with the salt flat, as the people pictured are not actually standing on it. The three people are also representative of how the population in Bolivia changed after the colonization, as today there are 3 main groups; the indigenous, the mestizos (mixed indigenous and European descent), and the people of European Descent (mainly from Spain) (Arnade, and McFarren, 2023). The young woman wearing the traditional hat is representing the indigenous people, the young man to her right the mestizos, and the young woman to her left the Spanish descendants. This way the government, and YLB, display inclusion for Bolivia’s diverse population, acknowledging that they are all a part of the contemporary Bolivian identity. Meanwhile, the word “esperanza” meaning hope, appear over the people and salt flat simultaneously, reveals that the government is aware that it must gain the people’s support, and approval, in order for this industrialization to become a reality. At the same time, it says something about the hope of the future for the young generation, as it is them, who truly get to enjoy the fruits of the labor done now. Similar to the video about CBC, the animator here is a faceless voice, performing the voice-over. The principal is Bolivia, and the author is an unknown director and/or screenwriter.

Then Mery Choque reappears, thanks for the video, and introduces the next speaker; Franklin Molina Solís Ortiz, the minister of Hydrocarbons and Energy.

He initiates his speech by enumerating the parties involved in this press conference, seemingly from the top of the hierarchy to the bottom, as the first one mentioned is President Arce. Then president of YLB, Mamani, followed by the Chinese diplomat, Huang Yazhong. Then a group of different Bolivian ministers, and the representative of CBC, Qinghua Zhou. Ortiz moves on to senators, mayors, and finally social movements<sup>33</sup> (Appendix 1, p. 4, l. 4-18).

Despite being present at the press conference, the mayor of Coipasa (town next to the salt flat of the same name, in Oruro), and mayor of Colcha (town next to the Uyuni salt flat, in Potosí), are not invited to speak. It seems curious, seeing as they are representing the locals that will experience the extraction first hand. However, it is likely that they are silent, because they support the government. Ismeal Pérez (mayor of Coipasa) expressed his support for lithium mining in 2021 (YLB, 2021), and César Ali is a member of the political party MAS (Movimiento Al Socialismo) (Ali, 2023), which is the governing party in Bolivia (Flores, 2022). Similarly, senators are appointed by the president (Arnade, and, McFarren, 2023), which explains their quiet backing of the industrialization. Nonetheless, without an opposition the press conference becomes one-sided. The idea is to show unity, but the notion that somewhere outside the presidential palace is someone who has been silenced, is hard to dismiss. Especially, since the mayor of Uyuni, Eusebio López Martínez, and the Civil Committee of Potosí (COMCIPO) is not mentioned, both of which have expressed desire for a higher degree of participation, and influence, e.g., the level of royalties. That is to say decentralization of lithium, but the Uyuni mayor claims that “[...] he’s had little to no communication with the central government.” (Radwin, 2022).

Having mentioned all the names, he deems worthy to be included in this speech, he then embarks on the actual address. He says “*Today, January 20, 2023, is a date that I believe will be engraved in the memories of our country.*”<sup>34</sup> (Appendix 1, p. 4, l. 19-20). Having a date ‘engraved in the memories’ is, of course, a metaphor, which serves to underline the importance of this day, seeing as engraving is usually reserved for very special occasions, e.g., when couples have their wedding day immortalized in their golden rings. Indeed, this joyous notion suggests that the deal between YLB,

---

<sup>33</sup> Translated by the author, from Appendix 2, p. 4, l. 5-20.

<sup>34</sup> Translated by the author, from Appendix 2, p. 4, l. 21-22.



and CBC, is a type of marriage, adding a romantic tint to the scope. This serves to say that this deal is something to celebrate.

Ortiz continues, “*Because this awaited dream of Bolivians to exploit and begin to benefit from the benefits of lithium, begins to be fulfilled.*”<sup>35</sup> (Appendix 1, p. 4, l. 20-21). The industrialization is not just a plan, or a wish, but a ‘dream’ of the whole nation, discursively this shows unity, as it is portrayed as something everyone hopes, and longs for happening. Therefore, if a political opponent were to contest this, they would appear to move against the will of the majority, which is a losing position in a democracy. Then Ortiz says “*Our territory is settled on the largest reserve in the world, and already in the 80s and 90s, technical studies developed, identified the salt flats of Uyuni and Coipasa with the most important lithium deposit on the planet.*”<sup>36</sup> (Appendix 1, p. 4, l. 21-23), with the word choices of ‘world’ and ‘planet’ he is making sure that the audience appreciate the global importance of this industrialization. Additionally, with the word ‘already’ he is making a point of revealing how long everyone has waited for it to become a reality. In turn, by naming the lithium reserves in Uyuni and Coipasa the ‘most important’ he answers an unspoken question, namely, “why should lithium extraction happen here?”. He seems to make the connection that the largest equals the most important, which could be a correct assumption, seeing as the largest deposit has the best chance of a large output, and, therefore, the highest chance to affect the global market.

When he states “*Bolivians have waited decades to see how this great economic and social development begins to materialize.*”<sup>37</sup> (Appendix 1, p. 4, l. 23-24), he reiterates that this industrialization is a public dream, and specifies what the people stand to gain; ‘great economic and social development’. ‘Development’ is a discourse with positive connotations, e.g., improvement, and the sense of moving in the ‘right’ direction. Discursively it is impossible to reject economic and social development, because what reason could anyone have to oppose progress, especially when such progress benefits all? However, someone might have to pay the bill for all this ‘great development’, but any such costs are excluded from Ortiz’s speech.

He continues “*Technology has also advanced in recent years and thanks to the determination and political vision of our president Luis Arce, a new extraction plan based on a different technology*

---

<sup>35</sup> Translated by the author, from Appendix 2, p. 4, l. 22-23.

<sup>36</sup> Translated by the author, from Appendix 2, p. 4, l. 23-26.

<sup>37</sup> Translated by the author, from Appendix 2, p. 4, l. 26-27.

*was brought to the table.*”<sup>38</sup> (Appendix 1, p. 4, l. 24-26). Like Mamani, Ortiz refers to the earlier attempts of industrializing lithium when he says ‘technology has also advanced in recent years’, and reassures the audience that this time the extraction will be ‘based on a different technology’. Then, through the speech act of flattery, Ortiz lets the people know who is the mastermind behind this ‘new extraction plan’, namely, the president, who is characterized with ‘determination’ and ‘political vision’. It is the grammatical element transitivity that is in play in this sentence; firstly ‘technology has advanced’ is a nominalization, seeing as there is no agent to take the responsibility for the action. Secondly, the agent, President Arce, is directly connected to the event of bringing the ‘new extraction plan’ to the ‘table’. Ortiz downplays the agency, when talking about the technology advancing, because that is not what he wants the audience to focus on. Instead, he makes sure that the president receives appropriate appreciation for his part in the process.

Ortiz claims “*The direct lithium extraction technology that undoubtedly provides a viable, real and fast-to-implement solution.*”<sup>39</sup> (Appendix 1, p. 4, l. 27-28). This refers to the conventional evaporitic technology, which has been attempted with pilot projects in Bolivia, but this technique has had limited success, because of inconsistent sun (Morse, 2022). As such, this is an example of intertextuality, seeing as it requires knowledge of earlier industrialization attempts. Additionally, Ortiz places DLE as the opposite to the conventional method, which means that this is the speech act reassurance, as he tries to ease the minds of those, who believe this attempt to extract the lithium is going to suffer the same fate as the earlier ones. In regards to DLE allegedly providing an ‘undoubtedly, viable, solution’ it should be said that there are no certainties, when it comes to DLE, because so far it has not been attempted in large scale outside labs (Vera, et al. 2023). Furthermore, the study mentioned earlier, where freshwater usage was researched in 57 reports about DLE, found “*A quarter of these reports do not provide freshwater consumption data, 13 use lower amounts than current practice and 9 require similar amounts. A quarter [...] over 10 times greater than that used in current practice.*” (Vera, et al. 2023, p. 157). So, there is indeed doubt about DLE, especially about it being a ‘better’ option, than the conventional evaporitic method, but Ortiz attempts to make it discursively inconceivable to question the applicability of DLE. If he, and the government in general, can establish DLE as the best, and only, alternative to current practice, then its implementation becomes difficult to argue against.

---

<sup>38</sup> Translated by the author, from Appendix 2, p. 4, l. 27-29.

<sup>39</sup> Translated by the author, from Appendix 2, p. 4, l. 29-30.

Ortiz delivers an estimation for the lithium plants' capacity "[...] the years 2024 and 2025, it is to produce from 45 thousand to 100 thousand tons of lithium carbonate per year."<sup>40</sup> (Appendix 1, p. 4, l. 29-30). If succeeding, this will help the global green transitioning agenda, as the World Bank brought an estimate in 2020, which concluded that the production of lithium would have to increase by 488%, if it is to meet demand in 2050 (World Bank, 2020). This is great support to the discourse of the promethean response; as technology here is presented as a means to mitigate climate change, and, additionally, alleviate scarcity of a commodity.

The connection to decarbonization is also made by Ortiz himself, when he says "[...] lithium is also a strategic material [...] for the production of batteries. Moreover, because the vast majority of countries, including also great powers, have understood the incalculable value that it means [...] to take care out of respect and the environment."<sup>41</sup> (Appendix 1, pp. 4-5, l. 30-1). The 'vast majority of countries' refers to the UN, while 'care', 'respect' and 'environment' evokes the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, with the 17 sustainable development goals (SDGs) (United Nations, 2023). Therefore, it is the discourse of sustainability he draws on here, which is evident as he believes 'production of batteries' (representing economic growth) can coexist with 'care of the environment' (environmental protection). In other words, the typical reassurance of sustainable development; that we can have it all, if we just do it the right way. This is further supported by Ortiz's next utterance "*Which is why today we are also migrating to a sustainable economy that fights with all possible forces the dreaded climate change or the climate crisis becoming more and more accentuated on the planet.*"<sup>42</sup> (Appendix 1, p. 4, l. 1-3). There are two discourses being mixed, in this quote, sustainability, and environmental problem solving. The latter is visible through 'migrating to a sustainable economy', which suggests that environmental concerns have been institutionalized in the top administration, namely, the government, and that sustainability is believed to be the best course of action. When Ortiz says 'fights with all possible forces' he is utilizing a metaphor, seeing as the 'battle' against climate change is not an actual battle, fought with 'forces' on the ground. However, by employing the discourse of war he incites the warrior spirit, as well as nationalism, because traditionally, wars were/are fought by nation states. Therefore, if a Bolivian were to be unsupportive of the lithium mining, they would, discursively, also be unsupportive of the 'war' against climate change, and become known as unpatriotic. The word

---

<sup>40</sup> Translated by the author, from Appendix 2, p. 4, l. 31-32.

<sup>41</sup> Translated by the author, from Appendix 2, p. 5, l. 1-4.

<sup>42</sup> Translated by the author, from Appendix 2, p. 5, l. 4-6.

choice of ‘dreaded’ to describe climate change is a way to vilify this phenomenon; climate change is the villain of this story, but in reality, climate change is rather a symptom, caused by humanity’s extensive use of fossil fuels (UN, 2021). However, Ortiz is the Minister of Hydrocarbons and Energy in Bolivia, so it would be unwise, in his position, to vilify oil, and gas, and thereby place his own job in jeopardy.

It is evident, that Ortiz is conscious about the future of his position “[...] *we saw with concern how this effect of the climate is changing consumption habits in different parts of the countries.*”<sup>43</sup> (Appendix 1, p. 5, l. 4-6). He should not be ‘concerned’, if his earlier statements are to be believed, he should be thankful for more ‘forces’ against the ‘dreaded’ climate change. Perhaps, his concern is of economic nature, as the state-owned YPFB, which is an oil industry company (YPFB, 2021), risks being pushed out of global markets. This is supported by his next sentence “*In Europe, for example, sales of electric and hybrid cars increased and in the last quarter of last year reached 34.5% of total sales.*”<sup>44</sup> (Appendix 1, p. 5, l. 6-7), from an economic discourse, this is a concerning trend, when you are the Minister of Hydrocarbons and Energy, and know that the national energy sector has not been diversified, and is, therefore, unfit to meet this trend.

However, Ortiz shows that he is aware that going electric is the ‘right direction’, when he applauds the nation of origin of CBC “*China is another of the great examples of this new energy consciousness and an example for the rest of the world as well.*”<sup>45</sup> (Appendix 1, p. 5, l. 7-8). He manages, with these words, to use the speech act of flattery towards China, but also provide an explanation to Bolivians, why the Chinese are to be seen both as great partners, as well as role models. Nonetheless, it is not only admiration that drives Ortiz, but also the economic incentive, which surfaces when he speaks about the price of lithium, which “[...] *during these first days of 2023 have reached record prices that would be exceeding 70 thousand dollars per ton.*”<sup>46</sup> (Appendix 1, p. 5, l. 14-15). However, commodities often experience price volatility, and this has only been exacerbated by the geopolitical situation, with Russia’s war on Ukraine, and China’s declining economy (Perkins, 2023). In fact, as of September 2023 lithium carbonate have dropped to 200500 Chinese Yuan per ton (Trading Economics, 2023), which equals 27.485, 97 Dollars (Valutakurser, 2023).

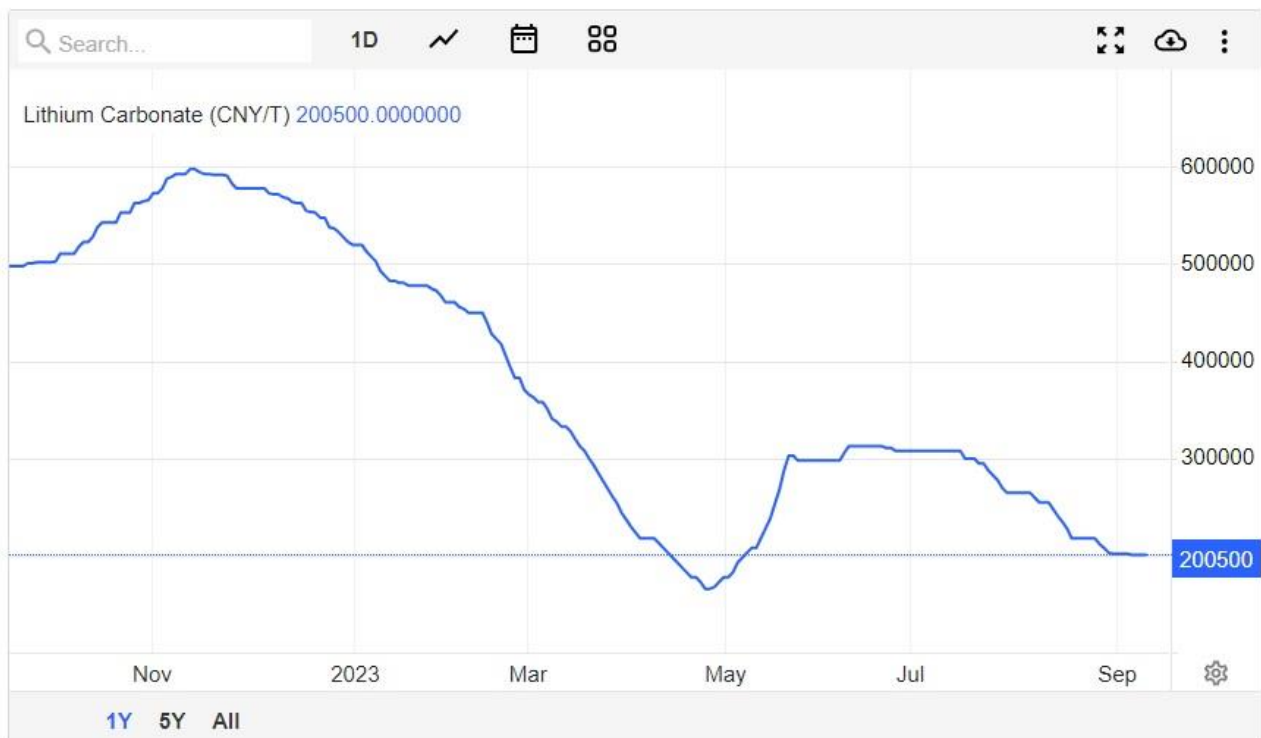
---

<sup>43</sup> Translated by the author, from Appendix 2, p. 5, l. 8-9.

<sup>44</sup> Translated by the author, from Appendix 2, p. 5, l. 9-11.

<sup>45</sup> Translated by the author, from Appendix 2, p. 5, l. 11-12.

<sup>46</sup> Translated by the author, from Appendix 2, p. 5, l. 18-19.



(Trading Economics, 2023).

The image shows a web-based currency converter interface titled "Valutaomregner". It features a search bar at the top right labeled "SKIFT DATO" with a checkbox. Below the title, there are two input fields for currency conversion. The first field contains the value "200.500" and is associated with the Chinese Yuan (CNY) currency, indicated by a red flag icon. The second field contains the converted value "27.485,97" and is associated with the US Dollar (USD) currency, indicated by a blue flag icon. A double-headed arrow icon is positioned between the two currency selection boxes, suggesting a swap function. Each input field has a small 'x' icon for clearing the value.

(Valutakurser, 2023).

Ortiz had not anticipated such price volatility, and, granted, the drop is dramatic; it is less than half of the 70.000 Dollars a ton of lithium could fetch in the beginning of 2023. Indeed, Ortiz had hoped the price would remain favorable for years to come *“This augurs well for an intense first few years to consolidate our position in this global market.”*<sup>47</sup> (Appendix 1, p. 5, l. 15-16).

<sup>47</sup> Translated by the author, from Appendix 2, p. 5, l. 19-20.

Demand, on the other hand, will continue to rise, as the World Bank's estimate from 2020, mentioned earlier, claimed that the production had to increase by 488%, to meet the demand by 2050 (World Bank, 2020). This is Ortiz also aware of, which is apparent when he says "*That is why the multinationals are also desperately looking for new reserves of this material [...]*"<sup>48</sup> (Appendix 1, p. 5, l. 16-17). Through the word choice of 'desperately' he is implying that Bolivia is in a very lucky position, as desperate business partners will act more generous, in order to gain this lucrative metal. It is the order of discourse of demand and supply he is evoking here. The trouble is, as seen above with the volatile prices, it is not always a safe investment to rely on the sale of commodities in the global market.

Ortiz continues "[...] *the planet requires this product to continue moving on the right path in favor of environmental protection, it is the best legacy that we can leave to future generations.*"<sup>49</sup> (Appendix 1, p. 5, l. 17-19), with this sentence he argues, that the extraction of lithium is compatible with environmental protection. Therefore, it is the sustainable discourse he is operating from here. However, when he says 'the planet requires this product' it would be very obvious for adherents of green radicalism to answer "then leave it in the planet", but this is a metaphor, a planet cannot actually 'require' anything. When he says 'the best legacy that we can leave to the future generations', he is admitting that a livable environment is worth more than money, while also reiterating that lithium extraction is how they get to hand this legacy down. Additionally, 'future generations' has an aspect of social justice, which is also found in the sustainable discourse, and shows that Ortiz is aware, that coming generations will have to live with the consequences of the actions of the contemporary ones. In turn, this is a speech act of reassurance to the children of Bolivia, or perhaps rather their parents; that the future generations will receive a better world, if YLB and CBC industrialize the lithium in the salt flats of Uyuni, and Potosí.

Ortiz refers to the signed agreement between YLB and CBC "*It is a sovereign model of exploitation and generation of investments in the lithium industry for the country [...]*"<sup>50</sup> (Appendix 1, p. 5, l. 20-21). There are two interesting choices of words here 'sovereign', and 'for'. 'Sovereign' has to do with the state-owned YLB, which means the mining business is controlled nationally, and not by the free market, and a private company. 'Sovereign' is, therefore, connected to 'for' as it reveals that the financial gains, from lithium mining, is 'for' the nation, for the people. This way Ortiz

---

<sup>48</sup> Translated by the author, from Appendix 2, p. 5, l. 20-21.

<sup>49</sup> Translated by the author, from Appendix 2, p. 5, l. 21-23.

<sup>50</sup> Translated by the author, from Appendix 2, p. 5, l. 25-26.

frame the lithium mining discursively as something the government do on the behalf of the well-being of the population. However, there is a risk of these finances ending up lining the pockets of corrupt politicians, instead of being used for the common good. According to Freedom House; *“Anticorruption laws are poorly enforced, and corruption affects a range of government entities and economic sectors, including law enforcement bodies and extractive industries. Public procurement processes are frequently compromised by bribery.”* (Freedom House, 2022). Notice how ‘extractive industries’ are named specifically, that does not bode well for the chances of the money ending up in the proper sectors, at least not in its entirety.

Ortiz continues to talk about the extractive model *“With this model investments are attracted, technology is developed and once again Bolivia shows with creativity and talent that there are sovereign alternatives to the privatizing models of lithium exploitation without selling or concessioning the salt flats to private companies [...]”*<sup>51</sup> (Appendix 1, p. 5, 24-27). ‘Investments are attracted’ and ‘technology is developed’ is referring to what CBC is attributing to this deal, what is interesting about it is the transitivity; the agent, CBC, is completely left out of the sentence, which gives the idea that these things happen by themselves ‘naturally’. This is nominalization, and it has the effect that agency is downplayed, because Ortiz does not want the audience to focus on CBC in this segment, but rather on how much control Bolivia has over the industrialization of lithium. When he says ‘Bolivia shows with creativity and talent’ it seems like he is complimenting the whole of Bolivia for the model, but in reality, it is the government, and more specifically Ortiz own ministry, along with YLB, that are the creators. Therefore, it is actually more a case of offering himself, and his staff, a compliment, so the public knows that they have done a good job. Meanwhile, ‘sovereign alternatives to the privatizing models’ is a break away from classic capitalistic ideology, where the free market, and private companies are the ruling forces. This idea, of finding an alternative to the classical industrial society, is something that would fit well under the discourse of green radicalism, as well as *vivir bien*, especially because both of these would strongly object to the notion of ‘selling’ a piece of land, as they would argue that people cannot own the planet. However, the extraction itself does not fit with either of these beliefs.

Finally, Ortiz offers his last notion on the model *“[...] investment, property, the market, taxes, royalties are under the absolute control of the Bolivian State.”* (Appendix 1, p. 5, l. 28-29). The investment comes, for the most part, from CBC, and even after Bolivia has received it the CBC

---

<sup>51</sup> Translated by the author, from Appendix 2, p. 5, l. 29-32.

probably have designs on how the money is meant to be spend; investments have a specific purpose. If by ‘property’ Ortiz is talking about the lithium plants, then they are not going to be under ‘complete’ Bolivian control, as this business deal is a joint venture. The ‘market’ refers to the global market, and as elaborated earlier, commodities experience price volatility, and the state of Bolivia will not have ‘control’ over that either. The taxes are something that can be controlled, at least within the nation. The royalties, however, is not going to be solely determined by the ‘Bolivian State’, as mentioned earlier, actors like the Uyuni mayor, and COMCIPO, demand higher degree of transparency, and also royalties (Bouchard, 2023). When Ortiz evokes the discourse of control it is a reassurance, meant to incite confidence in the people toward the government, in other words, Ortiz is telling the population “don’t worry, we got this under control, you can rely on us”. However, one cannot help but wonder what the representatives of CBC thinks about this statement, that the Bolivian government has ‘absolute control’ over this business deal, that is supposed to be a partnership.

Ortiz then thanks the president “*President Arce, I deeply thank you for your commitment to the development of this new technology, with your vision and your incessant concern to carry out this transparent public process [...]*”<sup>52</sup> (Appendix 1, p. 6, l. 5-7). Ortiz is employing the speech act of flattery, with the word choices of ‘commitment’, and ‘incessant concern’ he is implying that Arce is an industrious leader, and a competent one at that with his ‘vision’. Ortiz is portraying Arce as ‘the man with the plan’, and his flattery is not aimed at Arce, but at the public, as he wishes to instill a positive image of Arce in the public mind. Thus, he conveys that the country, and this industrialization, is in safe hands; Bolivia could not ask for a better leader.

However, in regards to ‘transparent public process’ another picture is forming, according to Freedom House “*Bolivia has no law guaranteeing access to public information. Elected officials by law must make asset declarations, but these are unavailable to the public.*” (Freedom House, 2022). This corresponds well with the experience of Martínez, the mayor of Uyuni, who claim to have had no contact with the central government in relation to the industrialization of lithium (Radwin, 2022). Additionally, Crisólogo Alemán, a spokesperson of COMCIPO reveals that the organization has had similar experience “*we have asked a thousand times for transparency, but there has been no answer*” (Bouchard, 2023).

---

<sup>52</sup> Translated by the author, from Appendix 2, p. 6, l. 11-13.



Ortiz says that the agreement with CBC “[...] guarantees to fulfill a dream of our brothers of Oruro, of our Potosí brothers, which is [...] to fulfill the dream of all Bolivians.”<sup>53</sup> (Appendix 1, p. 6, l. 9-10). Ortiz assumes that the people in Oruro, and Potosí, dream of fulfilling the national dream, but how can he be certain, when there is limited, to no contact, between the central government to the regions, as mentioned earlier. Additionally, having a minimum of contact, but still calling them ‘brothers’ probably feels quite insulting for the receiving part, seeing as all family members should be included in family matters, which the industrialization of lithium necessarily is, if the whole population is ‘brothers’ and ‘sisters’. The sentence also indicates that the people in Oruro and Potosí must sacrifice for the national good, in fact it is ‘guaranteed’. Discursively, the citizens of Oruro, and Potosí, would appear selfish, should they oppose the lithium mining, as they would be shattering everyone’s ‘dream’.

In the next sentence “*Today the takeoff of Bolivia as a world power in the field of lithium is certified, the seamless actions of our government to make the promises made to the Bolivian people a reality [...]*”<sup>54</sup> (Appendix 1, p. 6, l. 10-12), Ortiz makes use of two metaphors. The first is ‘takeoff’, which is a word encountered in the order of discourse of aviation, as it has to do with airplanes leaving the ground. Using it in this context gives the impression that the development is rapid. The second metaphor is ‘seamless actions’, which serves to say that the government has made no mistakes in the negotiations, and other procedures, leading to the signing of this agreement. In other words, it has been ‘smooth’. This is a truth with modifications, especially concerning transparency, as mentioned above. By the term ‘world power’ Ortiz is promising that not only will the industrialization become successful, it will result in Bolivia being dominant in the field.

Returning to the president, Ortiz says “*Our nation under the leadership of President Arce has proven to rise to the challenge and return to our course.*”<sup>55</sup> (Appendix 1, p. 6, l. 12-13). The ‘challenge’ is the industrialization of lithium, and the ‘return to our course’ is working on making the industrialization a reality, which Ortiz said earlier, begun as early as in the 1980’s. This metaphor of returning to a course, is something seen in the discourse of environmental problem solving, as it relates to the administration guiding the actions of the society.

---

<sup>53</sup> Translated by the author, from Appendix 2, p. 6, l. 15-16.

<sup>54</sup> Translated by the author, from Appendix 2, p. 6, l. 17-19.

<sup>55</sup> Translated by the author, from Appendix 2, p. 6, l. 19-20.

Ortiz ends his speech with “*Today our country becomes the hope not only of the region but also of the planet and we must be proud to rewrite our history. Thank you very much.*”<sup>56</sup> (Appendix 1, p. 6, l. 14-15). He echoes the video by YLB, and the government, by using the word ‘hope’. Thereby, his text becomes part of an intertextual chain, because his intertextuality links his text to an earlier one, namely, the video “Bolivia, hope of the planet”. The effect is that he projects unity within the government, by showing he views Bolivia in the same light. Ortiz says the Bolivians must be ‘proud’ of the industrialization, as it is a good deed towards the planet, thereby, making other feelings invalid, e.g., concern of water scarcity, anger for lack of transparency, or fear of arid farmland.

Then the hostess, Mery Choque, comes onstage again. She thanks the minister for his speech, and then she calls the president to the lectern.

President Luis Arce begins his speech in a similar manner to Ortiz; with an enumeration of names. Naturally, he calls the same names as Ortiz did, and also excludes the same; COMCIPO, senator of Potosí, and Mayor of Uyuni. Then at the end of the enumeration he says something interesting, when giving greetings “*To the Bolivian people who listen to us and who follow us through the media and social networks.*”<sup>57</sup> (Appendix 1, p. 7, l. 11-12). If the people have to follow the press conference ‘through the media and social networks’, then it must mean that the event was not accessible by the public. Furthermore, combined with the fact that neither Arce, nor Ortiz, mention anyone, who has voiced their concerns for the industrialization process, gives the impression that the government only has invited those with a positive outlook on the matter. This is a clever idea, from a strategic standpoint, as the risk of having protesters making a scene, in the presidential palace, during the press conference, is eliminated. Additionally, by only inviting “friends”, the government also supports the image of unity that it wishes to project.

Arce says “*Today is a historic day for all of us.*”<sup>58</sup> (Appendix 1, p. 7, l. 13-14). Through the word choice of ‘historic’ he is saying, that the Bolivian descendants will remember those who were part

---

<sup>56</sup> Translated by the author, from Appendix 2, p. 6, l. 20-22.

<sup>57</sup> Translated by the author, from Appendix 2, p. 7, l. 19-21.

<sup>58</sup> Translated by the author, from Appendix 2, p. 7, l. 21-22.

of the industrialization of lithium. It also indicates that Arce believes that the industrialization will succeed this time, and, therefore, this day will be inscribed in the history books. However, it is not the first time that the Bolivian government has had a signed contract with a company, with the plans of extracting lithium. In 2019, such an agreement was annulled with German ACI Systems (Bronstein, 2019).

Arce continues “*How many years had to pass for the country to feel on the right path to take advantage of one of its natural resources so precious today as Bolivian lithium.*”<sup>59</sup> (Appendix 1, p. 7, l. 14-15). The word ‘feel’ reveals that lithium mining is a sensitive issue for the Bolivians, as well as an issue that divides the population. Meanwhile, ‘the right path’ uncovers that Arce believes the industrialization is the proper step forward, and that he has awaited it impatiently, which is visible by ‘how many years had to pass’. Lithium is presented as a natural capital, as it is ‘precious’. Seeing nature as natural capital is something that fits under the discourse of sustainability.

Later Arce says, that because of the climate crisis there is no better moment to “[...] *take advantage of our national lithium in the healthiest way and for and by Bolivians [...]*”<sup>60</sup> (Appendix 1, p. 7, l. 24-25). With the words ‘For’ and ‘by’ Arce is committing the speech act of promise, saying that Bolivians will receive the gains, from the activity, while also be the ones who get the jobs, in other words, it will not be foreigners, who will reap the fruits. The ‘healthiest way’ is another promise, namely, that the extraction process will utilize, and emit, as little harmful substances as possible. It is quite vaguely put, and it gives a lot of leeway, within which to operate, without violating the promise. However, with this sentence Arce demonstrates, discursively, to the people, that he cares about their well-being, and economic situation.

Arce claims that the government has decided to implement DLE, because “[...] *the country has no time to lose, not only in industrialization but more importantly in the benefit that we are going to take from this our natural resource to continue with industrialization and improvement in the social policies of our country.*”<sup>61</sup> (Appendix 1, p. 8, l. 3-5). With ‘no time to lose’ Arce incites an urgency, and also signals that the time for negotiations, protests etc. is over; the industrialization is commencing. In regards to modality, he shows a high degree of affinity to his sentence, when he says ‘no time to lose’, which underlines that he thinks this is a fact. Arce employs a combined

---

<sup>59</sup> Translated by the author, from Appendix 2, p. 7, l. 22-24.

<sup>60</sup> Translated by the author, from Appendix 2, p. 8, l. 2-3.

<sup>61</sup> Translated by the author, from Appendix 2, p. 8, l. 14-16.

speech act, when he says ‘more importantly’ the ‘improvement in the social policies’, as this has both the characteristics of a reminder (remember why we do this), and as persuasion (see the good that can come of it). This idea, of addressing social concerns, by using the financial gains from commodity export, is a development strategy called neo-extractivism. It has spread across South America, as an alternative to neoliberalism (Siegel, 2016).

Arce describes lithium as “*A resource that was sleeping a long time [...]*”<sup>62</sup> (Appendix 1, p. 8, l. 5-6). Of course, metals, and resources in general, do not ‘sleep’, but when he decides to use this metaphor, it creates an image of lithium just waiting for something to happen; a chance to prove its potential.

Arce talks about the deal, that will result in releasing this potential “[...] *the big difference of this contract with respect to many that we have seen in friendly countries [...]* is that our state company YLB is going to be supervising and is going to be throughout the chain [...]”<sup>63</sup> (Appendix 1, p. 8, l. 8-11). In the first part, Arce is utilizing the discourse of diplomacy, by saying ‘friendly countries’, in order to smooth over that he believes it unwise for these countries, to let the extraction be privatized. In the second part he makes use of the speech act of reassurance, by saying ‘our state company’ is going to be ‘supervising’. In other words, Arce tells the public “don’t worry, we are not going to be as foolish, as other countries, we will not let private companies run us over”. However, the deal, that Bolivia has made, is in fact, with a private company, or rather consortium; CBC. By downplaying CBC’s role in this industrialization, Arce supports his claim, that the revenue from the lithium mining, is going to fuel the improvement of social issues in Bolivia, and not line the pockets of foreigners. Additionally, with the involvement of foreign companies, the government risk violating the mining law that declares, that the state must be the sole owner of the primary production of lithium (Ley No. 535, 2014, p. 22). This was one of the main complaints from COMCIPO, when the deal with German ACI Systems were annulled in 2019 (Morse, 2022). Therefore, for this deal to be successful, Arce feels the need to downplay CBC’s involvement.

Arce talks about the many tasks, that the YLB will be assigned in the industrialization, one of them being “[...] *generating royalties to the regions of these resources.*”<sup>64</sup> (Appendix 1, p. 8, l. 14). The ‘regions’, e.g., the regional government of Potosí, are the recipients of the royalties, and not the

---

<sup>62</sup> Translated by the author, from Appendix 2, p. 8, l. 16-17.

<sup>63</sup> Translated by the author, from Appendix 2, p. 8, l. 19-22.

<sup>64</sup> Translated by the author, from Appendix 2, p. 8, l. 25.

municipalities, where the lithium is extracted (Petavratzi, et al. 2022, p. 691). This has contributed to conflicts, between regions and municipalities (Ibid.).

However, Arce does not mention any percentage, in regards to these royalties, but “[...] *there is a unique lithium royalty of 3% of the gross value of production*” (Petavratzi, et al. 2022, p. 690). This number was at the core of issues for COMCIPO, which demanded at least 11% of royalties, which, in turn, made the government annul the deal with ACI System in 2019 (Morse, 2022). Therefore, Arce is careful about royalties, reminiscent of the trouble it can ignite, but he mentions it, because he wants to remind the people of what they will gain from the industrialization.

Furthermore, YLB will be “[...] *in the phase where perhaps the profit is always made, which is the phase of the commercialization of this product.*”<sup>65</sup> (Appendix 1, p. 8, l. 16-17). If YLB can manage the lithium, seemingly from extraction, to the ‘commercialization of this product’, why would Bolivia even set out to make a deal with CBC in the first place, and why would CBC agree to it, if the ‘profit’ will be claimed by YLB? This is, however, a mirage. Arce focuses on what Bolivia stands to gain, from this business deal, and being ‘in the phase’ does not equal the full responsibility, nor the full earnings. YLB could, for all the audience is privy to, only be in the ‘phase’ as an observer, and receive corresponding financial reward. Nonetheless, focusing on the positive sides of this deal, for Bolivia, enables Arce to, discursively, present himself as a very competent business man (see how much we gain, compared to our partner), and Bolivia as a sovereign nation (no foreigners can make decisions about, or earn off of, our resources).

However, CBC must be gaining *something*, otherwise the “[...] *investment of more than one billion dollars in this first stage.*”<sup>66</sup> (Appendix 1, p. 8, l. 21), would not be an ‘investment’, but a gift. ‘Investment’ means that, not only do CBC expect something in return, but they expect to gain more than they put into the project; that the industrialization will begin to *earn* money, at some point in the future. Similar, when Arce was talking about the royalties, he does not mention any percentage, that CBC will be gaining through this business agreement, but it fits with the image he is constructing; that Bolivia is the “winner” of this deal.

Eventually, Arce uncovers some of the assignments, that the CBC will carry out; “[...] *the CBC company will be working and will be little by little installing the plants that have to produce the*

---

<sup>65</sup> Translated by the author, from Appendix 2, p. 8, l. 27-28.

<sup>66</sup> Translated by the author, from Appendix 2, p. 8, l. 32.

*industrialized product of our lithium.*”<sup>67</sup> (Appendix 1, p. 8, l. 25-27). With the word choice of ‘little by little’ Arce is making two speech acts of reassurance, firstly, that the Bolivians will have time to adjust to the plants, secondly, that it *is* happening, although it may look like it is going slowly. He makes yet another reassurance, when he says ‘our lithium’, letting the people know, that the CBC may be helping the state, with the extraction, but the metal is still state property, and likewise the revenue thereof.

Arce defends the neo-extractive model “*There is no other economic, social, community, productive model that has always taken into account industrialization, growth, economic development based on the exploitation of our own natural resources.*”<sup>68</sup> (Appendix 1, p. 9, l. 1-3). Discursively, Arce sets up neo-extractivism to become hegemonic, making it indisputable that this is the *best* governing model a country can have. Additionally, it stresses the need for the industrialization of lithium, as it is the driver, and foundation, of this great plan.

Arce argues further, on the benefits of “*A business model where the State is the main protagonist, where YLB, which represents the Bolivian State, plays the leading role [...]*”<sup>69</sup> (Appendix 1, p. 9, l. 6-8). With the word choices of ‘protagonist’, and ‘leading role’, he is evoking the order of discourse of theater. It is a metaphor, which people can relate to, and serves to underline that the government is in control, in this business deal, and the one reaping the benefits. It also portrays the government, or YLB, as the ‘hero’ of this story, and this is crucial, as the wanted effect is to get the people to cheer its hero on. However, the “real” scene looks different, by providing more than one billion dollar investment, and constructing the lithium plants, YLB might just have to share the ‘leading role’ with CBC. Nonetheless, such a casting would hurt the story, that Arce is attempting to create.

Arce elaborates on the decision, of choosing CBC to be the business partner “*China is also using this technology, we are looking at what is happening in the world to be able to bring the best possible state of the art technology [...]*”<sup>70</sup> (Appendix 1, p. 9, l. 12-14). By ‘this technology’ Arce means DLE, and with ‘China is also using’ Arce commits a speech act of reassurance, saying that Bolivia is not going to be a guineapig, as the technology is already in use. At the same time, Arce

---

<sup>67</sup> Translated by the author, from Appendix 2, p. 9, l. 5-7.

<sup>68</sup> Translated by the author, from Appendix 2, p. 9, l. 14-16.

<sup>69</sup> Translated by the author, from Appendix 2, p. 9, l. 20-22.

<sup>70</sup> Translated by the author, from Appendix 2, p. 9, l. 27-28.

wishes the people to know, that DLE, and thereby CBC, is the best choice currently, based on the governments research.

Then Arce makes use of the rhetorical device of repetition, when he repeats “*There is no time to lose, no time to lose.*”<sup>71</sup> (Appendix 1, p. 9, l. 20-21). He has said ‘no time to lose’ three times, through his speech, evoking the discourse of urgency, in an attempt to get his message across; that the industrialization cannot wait any longer.

He ends his speech with “[...] *congratulations to all the Bolivian people because today begins the era of industrialization of Bolivian lithium. Thank you very much to all of you. Long live our plurinational State of Bolivia. Long live our natural resources.*” (Appendix 1, p. 9, l. 27-30). The word choice of ‘congratulations’ means, that the president views the business agreement, as a gift to the population. The word choice of ‘era’ signifies, that Arce believes this industrialization will be a turning point for the country, and indeed become a significant time period of Bolivia’s history. Finally, he makes one last attempt at equating lithium with Bolivian nationalism, which can be seen in ‘Bolivian lithium’, and the use of ‘long live’ before both the ‘state of Bolivia’, and the ‘natural resources’.

In discourse analysis it can be useful to pay attention to discourses that are being omitted. An aspect that was missing in president Luis Arce’s speech was water. He did not mention it, at all, and neither did Franklin Ortiz. The two videos in the conference, by CBC, and YLB, did use various pictures of water, but the voice-over did not actually say the word ‘water’. In fact, the only one to mention water was Mamani; “[...] *optimization of water use [...]*”<sup>72</sup> (Appendix 1, p. 1, l. 3-4). The reason, for avoiding the discourse of water, could be that the government does not wish to invite questions thereof, either because they know it is a sensitive issue, or that they are conscious about not having lived up to the law.

The law no. 94 dictates “*For purposes of water factor management, Yacimientos de Litio Bolivianos Corporación (YLB) and companies related to the lithium production chain and evaporitic resources, must carry out prior to and/or during, the studies indicated below, in order to adjust the rate of water use allowed in the projects and activities so as not to affect the surrounding*

---

<sup>71</sup> Translated by the author, from Appendix 2, p. 10, l. 4.

<sup>72</sup> Translated by the author, from Appendix 2, p. 1, l. 4.

*communities in the salt flats, salt lagoons and others of the plurinational state of Bolivia: a) Water quality, b) Water balance, c) Environmental flow, d) Ecological flow, e) Water footprint, f) Other inherent studies.*”<sup>73</sup> (Ley No.94, chapter 6, article 22, 2022). If such studies had been carried out, and had resulted in positive feedback, the government would not have been quiet about it, as it would have been great support to the claims of the sustainability of DLE.

In regards to water usage, Donny Ali, a former director of lithium at YLB, and a resident of Río Grande, said, that it was not known how much water the lithium mining would demand, and neither how much of it resided underground. He is looking to neighboring Chile, and the communities there, who have already endured years of lithium extraction, near the Atacama Desert “*I want to see if this money really helped them [...] or if they would prefer to have water stability and greater harmony with Mother Earth*” (Graham, 2023).

In Chile there is at least one, who would prefer the latter. In 2019, a llama farmer, Sara Plaza, who lives on a hillside, next to Atacama, told BBC “*There used to be beautiful lagoons down there, with hundreds of flamingos [...] Now it's all dry and the birds have gone.*” and “*It used to be so green, now it's just hard, cracked ground. We can't keep llamas anymore.*” (Livingstone, 2019). Plaza attributes the water scarcity to the lithium mining activity in the area (Ibid.).

---

<sup>73</sup> Translated by the author, from Ley No. 94. Chapter 6, article 22.



## Conclusion

The Bolivian government's order of discourse, regarding the lithium industrialization, includes discourse types, such as; development, environmentalism, sustainability, nationalism, economics, welfare, hope, patriotism, globalization, and socialism. The most salient ones are nationalism, development, globalization, and economics, as the focus is on creating a new identity for Bolivia, as an industrialized, lithium producing nation in the global market. The employment of welfare, socialism, patriotism, and hope, serves to persuade the people, that the industrialization is not only a good idea, it is absolutely necessary; for the Bolivians, as the revenue can alleviate social concerns in the society, but especially for the world, since the Bolivian lithium can "save" the globe from climate change, through the green transition agenda. The discourses of environmentalism, and sustainability is used as reassurances to the public, but often as side notes, without any tangible benchmarks attached. History, as a discourse, is also used to some degree, in the scope of the dark past, and the glorious future.

The CBC and the government are aligned in some of these discourses, namely, development, economics, environmentalism, globalization, sustainability, and hope. CBC uses these discourses to persuade the Bolivian people, that CBC is a formidable business partner, with whom Bolivia can make a mutually beneficial, thriving business, while saving the world.

The environmental, and sustainable discourse are used in a similar way, by both the government, and CBC; they are typically evoked, without being backed up by evidence, which provides a tendency towards greenwashing.

Another similarity, between the government, and CBC, is the omittance of the discourse of water, except for a few pictures of the element in each their videos. Both seems conscious that water is a sensitive issue, and potentially deal-breaking. The same is true for royalties, but it is mentioned a few times during the press conference, e.g., by the president Arce, but royalties, and water usage, along with participation, is the core issues for COMCIPO, who oppose lithium mining. The most used discourse by COMCIPO is transparency, which is wanted in order to be informed about the industrialization, which in turn, would enable COMCIPO to express either resistance, or support.

However, the discourses, utilized by the opposition to the lithium industrialization, are obscured, by the fact, that no one of this persuasion were invited to speak at the press conference.

## Bibliography

- Aguirre B., Fernando, 2022, *The lithium triangle – the importance of Bolivia*, Journal of Energy & Natural Resources Law, Routledge, <https://doi.org/10.1080/02646811.2021.1930708>.
- Ali, César, 2023, <https://www.facebook.com/CesarAliAlcalde/>.
- Arnade, Charles W.; McFarren, Peter J., 2023, *Languages and religion*, Britannica, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Bolivia/Languages-and-religion>.
- Arnade, Charles W.; McFarren, Peter J., 2023, *Climate of Bolivia*, Britannica, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Bolivia/Climate>.
- Ball, Terence, and, Dagger, Richard, 2023, *What is socialism?*, Britannica, <https://www.britannica.com/question/What-is-socialism>.
- Bolivia Tv, 2023, *Firma de convenio: implementación de complejos industriales con base a tecnologías de extracción directa de litio en salares*, uploaded to Youtube by Cabildeo Digital, last accessed 21. August 2023 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rksfFzk9cQA>
- Bouchard, Joseph, 2023, *In Bolivia, China Signs Deal For World's Largest Lithium Reserves*, The Diplomat, <https://thediplomat.com/2023/02/in-bolivia-china-signs-deal-for-worlds-largest-lithium-reserves/>.
- Bronstein, Hugh, 2019, *Bolivia's lithium partnership with Germany's ACI Systems hits snag*, Reuters, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-bolivia-germany-lithium-idUSKBN1XE01N>.
- Bryman, Alan, 2016, *Social Research Methods*, 5<sup>th</sup> edition, Oxford university press.
- Castree, Noel; Hulme, Mike; Proctor, James D., 2018, *Companion to Environmental Studies*, Routledge.
- Cherry, Kendra, 2022, *The Color Blue: Meaning and Color Psychology*, Very Well Mind, <https://www.verywellmind.com/the-color-psychology-of-blue-2795815#:~:text=Because%20blue%20is%20favored%20by,sign%20of%20stability%20and%20reliability>.
- Dryzek, John S., 2022, *The Politics of the Earth*, Fourth Edition. Oxford University Press.

Durrfeld, Deborah, 2019, *Salar de Uyuni Bolivia : A trip on one of the biggest salt flats in the world*, <https://www.passporttheworld.com/salar-de-uyuni-bolivia-uyuni-salt-flats-day-tour/>.

Ellerbeck, Stefan, 2023, *Lithium: Here's why Latin America is key to the global energy transition*, World Economic Forum, <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2023/01/lithium-latin-america-energy-transition/#:~:text=Latin%20America%20is%20home%20to,is%20rich%20in%20lithium%20reserves.>

Eylon, Yuval, and, Heyd, David, 2008, *Flattery*, Philosophy and Phenomenological Research, Vol. 77, No. 3. International Phenomenological Society. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40041262>.

Fairclough, Norman, 1992, *Discourse and Social Change*. Polity Press.

Flores, Franz, 2022, *Bolivia and its factional politics*, <https://latinoamerica21.com/en/bolivia-and-its-factional-politics/>.

Freedom House, 2022, *Bolivia*, Freedom in the World 2022, <https://freedomhouse.org/country/bolivia/freedom-world/2022>.

Graham, Thomas, 2023, *Bolivia's dream of a lithium future plays out on the high-altitude salt flats*, The Guardian, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/jan/25/bolivia-lithium-mining-salt-flats>.

Hayman, Eleanor Ruth, 2021, *Shaped by Imagination: Myth of Water, Women, and Purity*, Rachel Carson Center. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/26240358>.

Jackson, Nicholas; et al. 2011, *Potosí Silver Mines*, Atlas Obscura, <https://www.atlasobscura.com/places/potosi-silver-mines#:~:text=Potos%C3%AD%20was%20founded%20as%20a,the%20world%20had%20ever%20seen.>

Jemio, Miriam Telma. May 19th, 2020, *Diálogo Chino* <https://dialogochino.net/en/extractive-industries/35423-bolivia-rethinks-how-industrialize-lithium-amid-political-transition/> .

Jørgensen, Marianne Winther, and Phillips, Louise, 1999, *Diskursanalyse som teori og metode*. Roskilde Universitetsforlag.

Kennedy, John F., 1961, *Ask Not What Your Country Can Do For You*, Independence Hall Association <https://www.ushistory.org/documents/ask-not.htm>.

Kvangraven, Ingrid Harvold, 2020, *Beyond the Stereotype: Restating the Relevance of the Dependency Research Programme*, International Institute of Social Studies, The Hague. <https://doi-org.zorac.aub.aau.dk/10.1111/dech.12593>.

Ley No. 535, 2014, *Ley de Minería y Metalurgia*, Estado Plurinacional de Bolivia, <https://mineria.gob.bo/documentos/LEY535.pdf>.

Ley No. 94, 2022, *Ley de Recursos Evaporíticos y Litio*, Cámara de Senadores, <https://web.senado.gob.bo/sites/default/files/P.L.%20N%C2%B0%20094-2022-2023%20C.S.PDF>.

Livingstone, Grace, 2019, *The farmers who worry about our phone batteries*, BBC, <https://www.bbc.com/news/business-49355817>.

Morse, Ian, 2022, *Bolivia looks to opaque methods, firms to build lithium powerhouse*, Mongabay, <https://news.mongabay.com/2022/12/bolivia-looks-to-opaque-methods-firms-to-build-lithium-powerhouse/>.

MSCI, 2022, *ESG Ratings & Climate Search Tool*, CATL <https://www.msci.com/our-solutions/esg-investing/esg-ratings-climate-search-tool/issuer/contemporary-ampere-technology-co-ltd/IID000000002841129>.

MSCI, 2023, *ESG Ratings & Climate Search Tool*, CMOC Group Limited <https://www.msci.com/our-solutions/esg-investing/esg-ratings-climate-search-tool/issuer/cmoc-group-limited/IID000000002161828>.

MSCI, 2023, *The MSCI app*, <https://www.msci.com/msci-app>.

MSCI, 2023, *What is an MSCI ESG Rating?* <https://www.msci.com/our-solutions/esg-investing/esg-ratings>.

Perkins, Robert, 2023, *Commodity price volatility 'here to stay' amid geopolitics, energy transition challenges: Trafigura CFO*, S & P Global Commodity Insights, <https://www.spglobal.com/commodityinsights/en/market-insights/latest-news/oil/032223-commodity-price-volatility-here-to-stay-amid-geopolitics-energy-transition-challenges-trafigura-cfo>.

Petavratzi, E.; Sanchez-Lopez, D.; Hughes, A.; Stacey, J.; Ford, J.; Butcher, A., 2022, *The impacts of environmental, social and governance (ESG) issues in achieving sustainable lithium supply in*

*the Lithium Triangle*, Mineral Economics 35:673–699, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13563-022-00332-4>.

Radwin, Maxwell, 2022, *Five pressing questions for the future of lithium mining in Bolivia*, Mongabay, <https://news.mongabay.com/2022/12/five-pressing-questions-for-the-future-of-lithium-mining-in-bolivia/>.

Ramos, Daniel, and Elliott, Lucinda. June 19th, 2023, Reuters <https://www.reuters.com/markets/commodities/chinese-battery-giant-catl-seals-14-billion-deal-develop-bolivia-lithium-2023-06-19/> .

Seefeldt, Jennapher, Lunde, 2020, *Lessons from the Lithium Triangle: Considering Policy Explanations for the Variation in Lithium Industry Development in the “Lithium Triangle” Countries of Chile, Argentina, and Bolivia*, Politics & Policy, Volume 48, No. 4., Policy Studies Organization.

Siegel, Karen M., 2016, *Fulfilling Promises of More Substantive Democracy? Post-neoliberalism and Natural Resource Governance in South America*, International Institute of Social Studies, The Hague, <https://doi-org.zorac.aub.aau.dk/10.1111/dech.12234>.

Solón, Pablo, 2017, *Alternativas Sistémicas*, Fundación Solón.

Stefánsson, Finn, 2012, *tal*, <https://symbolleksikon.lex.dk/tal>.

Trading Economics, 11. September 2023, *Lithium*, <https://tradingeconomics.com/commodity/lithium>.

UNCTAD, 2020, *Developing countries pay environmental cost of electric car batteries*, <https://unctad.org/news/developing-countries-pay-environmental-cost-electric-car-batteries>.

United Nations, 2021, *What Is Climate Change?*, Climate Action, <https://www.un.org/en/climatechange/what-is-climate-change>.

United Nations, 2023, *The 17 Goals*, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>.

University of Exeter, 2018, *Evidence shows ocean sound may help reduce stress and create a sense of calm*, <https://phys.org/news/2018-05-evidence-ocean-stress-calm.html>.

Valutakurser, 11. September 2023, Euroinvestor, <https://www.valutakurser.dk/>.

Vera, María L.; Torres, Walter R.; Galli, Claudia I.; Chagnes, Alexandre; and Flexer, Victoria, 2023, *Environmental impact of direct lithium extraction from brines*, Nature Review Earth & Environment, volume 4, March. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s43017-022-00387-5>.

World Bank, 2020, *The new kids on the block: redefining “critical” minerals essential for a clean energy future*, The World Bank, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2020/05/08/redefining-critical-minerals-essential-for-a-clean-energy-future>.

YLB, 2021, *YLB y el Ministerio de Hidrocarburos y Energías iniciaron la socialización del “Plan de Industrialización del Litio” en el salar de Coipasa*, [https://www.ylb.gob.bo/archivos/notas\\_archivos/20072021np1\\_compressed.pdf](https://www.ylb.gob.bo/archivos/notas_archivos/20072021np1_compressed.pdf).

YPFB, 2021, *Nuestra Historia*, <https://www.ypfb.gob.bo/es/acerca-de-nosotros>.