

# Geographies of Oil Dependency: Changing Spaces of Political Interaction over Oil in Ecuador and Peru

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## Summary of Thesis

This thesis examines the space-making consequences of state strategies performed to ensure continued revenues from oil in two very different states. To do so, the thesis examines the socio-political processes surrounding two contentious oilfields in neighbouring countries with different political trajectories: Ecuador's Yasuní-ITT (Ishpingo-Tambococha-Tiputini) and Peru's Block 192, which are located on either side of the joint Amazonian border between the two countries. As Ecuador's largest oil reservoir, Yasuní-ITT was the subject of the first major international attempt to leave oil in the ground in exchange for international compensation. The Ecuadorian government offered to forego extraction if it received international compensation totalling half the expected oil revenues. Launched in 2007, this initiative was cancelled in 2013 after only a fraction of the requested sum had been received, resulting in mobilisation and activism on the national scale against production in the oilfield. In Block 192, Peru's largest and oldest oilfield, ongoing socio-environmental conflicts are local, issue-based and linked to territory, as local actors attempt to condition oil extraction upon service provision, local royalties and environmental remediation, rather than questioning oil extraction itself.

Extractivism, a concept that has developed from defining a development model to an imperative where more extraction is the answer to all internal and external challenges, is conceptualised here as an accumulation strategy central to the state. Research on the consequences of extractivism has mainly had two main foci: (1) local resistance, conflict and displacement and (2) the strategies, policy reform and rhetoric of the states to ensure increased extraction. This thesis broadens the scope of research on extractivism by identifying the spatial dimensions and space-making outcomes of both states' strategies to ensure continued revenues from oil from Block 192 and Yasuní-ITT, as well as strategies for mobilising over oil. To do so, this thesis makes use of theories on state space and understands political economic resource governance and its space-making processes as outcomes of struggles and complex negotiations within the state and between state and non-state actors. This study relies on a three-fold data production strategy to analyse these processes. A thorough media sample, semi-structured interviews with key actors and a continual dialogue with secondary literature provide the basis for within-case analyses and across-case comparisons.

This thesis makes two interrelated theoretical contributions. The first main contribution shows how the states' imperative to ensure continued revenues from oil conditions spaces for po-

litical interaction and negotiation between scales. In Peru, the thesis identifies a permanent **space of cross-scalar negotiation** between representatives from local indigenous communities in Block 192 and the Peruvian national government. This space of political interaction is carved from the state's fear of loss of oil revenues, as local actors' abilities to impact oil production provide them with bargaining power to demand local socio-environmental measures. Cross-scalar negotiation resulting from the state's fear of loss of oil revenues is also observed in Ecuador, where the attempted oil moratorium in the Yasuní-ITT was conditioned upon international compensation. This attempted oil moratorium led to a purposeful rescaling of the space for political interaction over oil to encompass negotiations between the national and international scales. This rescaling is understood as a state spatial strategy to ensure continued revenues from oil in the face of shifting struggles of interests within the state after it, for a brief period, was open to environmental interests while still remaining heavily dependent on oil revenues. The thesis also compares the spatiality of mobilisation over oil production in Block 192 and Yasuní-ITT and develops a framework for explaining the different political spaces of oil mobilisation by connecting different aspects of state space to geographies of contention.

The second contribution of this study is that it **demonstrates how oil is constituted as a resource in new and changing ways** by examining two geographical processes that have changed and reinforced oil as a resource. The usage of oil production as a bargaining chip by local actors in Block 192 can be understood as the strategic utilisation of oil to demand state services and remediation, i.e. an attempted bottom-up reworking of state spatial strategies, to become a targeted area of state intervention, based on being a site for extraction. By utilising the state's extractive imperative to demand state services, oil is converted into a political resource. However, this dynamic creates local dependence on oil as a political resource, which means that declining demand and declining profitability of oil extraction are also highly worrying scenarios for actors at the local scale. In the case of the Yasuní-ITT Initiative to leave the oil in the ground for international compensation, the Ecuadorian state attempted to convert unextracted oil into a resource through rescaling and reconceptualising the oil as a global resource, as it would benefit the world if left untapped.

Nevertheless, the dependency on oil as a resource, albeit in changing ways, remains. Extractivism should therefore be considered a relational and cross-scalar phenomenon. The findings show that not only does the international political economy play a key role in re-shaping political

geographies of extraction but so do processes at national and sub-national scales. These findings imply that extractivism could benefit from a conceptual expansion to include strategies for ensuring continued benefits from oil, also in contexts of declining demand and international discussions of oil moratoriums as supply-side climate policies. Since the logics and practices of extractivism and the 'there is no alternative to oil' ideology are (re)shaped at different scales, the consequences of dependency on oil as a resource – in any of its forms – calls for further study of this phenomenon at different geographical scales.



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# Part I





# 1. Introduction

The extraction of natural resources is not only an economic activity; it is also a social and political endeavour. This thesis is about oil, a subterranean natural resource whose extraction has surface-level repercussions. Consequences of oil extraction range from direct and local, such as environmental degradation, displacement and conflict, to global and indirect, such as climate change and global warming resulting from carbon emissions. This thesis examines yet another consequence of oil extraction: the changing spaces of political interaction arising from ensuring continued revenues from oil.

The socio-political processes surrounding two contentious oilfields in Ecuador and Peru constitute the empirical foundation for this thesis. Peruvian oilfield Block 192 and Ecuadorian oilfield Ishpingo-Tambococha-Tiputini (Yasuní-ITT) are located in the Amazon a mere hundred kilometres apart on each side of the border between the two countries. These oilfields are located in areas extremely rich in biodiversity and superimposed on indigenous territories and they have been the subject of multiple political processes. It is safe to say that they are the most controversial and politicised oilfields in each country. Despite their physical proximity, public perceptions regarding the two oilfields are very different. In Ecuador, oil extraction in the Yasuní-ITT field has seemingly become a national-level political issue, with several instances of activism at the national level. In Peru, Block 192 has seemingly failed to gain comparable national attention, and the efforts of indigenous groups to impact the socio-environmental conditions for the extraction and demand remediation of five decades of contamination remain at the local level.

This inherently geographical observation constitutes the point of departure for within-case analyses and across-case comparisons of the two oilfields. An initial aim of this thesis was to identify and understand the contextual factors that condition and structure the national debates, public perceptions and political decision-making regarding oil extraction in vulnerable areas. An explorative research design, however, allowed me to (re-)develop queries that I followed throughout the research process. As will be discussed in greater depth, I realised that my initial observations regarding public perception were shaped by underlying processes of sustaining extractive accumulation and that they could be understood as political and spatial outcomes of extractivism.



Map 1: Yasuní-ITT in Ecuador and Block 192 in Peru. Based on data from GEO GPS PERÚ (n.d.); Natural Earth (n.d.); OpenStreetMap (n.d.); Save America's Forests (n.d.). Map created by Marcin Sliwa.

Theoretically, this study contributes to ongoing debates on the nature of Latin American extractivism – a concept that has been particularly pertinent in debates on Latin American economic development, both inside and outside academic sectors. Conceptually, extractivism has evolved from defining an economic activity based on the appropriation and export of raw materials (Acosta, 2013; Gudynas, 2010) to an imperative, wherein the need for continued resource extraction has become a goal in and of itself, thus forming the defining element for policy and state strategies (Arsel et al., 2016). Extractivism is not a new phenomenon; Latin America’s colonial history is based on the extraction and export of natural resources (Galeano, 1973). However, extractivism experienced an upsurge in scholarly attention during the first two decades of the 2000s, when many studies examined the socio-political consequences of the commodities boom of sustained high commodity prices in the 2000s due to a supply gap caused by demand from emerging economies and concerns for peak oil (Bridge, 2010; Finer & Orta-Martínez, 2010). As prices surged, there was an extractivist expansion, with the extractive frontier reaching ‘further and deeper’ as new extractive projects were deemed profitable (Arsel et al., 2016, p. 880).

## 1.1 Aim and Research Questions

Research on the consequences of expanding the extractive frontier has mainly had two main foci: (1) local resistance, conflict and displacement and (2) states’ strategies, policy reform and rhetoric to ensure increased extraction. This thesis broadens the scope of research on extractivism, as it finds that the extractive imperative also results in cross-scalar spaces for political interaction and negotiation. What started out as an exploration of context thus became a research project on the changing geographies of oil dependency, with the overarching aim of *examining the space-making processes involved in ensuring continued oil revenues in Ecuador and Peru*. This aim is addressed through two main research questions:

**RQ1: Which spaces of political interaction arise from the imperative to ensure continued revenues from oil in Ecuador and Peru in the case of Yasuní-ITT and Block 192?**

To answer this research question, this thesis analyses recent processes regarding Yasuní-ITT and Block 192, with a particular emphasis on actors’ spaces for action to negotiate the terms and conditions of oil extraction. This study also analyses the link between the spatiality of mobilising strategies over contentious oil projects and the way in which these projects fit into a hegemonic state strategy to ensure economic growth.

**RQ2: What do these political spaces imply for the changing geographies of oil dependency?**

The second research question addresses the changing geographies of oil dependency resulting from the spaces of political interaction identified in this thesis. It discusses the ways in which extractivism is a cross-scalar phenomenon and how extractivism, through a dependence on oil in new and changing ways, is reconceptualised and reproduced through rescaling. The implications of these findings are discussed in relation to an international context of declining demand.

The findings from the articles provide grounds for two interrelated theoretical contributions. The first main contribution of the thesis is that it shows how the extractive imperative conditions spaces for political interaction and negotiation between scales. To ensure continued revenues from oil, the first article of the thesis describes negotiations between the national and local scales in the case of Block 192, which resulted in some provisioning of public services and socio-environmental remediation. In the case of Yasuní-ITT, the second article discusses how a purposeful rescaling of the space for political interaction over oil, to encompass the national and the international scale, constituted a state spatial strategy to ensure continued revenues from oil through a conditioned oil moratorium attempt. In the third article, extractivist state spatial strategy is theorised as a contributing factor to the spatiality of mobilising strategies over oil, i.e. shaping spaces of contention.

As a second contribution, this thesis demonstrates how oil is constituted as a resource in new and changing ways. Articles 1 and 2 examine processes where unextracted oil was constructed as an international resource and where oil constitutes a political resource functioning as a bargaining chip for local communities to demand negotiations and concessions by the state. However, the dependency on oil as a resource, albeit in changing ways, remains. These findings demonstrate how extractivism should be considered a relational and cross-scalar phenomenon. Not only does the international political economy play a key role in re-shaping political geographies of extraction, but so do processes at sub-national scales. In sum, this thesis argues for an expanded focus on the outcomes of extractivism.

As I find that extractivism has space-making consequences, I have approached it as a geographical process and examined the underlying processes that give rise to patterns of socio-economic activity (Bridge et al., 2013). I make use of theories on state space to do so, understanding political economic resource governance and its space-making processes as outcomes of struggles and complex negotiation processes within the state and between state and non-state actors. Space-making processes arise from state spatial strategy to reconcile conflicts over economic growth,

social justice and environmental protection (Kristoffersen & Young, 2010), with the aim of maintaining an extractivist accumulation strategy.

I have relied on a three-fold data production strategy to analyse these processes. A thorough media sample, semi-structured interviews with key actors and a continual dialogue with secondary literature have been the basis for within-case analyses and across-case comparisons. A process approach to comparative case studies has allowed for an open, flexible and abductive research design, resulting in new interpretations of the case studies and subsequent theory development.

## 1.2 Latin American Extractivism

The export of primary commodities is the largest source of revenues in the national economies of Latin America, and resource extraction has played a dominant role in Latin American economic history since European colonisation, when gold, silver and other precious metals were extracted by indigenous slave labour and exported to Europe. Such extractive economic activities continued after most Latin American countries gained independence in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. Its economic history demonstrates several examples of resource boom and bust, where natural resources have been extracted by workers in abysmal conditions and local economic elites have benefitted from economic bubbles stemming from incomes from, for example, guano, natural rubber and timber. Such resources have been subject to international price fluctuations and obsolescence due to technological developments.

Latin America's natural wealth has not been translated into general socioeconomic improvements. Poverty and inequality indicators continue to demonstrate that large percentages of the population live in poverty (in Ecuador 25% and Peru 20.2%) and that Latin America remains the most unequal region in the world. This contradiction is in line with the resource curse thesis, a conglomerate of hypotheses finding correlations for why resource-rich countries are, with some exceptions, underperforming economically. While the existence of a general resource curse is debated, it is clear that it is macroeconomically challenging for a country to rely on revenues from exporting a few resources prone to price fluctuations (Bebbington & Bury, 2013). However, the national economic importance of resource rents has remained, as demonstrated through the focus of this thesis on the space-making effects of ensuring oil extraction.

### 1.3 Oil Extraction and Economic Development in Ecuador

Ecuador's national economy is thoroughly dependent on oil revenues, which constitute approximately one-third of its export earnings and public revenues. Oil was first discovered in the Northern Ecuadorian Amazon in 1967 by the Texaco-Gulf consortium, and production began in 1972 (Gerlach, 2003). From the early 1970s until the mid-1980s international oil prices kept rising, and this period constituted Ecuador's first oil boom. There was a gradual increase in state ownership in the oil sector, with 80% of oil revenues going to the state until the 1990s. Revenues were directed towards public expenditures, with clear effects on aggregate development indicators, such as life expectancy and education rates (Larrea, 2006). Health and educational programmes and import-substitution measures to stimulate national manufacturing were implemented without aggressive economic redistribution measures. As a result, the public sector and urban middle class have greatly expanded (Gerlach, 2003; Larrea, 2006; Perreault & Valdivia, 2010).

The transformation that oil has brought to the Ecuadorian economy has come at a substantial socio-environmental cost. The Amazon is one of the most biodiverse areas of the planet and is home to many indigenous groups. Oil was initially produced without proper environmental oversight and with obsolete production technologies. Oil spills and wastewater discharges have amounted to large amounts of toxic waste being freely dispatched into the surrounding environment, with reported local health consequences and biodiversity losses. Access roads to oil installations have additionally led to colonisation and agricultural expansion, illegal logging and hunting and resulting deforestation. Economically, the state has become dependent on a single export article as the source of most of its revenues. Ecuador has thus become a petro-state, a definition given to states that have an undiversified reliance on hydrocarbon exports (Karl, 1997).

As oil prices dropped from the mid-1980s, Ecuador underwent economic recession, inflation and increases in foreign debt. Until 2005, every political administration attempted to obtain international loans by implementing austerity measures and privatisation of the oil sector, as demanded by international lending institutions. Neoliberal restructuring of the economy and austerity measures resulted in increases in poverty and inequality and led to social unrest and demonstrations. Political newcomer Rafael Correa was able to capitalise on people's frustration with the social consequences of neoliberal austerity measures and the extreme distrust of the traditional political elite. When he first ran for president in 2005, nine presidents had been ousted in the past twenty years. Correa ran as the leader of a new political alliance, Alianza PAÍS (country

alliance, or the acronym for 'Proud and Sovereign Fatherland' in Spanish). Alianza PAÍS was hatched by a small group of intellectuals and initially consisted of environmentalist, indigenous, technocratic and developmentalist voices. Alianza PAÍS' post-neoliberal political programme, the Citizens' Revolution, entailed increased government spending on social programmes, health, education and infrastructure, and the government was thus considered part of the Latin American Left Turn or Pink Tide.

It is typical for Latin American countries to use the Constitution as a vehicle for major political changes, and Correa's first act as president was to call for a referendum on a constituent assembly to write a new constitution, Ecuador's 20th. This was a highly participatory process, where civil society was allowed a high degree of input and contact with members of the assembly. When completed and accepted by the Ecuadorian population through another referendum, the Ecuadorian Constitution contained several novelties. The Constitution defined the national development model *Buen Vivir*, the Spanish translation of the Kichwa concept Sumak Kawsay, implying living well in harmony with nature, which has been framed in opposition to a 'Western' understanding of development as economic growth (Radcliffe, 2012).

Within this context, the Yasuní-ITT Initiative to leave the oil in the ground for international compensation was established. The idea of a general oil moratorium in the Ecuadorian Amazon was initially developed in civil society. Actors from the environmental movement had, however, transitioned to government, and particularly Alberto Acosta, Correa's first minister of Energy and Mines and president of the Constituent Assembly (until he resigned a month prior to the completion due to pressure from the executive to speed up the process), had been influential in developing the initial moratorium idea. At the time, he had a personal relationship with the president, and he introduced the idea to him while he was minister. Framed as a concrete policy within the *Buen Vivir* framework, the oil moratorium in the Amazon was developed into a moratorium attempt for the Yasuní-ITT oilfield, conditioned upon international compensation, totalling half the expected revenues.

To legitimate and institutionalise the initiative internationally, a trust fund managed by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) was established. The revenues would be directed towards biodiversity conservation, renewable energy sources, social development in the surrounding areas, and innovation and science in the fields of bio-knowledge, energy and water management (Larrea & Warnars, 2009; Pellegrini et al., 2014). As such, the initiative would form

part of the economic transition of the country towards relying less on the exports of commodities (Goeury, 2021). In May 2013, approximately USD 37 million of the expected USD 3.6 billion was committed, and only USD 13 million was actually deposited in the fund (Pellegrini et al., 2014; Sovacool & Scarpaci, 2016). President Correa cancelled the Initiative on 15 August 2013, stating that ‘the world has failed us’ (Presidencia de la República del Ecuador, no date). The deposited money was refunded, and oil extraction began in Tiputini in 2016 and in Tambococha in 2018, while production in Ishpingo is planned for 2022.

The initiative fitted uneasily with the government’s increased reliance on oil and other extractive industries. The Correa government coincided with the 2000s commodities super cycle, with prices rising from 2000 to 2014. The increases in public spending required by the Citizens’ Revolution were possible through commodity revenues being channelled into the national budget and government spending. The Correa government nationalised the hydrocarbon sector in 2008, and existing concession contracts with transnational companies were replaced with service-provision contracts, with the state negotiating a fixed price per barrel. Within the first year of this legislative change, the state’s oil revenues increased by 53% (Forero, 2021). The Ecuadorian state at the time was thus a producer state, responsible for national oil production through public oil company Petroecuador and its subsidiary Petroamazonas, and a developmentalist state, attempting to construct and sustain a Keynesian welfare state. Social spending increased from 4.2% to 9.9% of GDP, and as this occurred in a period with continuous economic growth, it represented over 934% in absolute terms (Goeury, 2021).

The increases in social spending legitimated increased hydrocarbon extraction. New areas were zoned for extractive activities, including mining, an extractive activity that had not previously been expansive in Ecuador. For oil, approximately 68% of the Ecuadorian Amazon is covered by zoned oil blocks, 32% by 36 operative blocks, and 36% by new blocks which are open to international bidding and yet to be produced (Lessmann et al., 2016). While 22% of the Ecuadorian Amazon is defined as protected areas, over one-third of these areas overlap with oil blocks.

Ecuador’s oil dependence makes oil extraction an issue of high national importance. It is central in the national discourse on development and the future of the country. While the Citizens’ Revolution and the adoption of *Buen Vivir* opened up space for plurality of meaning and more heterodox understandings of development, at least initially, President Correa kept equalling increased revenues from oil and other extractive industries to development, a rhetoric that also en-



tailed an increased antagonism towards anti-oil environmental activists, calling them ‘childish ecologists’ and arguing that Ecuador could not ‘be beggars sitting on a sack of gold’. His government also passed legislation to forbid NGOs from being involved in ‘political activity’ and being able to close them down if they were seen to ‘compromise the interests of the state’ (Goeury, 2021, p. 217).

A post-neoliberal development model with concepts from an indigenous worldview, the first major international oil moratorium attempt and an increased dependence on oil together with harsh attacks on environmental organisations by the president demonstrate some inherent contradictions of the Correa government and the different interests involved in his political project. These contradictions also demonstrate how difficult it is to transition from an extractive development model, even in the case of new and ostensibly revolutionary political projects attempting structural transformations of the economy. President Correa’s vice president, Lenin Moreno, ran for president in 2016, and after assuming power, distanced himself from his predecessor and took considerable steps to the right. In the face of declining oil prices, he has attempted austerity measures, which led to considerable popular protests in 2019. In 2021, the candidate from the right, Guillermo Lasso, won the presidential election, and post-neoliberalism was replaced with ‘resurgent neoliberalism’ (Ponce et al., 2020).

#### **1.4 Oil Extraction and Economic Development in Peru**

Oil was first discovered on the Peruvian side of the Amazon in 1939. By then, Peru was already an oil-producing country, as oil had been discovered in northwestern Peru in 1863, making it the oldest oil-producing country in South America (Chavez-Rodriguez et al., 2015). When massive oil deposits were discovered in the Ecuadorian Amazon in 1972, this led to renewed interest in the Amazon in Peru. There was a major push for oil exploration in the Amazon in the 1970s in both countries, and this period has been named the ‘first oil exploration boom’ (Finer & Orta-Martínez, 2010). A second oil exploration boom occurred with the 2000s resource boom. In 2008, 72% of the Peruvian Amazon had been zoned for hydrocarbon activities, allowing the government to lease it out to companies for exploration and production (Finer et al., 2008).

Despite the occurrence of similar tendencies in oil exploration and zoning into blocks in both countries, the economic importance of oil is very different. While Ecuador is a petro-state overtly reliant on oil revenues, Peru’s oil industry is minor to its mining industry, and gold and copper, in particular, have been far more important for the national economy (Instituto Nacional

de Estadística e Informática [INEI], 2020). Peru's total value of oil exports is UDS 2,997 million, approximately a fourth that of Ecuador's, and due to a much larger economy, this totals only 6% (INEI, 2020). Peru is actually a net importer of oil (US Energy Information Administration [EIA], 2020).

Peru was not part of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century pink tide in Latin America, and it has had a neoliberal economy with very welcoming conditions for international economic activity. As such, the Peruvian state is a facilitator state for international investments. The hydrocarbon sector was restructured and privatised from 1993 to 1996, and the public oil company Petroperú was partitioned and, from then on, only involved in downstream activities, operating pipelines, refineries and petrol stations. International companies have been responsible for extractive operations.

Strategies to encourage international investments include favourable taxes and royalties and lax socio-environmental requirements. This facilitation is tied to Peru's neoliberal economic model, in which development as economic growth has been hegemonic. The largest newspapers in Peru consistently report on percentages of economic growth down to quartile and monthly periods. If investments are low, the solution is understood to make conditions even better for private international investments. A case in point was a proposal for a new hydrocarbon law, debated in 2018 and 2019, but still not approved. An overarching goal here was to attract investment, and this was attempted by increasing the possible time limit of operation contracts to 60 years and decreasing the legislative power of the state's environmental agencies in the name of speeding up red tape processes for international companies to start investing and operating in Peru.

The overarching aim to attract international investment in the oil sector is demonstrated well in the processes and dynamics surrounding Block 192. Block 192 is the oldest and largest oil-field in Peru, operating since 1971. In 2015, the operating contract with the transnational company Pluspetrol expired. An international bidding round for new operators followed, but concluded without any international company expressing interest. In fear of having to close down operations completely, the national government resorted to direct negotiations with three oil companies, which resulted in a two-year interim contract with the Canadian oil company Pacific Rubiales (renamed Frontera Energy in 2017).

The unsuccessful bidding round in 2015 and fears of a complete end to production led to considerable popular protest in Iquitos, the region's capital. The regional government of Loreto, Peru's Amazon region, is heavily dependent on the *canon*, a specific tax in which a certain amount

of revenue from oil or mining is directly transferred to regional and local governments. This system for local development instigates a strong dependence on extractive activity; it is in local and regional governments' interests to have as much of it as possible. The regional governor and his base organisations organised a 48-hour general strike in Loreto and protests with 70,000 participants in Iquitos to demand that the national oil company Petroperú assume production responsibilities, their argument being that Petroperú could perhaps be able to assume production without requiring promises of discovering new deposits and of great future revenues.

The local communities living in Block 192 have gained bargaining power from this dynamic of cross-scale fear of production halts, as they have the ability to cease production by simple means, such as occupying parts of the production infrastructure, which they have done on multiple occasions. Since 2009, the dynamics between the local communities and the government have been cyclical, consisting of a series of repetitions of occupations that paralyse part of the production, the dispatchment of top government officials to the area to negotiate and specific agreements between the local indigenous federations and the national governments. These agreements have been on, *inter alia*, environmental remediation, health services, local royalties and prior consultation (Bebbington & Scurrah, 2013; Orta-Martínez et al., 2018).

Up until the time of writing in the summer of 2021, Peru had not had a political moment destabilising the hegemony of development as economic growth achieved through extractivism. Mining and mineral extraction is by far the most important industry in Peru. Oil is minor. Block 192 is one of several contentious sites of extraction and does not play a significant part in political discourse in the country.

### 1.5 The International Political Economy Context of Declining Demand

This thesis examines the processes surrounding the Yasuní-ITT oilfield and Block 192 as outcomes of the extractive imperative. The extractive imperative is evident in states' policy objectives to 'continue and expand [extractivism] regardless of prevailing circumstances' (Arsel et al., 2016, p. 880), and these circumstances now include an international political economy context of declining demand. There is no question that the role of hydrocarbons in the global energy mix will diminish, and there will continue to be a shift towards renewable energy sources and a decarbonisation of society, with the aim of reaching net zero emissions in 2050 as stipulated in the Paris Agreement. There are, however, uncertainties regarding the speed and level of change, and prognostics and scenarios differ. The energy producer BP in its scenario finds that peak demand occurred in 2019

at about 100 million barrels/day, while the international Energy Agency (IEA) predicts that global demand will be back from the demand shock caused by the Covid-19 pandemic by 2023 and continue to increase through 2026, the end of their period of analysis (BP, 2020; IEA, 2021b). However, this prediction is based on no major behaviour or policy changes.

Oil-producing countries need to take the changes in international demand into consideration. Doing so may lead to a speeding up of oil extraction, to produce while it is still profitable and to avoid 'stranded assets' of unprofitable carbon reserves and oil infrastructure. This position was articulated by the Director General of the General Office of Social Management at the Peruvian Ministry of Energy and Mines:

The world is at a quick and aggressive pace of change. A year ago, the British government announced that in 2040 it won't have cars with petrol; the European Union will do the same within the next few months. The European Union will say this because this is a current that goes like this, that you go for the renewable, seeing how things are going with the planet.... Everything is derived from oil, and these derivatives are now being substituted. In reality, the useful life of oil as a motor is approaching its last cycle, and this leads to you beginning to see that these reserves, this crude that is below ground, what do you do with this crude if, within fifty years, it won't be good for anything? The world is transforming, and technology is advancing. The world is at a speed of change..., but we need to look at everything that contains oil, 'I need to extract it, while it still has value', if it's no longer worth anything, then it is not useful at all.

(Interview with author, September 2018)

The logic of producing the oil that there is in the face of declining demand has been named the 'Green Paradox', as 'expected future reduction in carbon consumption has the effect of accelerating climate change' (Sinn, 2012, unpagged). This attempt to maximise the value of their oil reserves through extraction now rather than later could also decrease the price of oil. While the green paradox is a theoretical proposition and any substantial real-life effect is uncertain (Bauer et al., 2018), the idea as an expression of the extractive imperative carries weight in policy circles, as demonstrated in the above quotation. It adds a level of urgency for facilitator states to attract international operating companies to develop and extract oilfields and for producer states to accelerate production.

Policymakers in Peru and Ecuador are well aware of the international context of declining demand. Diversification of the economy is difficult, however, when the economy is so dependent on revenues from extractive activities. Ecuador's attempt to change its production matrix fizzled as the state became increasingly reliant on immediate oil revenues to expand public services and infrastructure. This implies that a declining price per barrel also fosters an expansion of the extractive frontier, i.e. having a similar effect to increasing prices. Peru, with its smaller oil sector, would, in theory, not be as reliant on oil revenues. The idea of stranded assets and avoiding converting subsoil resources into monetary resources while they still can is, however, orienting policy objectives. More extraction is understood to be the solution to all internal and external challenges. The remainder of this thesis explores the space-making consequences of the extractive imperative and continued oil dependence in the international political economy context of declining demand.

## 1.6 Structure of the Thesis

The thesis consists of two parts. Part I functions as a thorough introduction to Part II, which consists of three research articles either submitted for publication or published. Part I consists of five chapters. This first chapter introduces the research, its overarching aim and research questions, and provides context for the analysis. The second chapter reviews prior research and develops the theoretical framework of the thesis. The third chapter presents the thesis' methodological framework, research strategy and research ethics. The fourth chapter provides a summary of the research articles in Part II. The fifth chapter concludes Part I by presenting the key findings of the thesis, discussing the implications of these findings and suggesting avenues for further research.

Part II consists of the following articles:

Laastad, S. G. (2021). The Janus Face of Local Extractivism. *The Extractive Industries and Society*, 8(2), 100903. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.exis.2021.100903>

Laastad, S. G. (2021). Leaving Oil in the Ground: Ecuador's Yasuní-ITT Initiative and Spatial Strategies for Supply-Side Climate Solutions. Submitted to *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space*.

Laastad, S. G. (2021). Mapping Terrains of Struggle: State Space and the Spatiality of Oil Mobilisation in Ecuador and Peru. Revised and resubmitted to *Geoforum*.



## 2. Theorising Geographies of Oil Dependency

This thesis argues that the imperative of ensuring continued revenues from oil is central to state strategy in Ecuador and Peru, and it explores its spatial consequences. Extractivism is therefore a central concept of the thesis. After a literature review, which highlights the main trends in the debates on Latin American extractivism, I detail how I approach extractivism as a geographical process, analysing the spatial dimensions and space-making outcomes of both state strategies to legitimise extraction in Block 192 and Yasuní-ITT, and strategies for mobilising over oil. More concretely, I understand the state as state space that is continually contested, re-articulated and re-shaped, and the processes surrounding Block 192 and Yasuní-ITT as outcomes of state spatial strategies to reconcile conflicts over oil. Utilising these theoretical approaches facilitates a relational and processual approach to extractivist space-making and feeds into critical resource geography scholarship. In the following sections I discuss in detail the theoretical concepts and approaches that constitute my analytical framework.

### 2.1. Extractivism

Early definitions of extractivism defined it as an economic activity and a feature of global capitalism (Acosta, 2013; Gudynas, 2010). Alberto Acosta (2013) defined extractivism as economic activities ‘which remove large quantities of natural resources that are not processed (or processed only to a limited degree), especially for export’ (p. 62). Similarly, Eduardo Gudynas (2018) defined extractivism as ‘the appropriation of natural resources in large volumes and/or high intensity, where half or more are exported as raw materials, without industrial processing or with limited processing’ (p. 62). The concept has since broadened to also imply a style of development (Gudynas, 2013) and a development model ‘based on rent-seeking activities’ (Dietz & Engels, 2017, p. 2), leading to a ‘re-primarisation’ of national economies (Svampa, 2017).

The political side of extractivism has been further emphasised in the literature on (progressive) neo-extractivism. Neo-extractivism has been applied to Latin American countries that underwent a turn to the left in the 2000s, when short-term returns were needed to carry out immediate needs and commitments by progressive governments. Gudynas defined neo-extractivism as a ‘twenty-first-century model in which the state negotiates a larger share of the profits’ (referenced in Farthing & Fabricant, 2018, p. 6). The protagonist role of the state is what differentiates neo-extractivism from the previous incarnations of extractivism. Extractivism based

on a classical trickle-down notion of indirect societal benefits from economic growth from private activity, is by Gudynas termed 'classic extractivism'. In classic extractivism, the state is a facilitator of operations by transnational companies (Gudynas, 2012). A main tendency in research on extractivism is to focus on the neo-extractivism of Latin American progressive countries to a far greater extent than classic extractivism.

### 2.1.1 Focus on the Latin American Left

Between 1999 and 2011, twenty-two presidential elections in Latin America were won by candidates from the left or centre-left (Kennemore & Weeks, 2011), and by 2009, almost two-thirds of Latin Americans lived under left or centre-left rule (Levitsky & Roberts, 2011). This political development was termed the 'Pink Tide'. A main similarity between Pink Tide governments was an agenda to increase the public provision of welfare and instigate large-scale public works on infrastructure (Bull, 2013). There was a 'spatio-temporal overlap' between this left turn and the 2000s international commodity super cycle with a boom in natural resource prices (Dietz & Engels, 2017, p. 11). The increase in public spending was possible due to an increase in state revenues from extractive sectors, both in absolute terms and as a share of revenues due to a renationalisation of extractive activity, new projects at the extractive frontier by public companies or a renegotiation of taxes and royalties (Arsel et al., 2016; Bebbington, 2012a; Svampa, 2019).

The Pink Tide governments' reliance on short-term returns from extractive industries to expand on social policy and human and physical capital was a more uncontentious solution than aggressive redistribution and increased taxes, both to avoid major dissatisfaction among economic elites and due to Latin America's large informal sector (Arsel et al., 2016; Bebbington & Humphreys Bebbington, 2011; Farthing & Fabricant, 2018). The neo- in neo-extractivism thus refers to revenues being directed to the state to finance social programmes, poverty alleviation strategies and infrastructure developments (e.g. Arsel et al., 2016; Chiasson-LeBel, 2016; Farthing & Fabricant, 2018; Gudynas, 2010). The hyphen, however, is due to the unchanging structural features of a development model based on the exports of commodities with volatile price fluctuations.

A renegotiation of the terms and conditions of extractive projects where revenues were increasingly directed towards the state has led to a broadened, deepened and even self-sustained extractivism (Arsel et al., 2016; Gudynas, 2012). It is this political economy context that forms the basis for the extractive imperative theorem (Arsel et al., 2016), and other lines of research focusing on the politics of legitimisation and the contradictions involved in Pink Tide governments' in-



creasing dependence on resource extraction (e.g. Bebbington & Humphreys Bebbington, 2011; Gudynas, 2010, 2012; Svampa, 2017). Arsel et al. (2016) argued that the high commodity prices of the 2000s, coupled with sustained demand and a post-neoliberal policy framework, prompted an extractive imperative in Latin American left countries. These factors are not required to sustain it, however, as the imperative to extract means that extraction ‘needs to continue and expand regardless of prevailing circumstances’ (Arsel et al., 2016, p. 880) and this has taken over ‘the logic of other state activities, reorienting policy objectives to further justify and advance extractivism’ (Arsel et al., 2016, p. 881). When more extraction emerges as a response to all internal and external challenges, extractivism assumes ‘teleological primacy’ and becomes the goal in and of itself (Arsel et al., 2016).

The resource-exporting Pink Tide countries have been unable to use the revenues from extractive industries to diversify their economies and change their subordinate position in international markets, with resource exports as their comparative advantage. Ecuador is a case in point. The initial rhetoric of the Correa government was that oil revenues would be used to invest, particularly in human and physical capital, leading to structural change and diversification of the economy. Additionally, the Correa government aimed to use oil revenues for strategic direct public investments in, for example, bioresearch, which was deemed a major untapped future resource (Arsel et al., 2016). A diversification of the economy has proved difficult, however, not least due to declining oil prices since 2014. The unchanging structural features of extractivism, where state revenues are sourced from exporting unprocessed commodities regardless of price fluctuations in the international market, have therefore resulted in a legitimization of the expansion and intensification of extractive industries, as social investments are dependent on revenues from the extractive industry (Arsel et al., 2016; Gudynas, 2012).

Based on the dependence on and legitimization of intensified extraction and the inherent contradictions in this position, several authors have argued that there is actually little difference between neoliberal and ostensibly post-neoliberal resource governance in the Andean-Amazonian region (Bebbington & Humphreys Bebbington, 2011; Humphreys Bebbington & Bebbington, 2010; Perreault, 2018; Svampa, 2012a). Despite the differences in the distribution of revenues, Humphreys Bebbington and Bebbington (2011) argued that ‘the logics and consequences of extraction seem very similar regardless of the political project or ideological model’ (p. 142). Similarities are visible in discourse and macroeconomic trends. Former neoliberal Peruvian President Alan Garcia

famously argued that the problem in Peru was what he named ‘The Dog in the Manger Syndrome’, arguing that ‘there are millions of hectares for timber extraction that lie idle, millions more that communities and associations have not, and will never, cultivate, in addition to hundreds of mineral deposits that cannot be worked’ (cited in Bebbington, 2009, p. 12). Former left-wing and post-neoliberal Ecuadorian President Correa similarly argued that ‘it’s absurd to be sitting on top of hundreds of thousands of millions of dollars, and to say no to mining because of romanticisms, stories, obsessions, or who knows what’ (cited in Humphreys Bebbington & Bebbington, 2012, p. 29). Despite pertaining to opposite sides of the political spectrum, they made the same argument that the subsoil belongs to the nation and should be extracted to benefit the nation (Bebbington & Humphreys Bebbington, 2011).

In terms of macroeconomic indicators, there has been an increased dependence on extractive activities in the entire Latin American region, despite the political ideologies of national governments (Smart, 2020). Svampa (2012a) argued that a ‘commodity consensus’ has replaced the Washington consensus in Latin America and that this consensus can be understood as a new economic and political-ideological order extending beyond the political differences of Latin American governments. Chiasson-LeBel (2016) concurred, arguing that there seems to be tacit agreement across the political spectrum on the absence of real alternatives to extractivism. This commodity consensus is demonstrated in the two case countries in this study. In Peru, ‘more concessions were granted between 1990 and 2010 than in the preceding two centuries’, and similar rates of increase occurred in Ecuador between 2000 and 2010 (Bury & Bebbington, 2013, p. 47). For hydrocarbons specifically, three-fourths of the Amazon are zoned for hydrocarbon exploration in Peru and three-fourths of the Amazon in Ecuador (Bebbington, 2012a).

Authors analysing both post-neoliberal and neoliberal governments in Latin America have argued that extractivism has reached a Gramscian ‘common sense’ position (Gudynas, 2019; Silva Santisteban, 2016; Svampa, 2012a), which means that extractivism can be understood as a mode or manner of achieving progress, and as such, it justifies itself. When commodity prices were high, the states’ response was to expand the extractive frontier and extract as much as possible as soon as possible. When prices are low, as they have been recently, the states’ answer is also to expand the extractive frontier and extract as much as possible as soon as possible. This seems to be the case regardless of whether oil production is state-run or private, and whether ‘development’ is to be achieved through the active role of a Keynesian welfare state or through trickle down growth by

private extractive activity. Continued and amplified extraction is the likely answer and end goal in itself, also in an international context of declining demand, giving rise to the green paradox.

This 'common sense' position also entails a growing intolerance to social resistance against extractive projects through the increasing use of repressive measures, the criminalisation of protests and the prosecution of leaders of resistance movements (Avcı & Fernández-Salvador, 2016; Bebbington & Humphreys Bebbington, 2011; Bebbington et al., 2013b; Kohl & Farthing, 2012; Middeldorp et al., 2016; Shade, 2015). Silva Santisteban (2016) demonstrated an othering and criminalisation of opposition to mining in Peru due to cross-political agreement on the need to extract. In Ecuador, during the Correa government, President Correa repeatedly stated that since revenues from extractive industries would be used for social development, environmental and indigenous organisations opposing extraction were 'extortionists' attempting to impede extraction that the country needed, 'terrorists', 'infantile leftists and romantic ecologists'; he also attempted to shut down leading environmental NGOs (Bebbington, 2012a).

### 2.1.2. Local scale as sites of resistance: Socio-environmental conflicts, territory and participation

The tendency to focus on the Pink Tide governments in extractivism research has entailed a strong emphasis on the role of the state. The intense focus on the state is mirrored by the most common representation of the local scale as sites of resistance for extractive projects imposed on them by the national state, either through public companies or through facilitating private investments and the operations of transnational companies (e.g. Farthing & Fabricant, 2018; Gudynas, 2016; Riofrancos, 2017). This representation is founded on a scalar logic where extractivism is mainly researched as a national phenomenon with the international political economy as a structuring backdrop, colliding with locally formed resistance, which sometimes gains national traction.

#### 2.1.2.1. Socio-environmental conflict

Consequently, socio-environmental conflict is usually portrayed as a binary conflict between indigenous organisations/socio-territorial movements/new socio-environmental groups and governments/large economic corporations and between the local and national and global scales (Svampa, 2019). The political geography of the subsoil entails that the state, as a custodian of subterranean resources, exerts state power to secure subsurface spaces for extraction at the expense of the populations that depend on the surface lands for their livelihoods (Shade, 2015). It is, therefore, at the local scale, where the immediate detrimental socio-environmental consequences of extraction are experienced and thus resisted and/or embraced, and the costs of extractivism are, as such,

spatially uneven (Arsel et al., 2016). Local populations close to extraction sites experience the socio-environmental impacts caused by insufficient treatment of local contamination, such as produced wastewater and solid waste, while most of the benefits are accrued to 'distant others' (Perreault, 2018, p. 240).

In addition to the negative externalities from production, local populations also experience the negative effects of land-use changes. Zoning land for hydrocarbon or mining activity and granting concessions for hydrocarbon and mineral exploration lead to uncertainty and instability for those depending on the surface for their livelihoods and culture (Bebbington et al., 2013b). As the extractive frontier is expanded to include more ecologically and socially sensitive areas, extractive activity competes with local agricultural livelihood strategies and practices through the use of local resources, such as water and land. Extractive projects have the potential to destroy both indigenous and peasant traditional livelihoods, as well as export-based large-scale farming (Conde & Le Billon, 2017; Moore & Velásquez, 2013).

Concessions for hydrocarbon and mineral exploration lead to shifting land markets and price increases as concession holders create subsidiary companies to buy land for exploration. Bebbington et al. (2013b) found in the case of mining projects in Cajamarca, Peru, that local populations have lost access to pastures and agricultural land, resulting in the intensification of remaining land and migration. A main concern when local populations discover that concessions for hydrocarbon or mineral exploration have been granted is the potential or actual loss of water, both in terms of a decline in quality and a reduction in availability. The expansion of the extractive frontier has meant that resource extraction also takes place on indigenous land, where local populations' relationship to the land is more intimately linked to culture and traditions. Extractivism can therefore not only lead to the dispossession of land and water resources, but also to the end of a way of life and ultimately the survival of culture and traditions. These processes of dispossession are characterised by poor communication between local populations, companies and the state (Bebbington et al., 2013b).

Conflicts arise from perceived or actual dispossession of land and water, concerns that the new extractive industry will destroy traditional ways of life in the area, or that such industries have actually occupied land previously owned by small-scale farmers or indigenous communities. If export-led and/or large-scale commercial farming is perceived to be threatened, this also leads to local opposition (Moore & Velásquez, 2013). Svampa (2019) referenced the Peruvian ombuds-

man's office's statistics, where 68% of social conflicts were related to mining in 2016, arguing that conflict is 'inherent to extractivism' (p. 19).

#### *2.1.2.2. Territory*

As changes in land use are a determinant factor, territory is a frequent theoretical lens through which the dynamics of socio-environmental conflicts over extractive projects have been analysed. Territory is more than just a physical space, and it has more recently been defined as the 'totality of social relations historically produced in a particular space and the meanings different groups have assigned to it' (Avcı & Fernández-Salvador, 2016, p. 912). Territory is therefore central to identity formation, and meanings are ascribed through territory. Resource conflicts can be understood as conflicts over imaginaries of territory or opposing territorialising projects. While extractive companies and states have created spatial imaginaries of territories as empty spaces with natural resources available for extraction, social movements opposing extractive activity often articulate their oppositions as a defence of territory (Avcı & Fernández-Salvador, 2016; Svampa, 2008, 2019). In her analysis of a conflict over the TIPNIS road project in Bolivia, which would facilitate hydrocarbon extraction in protected areas, Laing (2020) found that the conflict opened up a space for a plurality of understandings of territory. Territory is, therefore, potentially both a causal factor for conflict, impacting the degree of opposition, and something that is created through conflict.

While territory is a foundation for meaning-making and identity formation in resource conflicts, it also concretely demonstrates how indigenous groups are dispossessed when their claims to formal land titling and rights compete with concessions to explore the subsoil. The territorialising project of the state is to control state space, including subsoil natural resources. National sovereignty is construed as deciding over national territory at the expense of the territorial autonomy of indigenous communities (Humphreys Bebbington & Bebbington, 2010; Laing, 2020). The state territorial project constitutes a conflicting territorial project with that of indigenous actors, who aim to gain legal recognition of collectively owned lands (Humphreys Bebbington & Bebbington, 2010). Finer and Orta-Martinez (2010) argued that land titling, i.e. official recognition of territory, can be considered an indigenous resistance method against resource extraction on their territories, and that their security of culture is dependent on security of tenure, as territory is intimately intertwined with their livelihood, culture and worldview. Recognised indigenous territory allows for other processes regarding participation, compensation and distribution of benefits (Anthias, 2012, 2018; Humphreys Bebbington & Bebbington, 2012, 2010). Resource extraction is a process around which these territorial projects pivot.

### *2.1.2.3. Participation and dialogue*

Although local conflict over resource extraction is tied to overarching questions of territory, the survival of traditional livelihoods and dispossession, governments attempt to avoid conflict through procedural and narrow means of local participation and dialogue, namely environmental and social impact assessments (EIAs) and free prior and informed consultation (FPI consultation). EIAs identify environmental and social impacts and baselines and are meant to promote dialogue and participation (Aguilar-Støen & Hirsch, 2015; Jaskoski, 2014). EIAs are the responsibility of the private sector, with a state review, which, at least in the case of Peru, is found to lack rigour (Jaskoski, 2014). Although engagement with affected communities is required in EIAs, these communities do not have veto power over the decisions made in these processes.

FPI consultation is a weaker form of free prior and informed consent (FPIC)<sup>1</sup>, an important concept in international law on the rights of indigenous peoples codified in the International Labour Organisation (ILO) Convention 169 on the rights of indigenous peoples and tribal populations. When affected populations are consulted, the idea is that joint solutions can be found that take into consideration the concerns and knowledge of local populations (Schilling-Vacaflor & Flemmer, 2015). However, FPI consultation is nonbinding, and there are no formal follow-up mechanisms to ensure compliance (Schilling-Vacaflor & Flemmer, 2015).

These mechanisms for participation in affected communities are attempts to avoid conflicts impeding the smooth running of extractive projects. Schilling-Vacaflor and Flemmer (2015) argued that they are not mechanisms to change ‘the rules of the game’, however and they can therefore lead to disempowerment and provide further fuel for local resistance (p. 831). Participatory mechanisms do not equal decision-making power or consent, as most negotiations suffer from a clear imbalance of power, resulting in biased and limited information, insufficient understanding, shortened or no deliberation time and a reduction of participatory processes to the socialisation of information (Vela-Almeida et al., 2021). Central to the FPI consent/consultation mechanisms is that local communities have no veto power.

Although land use changes and threats to water and agricultural land are a main driver of conflict, companies that fail to provide promised benefits, including employment and development projects, also lead to conflict, and protests serve as a strategy to enforce negotiations with companies (Arellano-Yanguas, 2012; Jaskoski, 2014; Orta-Martínez et al., 2018). Both private companies’

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<sup>1</sup> Prior consultation is erroneously called previous consultation in Article 1.

and the state's imperative to extract can be utilised by local communities to gain some socio-environmental benefits from extractive projects. For mining projects in particular, as well as other extractive activities, a 'social licence to operate' is increasingly common (Arellano-Yanguas, 2012; Hayk, 2019; Moffat & Zhang, 2014; Wanvik, 2016; Wilson & Stammler, 2016). A social licence requires the local populations' ongoing acceptance of extractive activity (Humphreys Bebbington & Bebbington, 2010; Warnaars, 2012). Extractive companies attempt to gain this acceptance through agreements negotiated with local organisations and through corporate social responsibility (CSR).

Local particularistic agreements with industry have become a common strategy for local communities to gain some benefits from extractive activities. Himley (2013), Manky (2020) and Helfgott (2013) found in case studies of mining projects in Peru and Chile that local employment opportunities in particular have been demanded. Extractive industries are capital-intensive rather than labour-intensive industries (Bebbington et al., 2013b). However, these case studies found that companies recruit locally for low-paid and low-skilled jobs to gain social licences from local communities. Manky (2020) found in the case of the Antamina copper mine in Peru that, even in local negotiations over an environmental issue, resolutions included clauses on local employment. Himley (2013) found that in the case of the Piera gold mine in Peru, local organisations and the company reached an agreement on the temporal and circular hiring of locals. The company was able to frame this as CSR. However, when local demands also included wage increases and unionisation, this resulted in violent clashes between the parties (Himley, 2013). In sum, in research on the consequences of extractivism, the local scale is mostly understood as a site of resistance and defence of territory, with some insufficient processes of dialogue and particularistic agreements on local development.

## 2.2 Oil Dependency as a Geographical Process

As demonstrated in the above literature review, there are some clear geographical tendencies in the research on extractivism. It has mostly, although not exclusively, focused on the Latin American left, and there is a predominance of case study research focusing on newer mining projects. This thesis, on the other hand, examines the socio-political processes surrounding one mature and one new oil project in both a neoliberal and post-neoliberal political economy context and identifies the extractive imperative in both countries. There is also a scalar propensity in the reviewed research to understand the local scale as sites of resistance and conflict, and the geographical concept

of territory is frequently applied to analyse socio-environmental conflicts over extractive projects. The emphasis on territory allows for explanations based on social movement actors' identities and their relations to space, which are useful for grounded and contextual analyses of the internal factors of resource conflicts and how local actors articulate their resistance. A main argument of this thesis is that the outcomes of extractivism include political spaces arising from the imperative to continue extraction beyond territorialised conflicts, particular agreements between affected communities and industry and limited mechanisms for participation and government interaction.

Such political spaces include local actors' bargaining power towards the state if they have the ability to disrupt spatially fixed oil production and changing oil governance conditioned upon international financing. Therefore, I argue that extractivism results in cross-scalar spaces of political interaction, which implies treating extractivism as a geographical process. Treating extractivism as a geographical process entails examining the underlying processes and drivers that give rise to the patterns and scales of economic and social activity (Bridge et al., 2013). It is exactly the imperative to ensure continued revenue from oil, which is the underlying driver for these spaces to arise. As I find economic structures that are central to the spatiality of socio-political processes, I situate my research within a geographical political economy (GPE) perspective. As discussed in the second article of this thesis, GPE examines the spatialities of capitalism and how geography co-evolves with processes of commodity production, market exchange and accumulation (Sheppard, 2011). Understanding 'geography as actively produced alongside economic activities' (MacKinnon, 2011, p. 1) has ontological implications that geography is not pre-existing or external to the economy and, therefore, that space is relational and emergent.

Bridge and Gailing (2020) argued for the usefulness of a GPE framework in studying energy transitions. They argued that energy transitions are space-making processes that are also shaped by spatial contexts and that a GPE of energy transitions can analyse how 'sites, scales and spatialities of energy systems are key contemporary sites of struggle, through which broader questions of political economic governance (and the social relations of capitalism) are being worked out' (Bridge & Gailing, 2020, p. 1040). While they write on energy transition specifically, I find that non-transition is also a space-making process, and that GPE, as an approach to analysing the spatial and scalar aspects of political economic governance, serves to examine the space-making processes involved in ensuring continued revenues from oil, including in novel ways. In spaces of political interaction across scales, extractivism is reconstituted and rescaled.



I find that room for manoeuvre when negotiating the conditions for oil extraction are created by the Peruvian and Ecuadorian state's fundamental motivation to extract the existing oil. The object of my research can therefore be understood as the spatiality of the state accumulation strategy. This term is borrowed from Jessop (1990), who defined accumulation strategy as 'a specific economic "growth model"', and the 'extra-economic preconditions and general strategy for its realisation' (p. 198), including state institutions and policies capable of reproducing it (Brenner, 2004). Examples of accumulation strategies are typically Keynesian welfare states or import-substitution-industrialisation. The position of this thesis is that extractivism should also be defined as an accumulation strategy, as it is the main strategy for achieving economic growth. Jessop (1990) discussed how the state apparatus is centred on consolidating support for and facilitating a hegemonic position for the state accumulation strategy. Turning extractivism into common sense and equalling it to progress and economic growth is an attempt to uphold hegemony. Hegemony is also consolidated through conditioning development, both local and particularistic measures and agreements, and national economic growth upon continued extraction.

### 2.3. Resource–State Nexus

The above section established extractivism as a state accumulation strategy. The important role of resources in state power has been explored in critical resource geography. As critical resource geography attempts to eschew the taken-for-grantedness of natural resources to understand their role in the social world (Himley et al., 2021), it therefore provides fertile grounds for critical examinations of society (Bakker & Bridge, 2006). Bridge (2014) stated that the questions that critical geographers attempt to answer are not what resources and states are but how they come to be. Critical resource geography has demonstrated that natural resources are not only natural but also highly social. It understands resources dialectically, meaning that resources 'have meaning only in relation to specific social, economic and political configurations' (Koch & Perreault, 2019, p. 615), or put even more simply: 'Resources are not, they become' (Zimmermann, 1951, p. 15). This dialectical and relational understanding of resources calls for research on resource politics that is grounded in context, with the aim of accounting for 'deeply contextual constructions and contestation of "resources"' (Koch & Perreault, 2019, p. 614) and explaining how particular resources are 'constituted politically, economically and culturally' (Koch & Perreault, 2019, p. 615).

The emphasis on context naturally makes this approach to resources relational, as it understands that resource mobilisation and encounters also concern struggles over territory, sover-

eignty, citizenship and the meaning of development (Anthias, 2018; Perreault & Valdivia, 2010). Critical resource geography examines the co-articulation of resources with the meanings of 'citizenship, development and the nation' (Perreault & Valdivia, 2010, p. 698). Perreault and Valdivia (2010) stated that 'a closer look at the dynamics of resource conflicts reveal that the particular histories of nation and place shape their emergence and expression' (p. 690), which emphasises that by governing its subsoil resources, the state is also able to govern state–society relations. In Fernando Coronil's (1997) seminal thesis on Venezuela, he argues that the petro-state consists of two bodies: one political body consisting of its citizens and one natural body consisting of its subsoil resources. It was only when the state was perceived as successfully managing the natural body to the benefit of its citizens, by becoming a mediator between the nation and foreign oil companies, that it gained the 'political capacity and financial resources that enabled it to appear as an independent agent capable of imposing its dominion over society' (Coronil, 1997, p. 4).

Valdivia (2008) argued that after Ecuador started producing oil, the state and its citizens entered a 'rentist compromise', where the state became responsible for national development through the use of ground rent. The state's capacity to transform 'petroleum into wealth for the improvement of Ecuadorian society' solidified its governing legitimacy (Valdivia, 2008, p. 473). Opposing oil extraction in itself would equal opposing progress, and through governing petroleum, the state therefore also governed what was politically possible for citizens to opine. The 'rentist compromise' meant that dissatisfaction and protest regarding oil production in the 1990s and 2000s did not concern stopping production, but more responsible management of petroleum and revenue distribution by the state. Perreault and Valdivia (2010) similarly argued through comparing mobilisation over hydrocarbon resources in Bolivia and Ecuador that the goal of opposing 'hegemonic practices of hydrocarbon governance' is not to stop production or abolish state structures, but rather 'to intervene in the terms and intentions of such governance' (p. 697).

In the case of the Yasuní-ITT oilfield in Ecuador this goal changed, as preventing oil production in that particular field became the goal of mobilisation. As argued in Article 3 of this thesis, this change must be seen in relation to the unique process of the government promoting the initiative to leave the oil in the ground, but also to the changes to the state's articulations of accumulation and economic development with the Correa government in general and the contemporary history of strong and prolonged mobilisation against oil damages in the Amazon by indigenous and environmental organisations at the national level. These observations suggest that

the governing of oil and the ways in which state accumulation through oil is articulated and represented have implications for mobilisation over oil and the spatiality of mobilising strategies.

The 'rentist compromise' suggests that these hydrocarbon-producing states were able to uphold the hegemony of the extractivist accumulation strategy in a way that affected mobilisation strategies, which were not regarding whether to extract or not. Jessop (1990) argued that within a hegemonic accumulation strategy, there is still room for conflicts over policies, as long as they occur within an 'acceptable 'policy paradigm' setting the parameters of public choice' (p. 161). This policy paradigm constitutes a space within which 'conflicts over competing interests and demands can be negotiated without threatening the overall project' (Jessop, 1990, p. 210). The 'rentist compromise' can be understood as such a policy paradigm, where the underlying conditions for economic growth through extraction are accepted, but the conditions for extraction and the distribution of benefits are subject to conflictual negotiation. This notion suggests more generally that petroleum mediates the relationship between the state and its citizens. Oil thus functions as a channel through which citizens make their positions towards the state clear, amongst them what they expect from the state. Bebbington et al. (2013a) argued that 'the subsoil cannot be separated from the state and... struggles cannot be sensibly interpreted separately from the state' (p. 281).

Understanding state power and subsoil resources as closely connected can help analyse the dynamics subject to enquiry here: the leveraging of the state through impacting oil production, the state-led project to internationalise oil resources through non-extraction and the spatial and political opportunities and constraints for mobilisation regarding oil. It also opens for understandings of oil becoming a resource in different ways, for example, as a bargaining chip for local communities with the power to impact spatially fixed production to force negotiations with the state.

## 2.4 State Space

The above section demonstrated how state power and subsoil resources have been theorised as closely connected. This thesis adds to scholarship on the state–resource nexus by examining some of the spaces of political interactions that arise from ensuring continued revenues for the states from subsoil resources, and to do so, it draws on strategic–relational state theory (Jessop, 2007, 2016). Strategic-relational state theory is based on Poulantzas' (2014) conceptualisations of the state as a social relation and as the 'material condensation of societal power relations' (p. 127). As the owner of subsoil resources and the receiver of resource rents, the state is a main resource actor as it promotes investments, regulates activities and is, in many cases, a producer in its own right. It

is nonetheless not a monolithic entity, but rather an arena for socio-political struggle and negotiation in various ways. Jessop (2007, 2016) developed Poulantzas' (2014) assertion further by positing that the state is 'reflecting' changing balances of power and is a 'site', 'arena' or 'terrain of struggles' for different forces. The state can therefore be understood as a 'contested and changing field of discourses, policies and social relations' (Kristoffersen & Young, 2010, p. 578) and a 'pre-supposition, an arena and an outcome of continually changing social relations' (Brenner, 2004, p. 80).

The spatial dimensions of such a processual understanding of the state are grasped through the notion of state space. Political geographers use the term state space in an attempt to avoid taken-for-granted notions of the state and state territory, where its spatiality and scalar organisation are taken for pre-given background structures (Agnew, 1994; Brenner, 2004). A state-space approach sees the state's spatiality as 'actively produced and transformed through socio-political struggles at various geographical scales' (Brenner, 2004, p. 80). This means that the spatiality of the state is seldom, if ever, permanently fixed but instead 'represents an emergent, strategically selective, and politically contested process' (Brenner, 2004, p. 89).

Brenner et al. (2003) and Brenner (2004) separated state space in the narrow sense, as the spatial organisation of the state's institutional apparatus, and in the integral sense, as the 'changing geographies of state intervention into socioeconomic processes' (Brenner et al., 2003, p. 6) and the 'indirect socio-spatial effects that flow from apparently aspatial policies' (Brenner, 2004, p. 80). These approaches emphasise state territorial and scalar organisation and the institutional and organisational dimensions of state space, such as how state institutions are mobilised to regulate social relations and influence their locational geographies (Brenner, 2004). A broader approach to state space circumventing the explicit focus on states' spatial and institutional organisations is provided by Kristoffersen and Young (2010), who defined state space as 'both the institutional spaces in which policy-making takes place, *and* the spatial strategies through which the state seeks to reconcile conflicts over economic growth, social justice and environmental protection' (p. 578, emphasis added). There is also a representational dimension to state space. Understanding state space as the outcome of changing social relations and political practices implies that state space is negotiated and articulated and continually produced and transformed through a range of discursive and representational strategies by both state and non-state actors (Brenner et al., 2003).

In the same way that the state is an arena and an outcome of changing social relations, state spatial strategies can also be influenced by non-state actors and through socio-political struggles at various scales. State spatiality is never permanently fixed but represents an emergent, strategically selective and politically contested process. Social forces can ‘successfully mobilise state spatial strategies that privilege particular spaces against others’ and attempt to rework state spatial strategies towards particular ends (Brenner, 2004, p. 93).

Strategic-relational state theory has been used by several authors to analyse (attempted) shifts in hydrocarbon governance in post-neoliberal Andean countries. Andreucci (2017) and Andreucci and Radhuber (2017) argued that initial changes to resource governance in Morales’ Bolivia were partially reversed as a result of shifting power relations between social movements, the hydrocarbon industry and the state and that resource governance is a ‘condensation’ of such shifting power relations. Nelson (2019) utilised the conceptualisation of the state as an arena to argue that the leftist governments in Bolivia, Ecuador and Venezuela had to ‘walk a tightrope’ between transformative political programmes and challenges from dominant classes and that this resulted in the redistribution of resource rents rather than a more profound transformation of the economy. The spatial consequences of evolving relations between interests are discussed by Kristoffersen and Young (2010), who examined how a closer alignment between state and oil industry interests has shaped representations of state space in the context of the Norwegian Arctic. In maps and visual representations, offshore territories are represented as spaces ‘that can be turned into productive resource through the intervention of oil companies’ (Kristoffersen & Young, 2010, p. 582).

#### **2.4.1 State spatial strategies to ensure continued revenues from oil**

This thesis examines the spaces of political interaction that arise from state spatial strategies to ensure continued revenues from oil. As argued above, I conceptualise extractivism as an accumulation strategy central to the state and the state as attempting to uphold a hegemonic understanding of its necessity for economic development (Jessop, 1990). The extractive imperative is therefore an underlying driver of state spatial strategies. The findings of this thesis indicate that state spatial strategies to ensure continued revenues from oil include purposeful political interventions to reconcile conflicts over economic growth, social justice and environmental protection (Kristoffersen & Young, 2010). In the case of Block 192, these strategies entail some local-scale provisioning of welfare services, and in the case of Yasuni-ITT, constitutes an attempted moratorium conditioned

upon international financing. A main spatial strategy, therefore, is rescaling, the remaking of scalar configurations. Articles 1 and 2 of the thesis explore these processes of rescaling in greater detail.

Rescaling as a state spatial strategy to reconcile conflicts of interest and ensure continued revenues from oil is in line with Brenner's (2004) assertion that 'the scalar organisation of state power is no longer understood as a pre-given background structure, but is increasingly viewed as a constitutive, contested and therefore potentially malleable dimension of political-economic processes' (p. 71). Geographical scales have been conceptualised as both a platform and a container of social activity; they are the product of economic, political and social activities and relationships, which means that they are as changeable as these relationships and are not neutral or fixed (Smith, 1995). According to Swyngedouw (1997), geographical scales are where socio-spatial power relations are contested and compromises are negotiated. Thus, scales must be conceptualised relationally in terms of their links to other scales. Scales are one dimension of particular social processes and must be understood as malleable and contested (Brenner, 2004).

While rescaling serves as a state spatial strategy, state spatial strategies are also produced and transformed by processes at various geographical scales, both supra-national and local. As the extractive imperative is an underlying driver of state spatial strategies, these strategies are also conditioned by the resource-exporting states' position in the international commodity market. State space is 'molded into the (territorially differentiated) geography of capital' (Brenner, 2004, p. 16), and international commodity markets therefore limit states' parameters of action. As discussed in the previous section, several authors have established close links between state power and the control of subsoil resources. State power is therefore created and exerted through a dependency on the international commodity market, and this remains the case for both a neoliberal state, such as Peru, and a post-neoliberal state, such as Ecuador, during the Correa government.

The perpetuation of dependency on international resource export structures state power and state spatial strategy; this leads to a scalar dynamic in which the local scale can influence state spatial strategy by impacting spatially fixed oil production. This dynamic is explored in Article 1, which chronicles how local actors threaten to occupy or occupy parts of the oil infrastructure and are able to halt production in Block 192 and how this has led to direct negotiations with government actors. Because Block 192 is an oil-producing area, local actors have been able to demand state attention and have forced some local 'oil for development' measures by the government, an example of a state spatial strategy for reconciling conflicts over economic growth, social justice and

environmental protection. This scalar dynamic constitutes a spatial dimension of Jessop's (1990) policy paradigm, where conflicts over the conditions for extraction can be negotiated without threatening the hegemony of extractivism as an accumulation strategy. This scalar dynamic also leads to a local dependence on extractivism beyond strictly economic dependence, as it constitutes a bargaining chip through which state spatial strategy can be influenced from below.

The rescaling of the spaces for political interaction that occurred in the case of the Yasuní-ITT Initiative can also be understood as a state spatial strategy to reconcile conflicts over economic growth and environmental protection. Environmental interests gained access to the state during the first stages of the Correa government and, to reconcile conflicts of interests arising from the 'environmentalisation' of a petro-state, the idea of an oil moratorium as proposed by environmental civil society was reconceptualised through rescaling to ensure continued revenues from oil, even while remaining in the ground. This argument is related to Hunold and Dryzek's (2005) historical analyses of the relations between environmental movements and the state in different countries. They argued that securing economic growth is one of the state's core functions and found that if the aims of environmental movements can be connected to the state's 'economic imperative', then there are greater possibilities for these aims to be incorporated into the core of the state (Hunold & Dryzek, 2005). In the case of the Yasuní-ITT Initiative, non-extraction became an official state strategy in a way that would ensure continued revenues from oil, that is, only in a way that could fulfil the economic and extractive imperative. This process demonstrates how an energy transition process can also be perceived as a reconceptualisation and reproduction of oil dependency. Furthermore, the rescaling processes examined in this thesis underscore how extractivism must be understood as multiscalar. To uphold an extractivist accumulation strategy, extractivism is rescaled and reconstituted, while the fundamental dependency on oil remains.

#### **2.4.2 Spatiality of mobilisation**

A main argument of this thesis is that the extractive imperative shapes state spatial strategies. The abovementioned processes are examples of how state spatial strategies are used in concrete ways to maintain extractivism through rescaling. State spatial strategies could also shape the spatiality of mobilising strategies over contentious oil projects. Brenner et al. (2003) argued that socio-political actors' actions are conditioned upon already 'established, emerging or potential state spaces' (p. 10), which suggests that state space is one important dimension of political opportunities for mobilising. Such political opportunities are commonly analysed by drawing on concepts from conten-

tious politics theory, which analyses the political opportunities of social movements arising from the varying forms of interactions between governments and political actors, and the ways in which these political opportunities structure movements' repertoires of contention: the methods of protests that actors use (Tilly & Tarrow, 2006). This thesis analyses the *spatiality* of mobilising strategies regarding the two contentious oil projects and suggests that a link exists between state space and the spatiality of mobilising strategies.

As established above, state space is negotiated, articulated and continually produced and transformed through the discursive and representational practices of both state and non-state actors (Brenner et al., 2003). According to Brenner et al. (2003), evolving state space shapes the 'terrain of socio-political struggle', but socio-political struggle at different scales also produces and modifies state space through its representation and articulation of space. This dialectical proposition suggests that examining both historical processes for articulations and production of state space and previous processes of socio-political contention can help explain the current spatialities of mobilising strategies. This analytical framework is used in the third and final article of the thesis, which contributes with an explicitly spatial analysis of the differences in mobilisation regarding Block 192 and Yasuní-ITT. Although it is outside the scope of this thesis to speculate, recent and ongoing mobilisation over oil potentially remaps state space and the 'terrains of struggle' for future mobilising, as previous processes of mobilisation have done in the past.

## 2.5 Towards an Analytical Framework for Geographies of Oil Dependency

A review of previous research on Latin American extractivism found that there is a tendency to (a) focus on the Latin American left and (b) portray the local scale as a site of resistance. Extractivism literature has focused on the manifestation of the extractive imperative as state regulatory frameworks favouring industry interests, socio-environmental conflict and criminalisation of protests and limited local participation and decision-making. This thesis, therefore, adds to the scholarship on extractivism by analysing the spaces of political interaction that arise from state strategies to ensure continued revenues from oil in one country that was part of the Latin American left turn and one country that was not. Such spaces are also outcomes of extractivism and include the local scale's strategic usage of the state's extractive imperative to demand local socio-environmental measures and welfare provisions, which in turn leads to local dependence on oil as a negotiation resource. This strategic usage of the state's extractive imperative constitutes a different sort of lo-



cal-scale response from rejecting extractive activity and implies that oil can become a resource in different ways.

As I find that the extractive imperative has space-making consequences, the point of departure for further theorising is understanding extractivism as a geographical process, as it is constituted by space but also constitutive of space (Bridge & Gailing, 2020). Understanding extractivism as a geographical process allows for an examination of the underlying processes that can explain the geography of economic and social activities. To examine such processes, this thesis makes use of strategic-relational state theory. It understands the state as a key site for contestation and political economic resource governance and its space-making processes as outcomes of struggles and complex negotiation processes within the state and between state and non-state actors. Space-making processes arise from state spatial strategy to reconcile conflicts over economic growth, social justice and environmental protection (Kristoffersen & Young, 2010), with the aim of maintaining an extractivist accumulation strategy. Within this understanding, there are political spaces (policy paradigms, in Jessop's (1990) terminology) for some socio-environmental improvements, as long as they do not threaten the overall accumulation strategy. In the cases examined here, these spaces for negotiation and bargaining occur between scales. What occurs in these spaces can be understood as socio-political struggles to change state spatial strategies, resulting in changing geographies of state interventions.

Extractivism could therefore benefit from a conceptual expansion to include strategies for ensuring continued benefits from oil, as well as in the current contexts of declining demand and international discussions of oil moratoriums as supply-side climate policies. The logics and practices of extractivism and the 'there is no alternative to oil' ideology are (re)shaped at different scales; extractivism should thus be considered a cross-scalar phenomenon. Extractivism is reconceptualised and reproduced in the changing geographies of oil dependency.

This thesis uses parts of this theoretical approach to different extents. The first article relies mostly on extractivism literature to argue that a local form of extractivism arises from a local dependence on impacting oil production as a bargaining chip to negotiate directly with the government. The second article engages with the idea of the state as an arena of conflicts of interest and argues that when environmental interests gained access to the Ecuadorian petro-state, the idea of oil moratorium was rescaled and made dependent on international financing. This moratorium attempt can be understood as a state spatial strategy to reconcile conflicts between environmental

and oil interests. The third article understands state action and civil society mobilisation relationally and establishes a connection between historical and political processes that have shaped state space in the representational sense and the spatiality of mobilising strategies over the contentious oil projects examined in this thesis.

## 3. Methodology and Methods

This chapter provides transparency in the research process carried out for this thesis. In what follows, I elaborate on the rationale for choosing the two cases studied here and describe how I deal with the issues of comparison and causality before discussing how the research has been characterised by an open, flexible and abductive design. I then detail my methods for data production and analytical choices before discussing my positionality and the ethical considerations involved in this study. I conclude by explaining how I have ensured a high degree of trustworthiness through the transparency and critical reflexivity that form the basis of this chapter.

### 3.1. Research Design

I started my research fellowship in August 2017 and spent the first semester developing my research project. My initial aim was to examine the translation processes occurring in the design and implementation of policies regarding an international environmental issue on the national and local scales by analysing the various ways discourses regarding rainforest protection were shaped and developed throughout policymaking processes in Ecuador and Peru. The reason for developing a research proposal about these two countries was that I have had an academic interest in Latin American environmental and resource politics for many years. I thought that researching two neighbouring Andean-Amazonian countries with different political trajectories would be an interesting point of departure. I also had prior fieldwork experience in Ecuador (Laastad, 2016, 2020).

In the process of narrowing down and operationalising the research project, I decided to focus instead on oil extraction in the Amazon region of the two countries as it was a field that sparked my academic interest. As I was conducting preliminary literature reviews of both academic and non-academic literature regarding oil extraction in the Amazon in Ecuador and Peru, I quickly realised that two oilfields were particularly contentious: Block 192 in Peru and Yasuní-ITT in Ecuador. I was familiar with the proposal to leave the oil in the ground in the ITT field and aware of its centrality to Ecuadorian foreign policy during its six years of existence and to national and international civil society. Block 192 appeared in Peruvian news media intermittently due to indigenous protests and occupations of oil installations, leading to halts in oil production and compelling negotiations between local indigenous federations and the government.

As mentioned in the introduction, the analytical decision to choose these two cases as my empirical point of departure was based on both their similarities and their differences. They are

located close to one another in traditional territories of indigenous groups and areas extremely rich in biological diversity, but there is a national border between them. They are both emblematic and politicised oilfields, as there have been multiple parallel processes of controversy and conflict surrounding both. A main difference is the spatiality of these processes. In Ecuador, oil extraction in the Yasuní-ITT field has seemingly become a national-level political issue, with several instances of activism at the national level. Block 192 in Peru on the other hand, has seemingly failed to gain comparable national attention, and indigenous groups' efforts to impact the socio-environmental conditions for extraction and demand remediation of five decades of contamination remain at the local level. I subsequently aimed to identify the different factors structuring the debates, policies and politics regarding these two oilfields to find out why they are so different in each country.

There are several apparent and surface-level explanations for the different trajectories of the socio-political processes surrounding these oilfields, not least the simplest of them all: they are in different countries with different histories, politics and state structures. An additional reason for their different public apprehensions is the oilfields' spatial and temporal distances. Peru is a country four times the size of Ecuador, and the Amazon is much further away from the most populous areas on the coast. The Ecuadorian Amazon is also better connected by road than the Peruvian Amazon. Block 192 has been operating since 1971, meaning that production started in an era of less environmental knowledge and concern by governments and the population at large. Production in Yasuní-ITT only started recently, at a time of more knowledge and evidence of the detrimental effects of both local contamination and international carbon emissions. In addition to changing contexts caused by the passage of time, it is much easier to protest plans to start drilling than to protest against continuing production that has lasted for decades. This explorative examination moves beyond such surface-level explanations to identify some of the differences between the state projects in Ecuador and Peru, but also the similarities: mainly how continued extraction is a main objective structuring action, despite severe socio-environmental consequences.

There are examples of some of the processes I have studied in Peru also in Ecuador, such as attempts from below to condition extraction (Valdivia, 2008) and conflicts regarding monetary transfers towards local development in extraction areas (Lyll & Valdivia, 2019). Rather than studying similar processes of socio-environmental conflicts and resource allocation in Ecuador and Peru, I chose two cases for their specific and well-known trajectories. This choice was made both by accident and by design. By accident, because I did not have the prior knowledge of specific cases

that could perhaps lend themselves more easily to a traditional comparative case study design, and by design, as I aimed to analyse the most politicised oilfield in each country. I address this cross-border comparison below.

### 3.1.1. A cross-border comparison

Bebbington et al. (2019) and Perreault and Valdivia (2010) carried out comparisons between two neighbouring countries to establish why resource policy trajectories are different and to illustrate the broader and more general features of resource politics, respectively. Bebbington et al. (2019) argued that such a cross-border comparison can shed analytical light on factors that make something possible in one of the countries but not the other. These analyses both contribute to theory development. I see these types of comparisons of cases between countries as having a mirroring function, where one country case can be held up to reflect processes in the other, revealing new or underlying factors. Alternatively, such comparisons could be understood as a telescope or magnifying glass that aids the researcher in deciding what to focus on and what can be considered explanatory factors, or perhaps even offers a lens or frame through which to analyse the other country case in a dialectic fashion. Regardless of which vision metaphor is most applicable, the underlying point is that a cross-border comparison can function as a deconstruction and reassessment of context with the aim of uncovering central explanatory factors. Such comparisons are fruitful, as they can provide new insights into underlying reasons or processes or bring into focus new theoretical questions.

This thesis takes a process approach to comparative case study research. Classic case study research methodology bounds cases *a priori*: deciding what they are a case of, establishing variables and testing for variance. When the case is bounded early in the research process, it necessarily relies on limited notions of contexts (Bartlett & Vavrus, 2017). A process approach to case studies, on the other hand, entails an unbounding of cases for the researcher to constantly ask ‘what is this a case of?’ and to follow the enquiry (Bartlett & Vavrus, 2017; Maxwell, 2013), thereby placing an emphasis on context to identify ‘the historical and contemporary networks and actors, institutions and policies that produce some sense of bounded place for specific purposes’ (Bartlett & Vavrus, 2017, p. 15). This approach is particularly suited to human geography research, which is commonly defined as the ‘study of interrelationships between people, place and environment’ (Castree et al., 2013, unpaginated).

I have found that a process approach to case studies and an unbounding of cases rather than an upfront bounding are better suited to my positionality as an outsider researcher, as what-it-is-a-case-of can be changed and expanded upon when new knowledge is gained. Throughout the entire research process, I have continued to acquaint myself and learn more about the Ecuadorian and Peruvian contexts, which has continually fed into my analytical thinking. Therefore, it has been paramount to have a research design that has allowed for feeding new-to-me contextual knowledge into the analysis. This research design also allowed for both within-case analyses and across-case comparisons. The first involves an in-depth exploration of the case (Articles 1 and 2). The latter facilitates the identification of themes and the relationships between them (Article 3) (Ayres et al., 2003).

Variable-oriented approaches to causal relations aim to generate generalised relations between variables. A process approach, on the other hand, deals with events and the processes that connect them, resulting in contextually grounded findings and revealing processes and patterns to expand on theory (Maxwell, 2004). With this approach, causal relations may also be perceived and not just inferred, allowing for abductive interpretation. A process approach is suited for theory development rather than theory testing.

### **3.1.2. Abductive research strategy**

Whereas deductive research abstracts from the general to the particular and inductive research abstracts from the particular to the general, abductive reasoning can be understood as a middle ground. Abductive reasoning begins with a puzzle and then ‘seeks to explicate it by identifying the conditions that would make the puzzle less perplexing and more of a “normal” or “natural” event’ (Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2012, p. 27). An abductive analysis is therefore a ‘puzzling-out process’, where the researcher moves back and forth between what is puzzling and possible explanations for it, i.e. data and theory, in an iterative-recursive fashion. In the process, both data and theory are adjusted and re-interpreted. Abductive research therefore results in interpretations that can make sense of particular puzzles, but also contribute to theory development.

Schwartz-Sea and Yanow (2012) argued that ‘stranger-ness’ is important for abduction, as it can help make something puzzling. Being a stranger to the research context can elucidate what is tacitly known or taken for granted by ‘situated knowers’ (Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2012, p. 29). Abduction is therefore a good fit for critical resource geography research, where stripping resources of their ‘taken-for-grantedness’ and making them strange is a way to understand their

complex role in the social world (Himley et al., 2021, p. 4). The different spatialities of mobilisation and the scale of public reaction to contentious oil extraction in the case of these two oilfields in Ecuador and Peru was a puzzle to me and became the starting point of the research process. I think someone more closely familiar with the cases and the national contexts would not find this puzzle quite as puzzling, and my inkling about this was corroborated in some of the research interviews.

In abductive process-based case studies, there may be abduction within abduction, where one ‘discovery’ leads to another (Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2012), which is what occurred with my research. The level of abstraction increased as I became more familiar with the cases and their contexts. This study has developed from that of differentiating contextual factors to identifying the space-making outcomes of the extractive imperative. The development of the research project over time is visible from the articles and their different analytical frames. The first article challenges the theory with which I was familiar, which meant that I realised early that my case would challenge it. The second article is based on observations regarding one of the cases, then reading relevant research literature and realising that I had a different interpretation. The third article is based on the initial puzzle of the different spatialities of mobilisation and several rounds of attempting to ‘puzzle it out’ by utilising different analytical frames and theoretical perspectives.

## 3.2. Research Methods and Data Analysis

In practice, this research strategy entailed a three-fold data collection strategy. An open-surface coding of a thorough sample of media articles from the two main dailies of each country was followed by semi-structured interviews with key actors in Peru and Ecuador, complemented by continual dialogue with secondary information and literature. In this section, I discuss my analytical choices and fieldwork experience in detail.

### 3.2.1. Desk-based research

The initial information gathering was desk-based. In addition to academic literature and institutional reports regarding the oil sectors in the two countries in general and the two oilfields in particular, I carried out an extensive review of media sources. A strategic limitation of this media sample was necessary, so I downloaded, read, systematised and analysed all articles mentioning ‘*Lote 192*’ (Block 192) from the two largest dailies in Peru, the conservative *El Comercio* and the centre-left *La República*, from 2015, when the contract with former operator Pluspetrol concluded, to the time of research, mid-2018. This sample totalled 487 news items. I chose these newspapers because they are the largest in Peru and both had easily accessible archives and search engines.

These newspapers are not politically neutral, and I have been careful not to use them for causal analysis. The initial aim of this first exploration was to increase familiarity and gain an overview of events, not to compare and contrast their politics. Some differences were nevertheless clear: *La República* argued that it made economic sense for the public oil company Petroperú to assume production responsibilities, and covered congressional debates regarding Petroperú's legal possibilities for assuming ownership. By contrast, *El Comercio* did not support national ownership and focused more on indigenous protests and how they hindered production. Politics aside, their different emphases helped me gain a fuller idea of the parallel processes surrounding Block 192.

As I initially planned to examine the processes regarding Yasuní-ITT after the initiative to leave the oil in the ground concluded unsuccessfully, I collected a similar sample for Ecuador, downloading all articles mentioning Yasuní-ITT after the initiative concluded in August 2013 until mid-2018, from the two main Ecuadorian dailies, conservative *El Comercio* and centrist *El Universo*. This sample totalled 317 items. These newspapers' politics also come into play methodologically. They have both had an anti-Correa positioning, and it could be argued that these newspapers have actively produced the Yasuní issue as a national issue, rather than merely reflecting the spatiality of civil society mobilisation<sup>2</sup>. This potential purposeful production of oil production in the Yasuní as a national issue has proven to be a methodological conundrum for me, in addition to attesting to my outsider status. My impression that the cancellation of the Yasuní-ITT Initiative and the start of oil production caused an uproar at the national level was further consolidated from reading these newspapers' coverage of national protests and similar framings of the issue from international media. I have attempted to deal with the potentially exaggerated idea I got regarding national-level protests in two ways. First, I was able to check my impressions through interviews with actors involved in the initiative and working on the issue now in Ecuador. Second, the research project has evolved towards other analytical contributions that I feel confident about.

As mentioned, the initial aim of this first analysis was to increase familiarity with the additional benefits of gaining exposure to multiple interpretations of events (Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2012). I organised all newspaper articles as files in NVivo, a computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software, which facilitates the coding of text sections. Coding is 'the transitional process between data collection and more extensive data analysis' (Saldaña, 2013, p. 5). I marked all the files with their dates, and I carried out descriptive and open coding, moving forward in time. De-

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<sup>2</sup> I thank an anonymous reviewer for raising this point.



scriptive coding is a type of initial coding summarising the topic of the excerpt coded. Open coding stems from grounded theory and allows the researcher to explore the data while keeping an open mind and being receptive to all the clues and hints that the data might provide. Although some general ideas about the field might guide open coding, sometimes explicitly and often implicitly, at this stage, researchers should let the codes emerge from the data without particular restrictions (Charmaz, 2006). Examples of codes at this stage were ‘Petroperú’, ‘indigenous protests’ and ‘prior consultation’ in the case of Block 192 in Peru, and ‘public opposition’, ‘government position’ and ‘oil production’ in the case of Yasuní-ITT in Ecuador. In an explorative fashion, I traced contextual factors and created a timeline of events regarding the two oilfields, creating an overview of the actors involved and their positions.

I simultaneously wrote extensive analytical memos. A precise definition of analytical memos is ‘sites of conversation with ourselves about our data’ (Clarke, 2005, p. 2020, as referenced in Saldaña, 2013). Such memos fostered reflexivity regarding the data, and coding functioned as prompts for written reflection and developing ideas from the data. In the analytical memos, I wrote about connections as they emerged for me, the different actors involved, particular events, evolving processes and preliminary ideas for research articles. I also wrote down questions I had for the data and things that remained unclear. In a separate document, I compiled a long list of questions, which I grouped into topics. This list served as the basis for the preliminary research questions and interview guides. I also kept a list of institutions and actors mentioned in the news items as possible contacts for interview-based field research.

### 3.2.2. Field research

I carried out field research from mid-August 2018 until end-December 2018, staying in Peru from late August until November and in Ecuador from early November until late December. In Peru, I was based in Lima, where I had a guest researcher affiliation and an office space at the *Centro de Investigación en Geografía Aplicada* (CIGA, Centre for Applied Geographical Research) at the Pontifical Catholic University of Peru. I carried out most of my research interviews in Lima with government officials and representatives from civil society and NGOs. I also went on a shorter trip to Iquitos, the regional capital of Loreto, the region encompassing most of the Peruvian Amazon. Here, I interviewed government officials more directly involved in negotiations with the indigenous federations representing the communities living in Block 192, one leader of one of these fed-

erations, and representatives from civil society working on issues of remediation and socio-environmental justice for the indigenous communities living in Block 192.

I made a conscious decision not to carry out in situ fieldwork in Block 192 because the people living there are a vulnerable population, and I did not wish to involve them in a research project that would not be able to improve their lives or contribute to their cause. The location is also very remote and would require complicated travel arrangements involving travelling by a privately hired river boat for approximately two days from Iquitos, something I was hesitant to undertake on my own for security reasons or travel by the operating company's private aeroplane, which I did not gain access to. In situ fieldwork in Block 192 would undoubtedly have provided more multilayered and in-depth data on the processes between the local communities, state and industry, and different positions regarding oil extraction. I also believe that the findings could lead to different types of analyses altogether, as the positions of local people do not necessarily align with those of the federations that represent them. There are political processes regarding representation and leadership positions that may remove federations from the people they represent. It is the federations' positions that are most relevant for understanding the dynamics of negotiation between local actors and the state analysed here.

In Ecuador, I carried out interviews in the capital city of Quito only, due to the non-local scaling of the Yasuní-ITT Initiative and subsequent mobilising. For the same reasons, I did not travel to the Yasuní. The ITT oilfield is highly remote and I would not have been given access to enter it. I was a guest researcher and had an office space at FLACSO Ecuador, the Ecuadorian campus of the Latin American Faculty of Social Sciences. In Quito, I interviewed current and former government officials and representatives from civil society.

#### *3.2.2.1. Sampling and interview partners*

A clear limitation to my research strategy was my geographical distance from the field, which meant that the time I had to carry out the research interviews was during my research stay only. Therefore, I had to use a relatively open sampling strategy. My sampling strategy was purposeful sampling, because I aimed to gain exposure to the opinions of stakeholders who could discuss the processes regarding Block 192 or Yasuní-ITT, oil politics and state-society relations in Ecuador and Peru. My sample was also a convenience sample, which is defined as a selection process based on access and an opportunistic sample, characterised by following new leads during fieldwork (Silverman, 2010; Thagaard, 2009). I also relied on the snowball sampling technique, asking my inter-

view partners for recommendations on who would be knowledgeable and relevant for the type of questions I was asking. As I was an outsider researcher with a limited amount of time for field research, this was a useful strategy, but snowball sampling is not without its drawbacks. With my open sampling strategy, I realised that I ran the risk of interviewing the same type of interview partners and moving within the same type of interpretive communities. I therefore attempted to get referrals from interview and conversation partners within different environments, both within research institutions, government agencies, NGOs and the oil sector, and in this way have several smaller snowballs running (Thagaard, 2009).

While still in Oslo, I established contact with the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative's (EITI) International Secretariat, which is located in Oslo. Peru is an implementing country of this global standard to promote 'open and accountable management of extractive resources' (EITI, n.d.). Each implementing country is supported by a coalition of government, companies and civil society. I met with the regional director of Latin America and the Caribbean, who put me in touch with the parties to the Peruvian coalition. EITI, therefore, became an important gatekeeper.

Before and upon my arrival in Lima, I emailed the parties to the EITI coalition, government agencies involved with management of the oil industry and its environmental effects, and NGOs involved with both Block 192 specifically, and the socio-environmental consequences of oil more broadly. I also got in touch with academics researching adjacent fields for more informal chats. I received some positive responses to my emails, some polite declines and mostly non-responses. At this stage, I experienced the advantages of having an institutional affiliation. My contact person there knew personally some of the actors I attempted to reach and got in touch with them by phone on my behalf. In this way, she helped me obtain some of my most valuable interviews.

Table 1: Overview of Semi-Structured Interviews in Peru

Type of Interview Partner	Number of Interviews
Representatives from NGOs with experience working with the indigenous communities in Block 192	9
Government officials directly involved in negotiations and policies related to Block 192	7
Representatives from oil sector	1
Researchers	2
Advisors to the indigenous federations representing the communities living in Block 192	3
Leaders of the indigenous federations representing the communities living in Block 192	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>23</b>

Having EITI and PUCP as gatekeepers influenced the sample. Those who responded to my emails were mostly people higher up in the system who were, first, very busy and, second, not working with Block 192 directly. I felt initially as if I were unable to steer the sample to a sufficient degree and establish contact with actors who would give me the most precise answers, as I did not know how to approach them. In the end, owing to purposeful snowball sampling, I was able to interview people with more general knowledge of the Peruvian oil sector and of how socio-environmental conflicts were handled. I also spoke with officials who negotiated directly with the federations in Block 192, who gave specific examples and knowledge of context. There is an underrepresentation of indigenous voices in this sample, although their views align with those of their advisors. Nonetheless, to properly encompass their viewpoints, the analysis relies extensively on news items from the website of the umbrella organisation of the indigenous federations living within or by Block 192 (PUINAMUDT, 2020) and their social media postings, and indigenous actors' statements and comments to the media.

I obtained interview appointments in Ecuador by getting in touch with some informants from my previous research stay, snowball sampling and contacting key actors directly via email and Twitter. There is a discrepancy in the number of interview partners in Peru and Ecuador. I assumed that interview-based fieldwork would be easier in Ecuador, as I had previous fieldwork experience from Ecuador for my master's thesis. I believe that this difference demonstrates the advantage of an institutional gatekeeper, first, by being given the contact information of partners

to EITI Peru, and second, by having a helpful contact person at my host institution who also knew these same actors, providing a highly advantageous point of departure for further sampling. Ecuador is not a party to EITI, and my contact person at FLACSO was not in Quito during my research stay.

*Table 2: Overview of Semi-Structured Interviews in Ecuador*

<b>Type of Interview Partner</b>	<b>Number of Interviews</b>
Former government officials who had worked directly with the Yasuní-ITT Initiative	4
Representatives from NGOs heavily involved in contesting extraction	2
Current government officials	2
Researchers	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>9</b>

#### *3.2.2.2. Research interviews*

I carried out semi-structured interviews, which employ an interview guide with ordered but flexible questions (Dunn, 2010). When developing the interview guide, I took care to make sure that my questions were open-ended, neutral, singular and clear (Patton, 2002), and I presented the draft to my supervisor and a professor at the CIGA for input. For most of the interviews, I prepared approximately ten questions, and most interviews had a duration of approximately one hour. The interview guide had three sections. I started the interview with straightforward descriptive questions, asking about the interview partner's position, role and main responsibilities, and how their work had touched upon Block 192 or Yasuní-ITT, before asking about the structure of the national oil sector, the most important agencies and actors and the relations between them. The second section consisted of a bulk of questions regarding either Block 192 or Yasuní-ITT, with questions asking about their recent history and opinions of how best to operate them and their future scenarios. The final section asked whether there was a debate regarding oil extraction in these oilfields at the national level, and if so, who was involved and what the most important points of conflict were. I also asked their opinions on the importance of these oilfields to the national economy.

The questions I asked were relatively broad, but they could be adapted to the specific interview partner. I could ask follow-up questions or probes and either discard questions or ask new

questions on the spot, depending on the information and interpretation the interview partner shared. If we were short on time, I knew which questions to prioritise. Initially, my research design relied largely on the analysis of discourses and representations, which influenced how I thought about interviews in terms of gaining exposure to actors' representations of the oilfields and the mobilisation around them. Gradually, I focused more on the processes and interactions between actors and changed my questions accordingly. This change made it easier to adapt the interview guide to each interview, as I no longer needed to compare representations, but rather tried to obtain the details about what had occurred and the actors' understandings of why.

I left it up to the interview partners to decide when and where to hold the interviews. They mostly chose to meet at their offices during office hours and some chose to meet in cafés. The interviews were conducted in Spanish, which I speak fluently, and I did not rely on an interpreter. During the interviews, I practiced active listening and asked follow-up questions, although when I listened to the recorded interviews, I regretted many times not having asked more follow-up questions. After the first few interviews, I was left with the frustrating feeling that my questions were a bit too general but also that I still lacked sufficient knowledge of the case and context to know in which way I could sharpen and narrow the questions. General questions are not useless, however, as I not only learned much regarding the process and actors involved, but they also helped me gain an understanding of the context in which interview partners framed their experiences (Sæther, 2011). Fieldwork is a time of extreme learning, and my knowledge regarding case and context thankfully increased rapidly. I found that some weeks into the fieldwork I would know interview partners' references and could discuss and ask follow-up questions in more detail. Although I retained an outsider-ness, I gradually understood what the interview partners were implying and I knew about all the processes and events to which they referred.

I quickly realised the advantages of conducting interview-based fieldwork in addition to document analysis of news sources. Several of my perceptions of the processes surrounding Block 192, on which I based my interview guide, were incorrect. A concrete example of such a realisation was during an interview with a representative from Oxfam Peru, who had advised and collaborated with the indigenous federations in Block 192. From Peruvian media, I had comprehended that indigenous groups in the area mobilised and protested in favour of nationalising the oil production in Block 192 and for the public oil company Petroperú to assume production. I was interested in exploring whether this could be understood as drawing state presence to an area that had been

neglected by the state and increasing state accountability in the area, an idea that had also been explored in previous literature regarding oil production in the area (Bebbington & Scurrah, 2013). However, it turned out that the indigenous groups that had been protesting for public ownership were completely different indigenous organisations that formed part of the regional governor's base organisations, and that the nationalisation of oil production in Block 192 was the governor's political struggle. For the indigenous federations in Block 192, ownership is not the most important issue; their struggle is for socio-environmental remediation. This situation demonstrates how news items lack context and are mere snapshots. To gain a more complete picture, I needed to talk to people. Such realisations throughout fieldwork meant that I was constantly adjusting and changing research questions, interview questions and even research aims. Such constant readjustments are part of a flexible and emergent research design and were highly necessary to ensure research quality.

Another advantage of fieldwork was that I gained additional knowledge and insights by attending relevant events in Lima and Quito. I went to report and book launches, as well as roundtable discussions on adjacent issues, such as a possible new hydrocarbon law in Peru and the protection of the peoples in voluntary isolation in the Yasuní in Ecuador. During these talks, I took notes and treated them as data.

### *3.2.2.3. Coproduction of data*

Based on the above experiences, I find 'data collection' to be a problematic notion for several inter-related reasons. First, which data are 'collected' depends on an infinite number of factors, including access, timing and coincidences. My data 'collection' was not an exhaustive collection of the data that existed on the politics of oil extraction in Block 192 and Yasuní-ITT, nor could it ever hope to be, as the social world is open-ended and constantly evolving and is subject to myriad interpretations. Second, the qualitative researcher does not extract data from an external reality; data do not simply exist 'out there' to be found and collected; data are produced. In interview research, data are interactively co-produced with the interviewer and interview partner in the interview setting and are therefore intersubjective (Cloke et al., 2004). Which questions are asked, with which tone and with which wording will influence the 'data' the interview partner constructs when answering the question. Factors such as timing, time availability and interview setting impact the wording of questions and answers. For this reason, I call those that I have interviewed interview partners rather than interviewees. They are not research subjects I collected data from; they are

actors with agency and they are much more knowledgeable than me regarding the topic at hand, with their own interpretations of events.

The coproduction of data underscores the relational dynamic to social science research and how the researcher needs to be open 'to learning and change, the willingness to revise thinking in light of experience and a high tolerance for ambiguity, together with improvisational skills and an understanding of research design that makes room for their use' (Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2012, p. 74). The resulting analysis of data co-constructed in interviews is based on double hermeneutics, of interpreting others' interpretations of events (Thagaard, 2009). This is the third reason why I reject the notion of data 'collection'. Even the stage at which knowledge and insights are gained through interaction with the social world, in this case, through interviews, is part of the analytical process, and the analytical process is inescapably based on the researcher's interpretations of information and knowledge. This means that transparency about the analytical process achieved through reflexivity is highly important.

If recognising that the data produced from interviews are interview partners' interpretations and meanings, which are later interpreted by the researcher again, and if recognising that there can exist multiple interpretations of events, then an aim in this type of research should be exposure to a wide variety of meanings (Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2012). This aim has implications for ideas about sample size and saturation. Sample size is usually considered adequate when reaching a point of saturation; that is, when additional interviews yield little new information. The liminal position of a foreign researcher entails a phase of constant learning, and almost anything can be relevant and feed into their interpretations in some ways. I could have searched for information *ad infinitum*, without reaching saturation, as there are endless potential sources of information, including different persons, articles, news and opinion pieces. The interview partners helped me with the analysis by offering their analyses. I do not ask questions regarding the life-world experiences of a specific population, which I subsequently analyse; instead, I obtain their interpretations regarding a topic. Therefore, my sample selection is not based on specific criteria beyond their involvement in or knowledge of the socio-political processes regarding the oilfields.

This description of my fieldwork experience would be remiss without mentioning the temporal liminal existence of a foreign researcher. Sæther (2011) described fieldwork as learning while coping with multiple sources of insecurity. Yes, I designed and planned for emergence and flexibility, but sometimes, these words can hide feelings of uncertainty and inadequacy. I experi-



enced a subject position that was different from that which I normally embody as an employed research fellow at my home university in my home country. I felt very much like I was in a position of inferiority, 'approaching those who know and belong' (Sæther, 2011, p. 44). This subject position involved feelings of not knowing enough and of being a privileged foreign researcher with the means to travel, but perhaps not sufficient detailed knowledge of the field. It involved days of feeling unproductive, lonely or doubting whether my research would be able to contribute in any way. Such experiences, I believe, are important to mention in accounts of fieldwork to underscore that research on the social world is not as straightforward as it might appear in hindsight. The inferior subject position nonetheless constitutes a situation of knowledge production, as fieldwork is a period of rapid learning.

### 3.2.3 Data analysis

The next phase of the research project consisted of a desk-based analysis of the data. A research assistant and I transcribed all the interviews, and through NVivo, I coded the transcriptions in several cycles. Coding is a subjective endeavour, a systematisation stemming from my understanding of data through which I was able to link empirical data to ideas. The first-cycle coding of the interview data was based on initial analytical ideas stemming from points brought up in the interviews, analytical memos and the field diary and consisted of three overarching organisational codes: 'geography', 'extractivism' and 'development'. These codes were central concepts in the thesis and were also what I thought would be the main topics for each article of the thesis. These first codes functioned as 'bins' for sorting the data for further analysis (Maxwell, 2005). While coding passages from transcribed interviews, I also commented on them in analytical memos for each code and wrote summaries of these thoughts. This led to provisional ideas and analysis, such as the construction of the oilfields as spaces with different meanings ascribed to them, the interplay between relative distance and spatial imaginaries of the Amazon in the two countries, and how processes concerning the oilfields seemingly moved in different geographical directions (from the national to the local in Ecuador and from the local to the national in Peru). These are proto versions of the final analyses in the articles, which are much more specific.

While continuously exploring analytical ideas, I also attempted to relate these to relevant literature and theory, and I moved back and forth between data and theoretical literature several times, attempting to link the data to theories on spatial imaginaries (Watkins, 2015), contentious politics (Tilly & Tarrow, 2015) and relative and relational distance (Harvey, 2006) before realising

how state space could be a central concept to the analytical framework of two of the articles (Brenner, 2004; Brenner et al., 2003). After having settled on the topic of each article, I recoded the interview data and reread the coded newspaper data. I performed the rest of the analysis through extensive analytical memo-writing, relating the data to existing theory. The results are theory-informed inferences from the data, resulting in new interpretations of the case studies and subsequent theory development.

In this stage of the research, I also relied heavily on secondary information and literature to the extent that I would characterise it as an equally important data source to the news items and interviews. The analysis of Block 192 relies on statements from the Ombudsman's Office, NGO reports and UNDP Peru's independent technical study of former Block 1AB, in addition to peer-reviewed research articles on Block 192. The importance of secondary literature to my research is perhaps most apparent in the second article. Most of the questions I asked during the interviews in Ecuador were regarding processes and events that occurred after the Yasuní-ITT Initiative was cancelled. I obtained useful information for the third article of the thesis, but I realised upon reading existing research literature that my interpretation of the reasons for the initiative occurring in itself differed and that this would be worth pursuing further, with the help of published research literature. For the third article, I relied on secondary literature to discuss differences between the indigenous movements in Ecuador and Peru, an important point for my analysis, for which I could rely on pre-existing literature.

### **3.3 Ethical Considerations**

Research ethics concern both research values and more concrete ethical research criteria, namely informed consent. In this section, I first discuss my values and position as a foreign researcher in the field and explain how this has impacted my research. I then describe the choices I have made to ensure a high degree of ethical conduct throughout the research process and discuss how my research has complied with the ethical standards required by relevant institutions.

#### **3.3.1 Positionality**

First, it is important to state that this research project stems from a position of inherent privilege. This privilege is manifested on several levels. It is manifested in me being in a position to design a research project based on personal academic interests and pursue research topics that do not impact me personally, but which I nonetheless find interesting, regardless of distance, and being given the financial means to travel. This privileged position must be seen in relation to entrenched

inequalities in academic research, where researchers based in the Global North tend to be able to secure the means to research topics in the Global South, while it is seldom the other way around.

Relatedly, the second defining feature of my positionality is my outsider status. An insider researcher is similar to their informants and shares their outlook on the world. They would arguably, therefore, have a better understanding of what the informants are saying and provide better interpretations. For an outsider researcher, it might be more difficult to establish a rapport with informants and interpretations might be less reliable as they are not embedded in a wide spectrum of tacit knowledge. On the other hand, interview partners might more clearly articulate events and circumstances to an outsider researcher (Dowling, 2010). I found that I was able to establish a rapport through being appreciative, good-natured, open and curious and that the semi-structured interview situation did not require the intimacy stemming from shared experiences, as I took on the position of a student eager to learn, appreciating the opportunity to gain answers from knowledgeable and experienced interview partners. Moreover, my foreign identity was useful to lean into when I asked overarching and general questions.

My positionality likely influenced my data production to a far greater extent than I am able to dissect. To the extent that I am able to, I use the rest of this section to discuss the ways in which it has impacted my research project, which I have tried to hold to a high ethical standard. This thesis concerns severe issues for people. The topics of analysis concern real-life people and have real-life effects. My research does not solve anything. This certainty had consequences for my behaviour during the fieldwork. I did not feel comfortable asking for the involvement of vulnerable groups, such as the indigenous communities living inside Block 192. Their contribution to a research project, which in its nature would not be able to improve their situation or livelihood, would feel like an unjust arrangement. A natural follow-up question would be why I did not carry out a decolonial research project, that is, collaborative activist research in support of people's emancipation and self-determination (Howitt & Stevens, 2010). However, such a project felt outside the scope of what I would be able to do as a novice researcher without a proper network in place. I therefore chose not to directly engage in people's struggles. My analyses are at an arm's length, as my level of analysis is spatial dimensions of the socio-political processes regarding Block 192 and Yasuní-ITT, i.e. a more macro-level perspective.

The aim of this research project and the research questions require a processual, more overarching type of information and interpretation. This level of analysis has eschewed some com-

plicated power dynamics. The actors I have interviewed are mostly professionals whom I have, for the most part, interviewed during their working hours. While contributing with analyses of processes might seem like an inadequate outcome, that is what I have been able to do within the boundaries of a PhD research project. I got the impression that some of my interview partners had been approached by foreign researchers and students for research interviews several times before and perhaps felt as if the time they took to answer my questions would not materialise in knowledge that would be immediately useful to them (cf. Bornschlegl, 2018). I wholeheartedly understand this position. They took time out of their busy schedules to meet with me, answering questions that might have seemed overtly general or overarching. More applicable research might have proven more useful for local interview partners, but I did not feel as though I was in a position of sufficient expertise to provide this knowledge.

Despite having carried out research in Spanish-speaking countries, my research is mostly disseminated in English-speaking academic journals, as well as through academic conferences and seminars. Bull (2015) found that this is a common way of disseminating Norwegian social science research on Latin America, which has mostly engaged with debates originating from outside of the region. Although the concept of extractivism originates in Latin American social thought (Gudynas, 2010), I mostly engage with it by building on peer-reviewed academic literature, the majority of which is written in English, although I have also read much Spanish academic literature on extractivism. The way this research is disseminated has to do with two main factors: the first is academia's requirements to publish in peer-reviewed outlets; the second is that I, as a student researcher, do not have the network or experience to disseminate and communicate in more non-traditional ways. To make sure that both interview partners and others who facilitated my research knew that their contributions had been valuable and important, I always made sure to tell them so during the interviews, and I always left them my contact information. Now that I am nearing completion of the project, I am sending the thesis as a whole, in addition to a summary in Spanish, to all participants and other actors who facilitated my research stay, and I remain open to questions and feedback.

Positionality not only comes into play during data production and regarding field relations; it also manifests as analytical biases. Such biases can be hard for me, as a researcher, to discern, as they are tied to how I understand the world and how I believe things ought to be. To ensure research quality, research projects should include checks of the researcher's interpretation,

as discussed in section 3.4.1. Through critical reflexivity, however, I have recognised some analytical biases based on both my national and academic background. Although this research project attempts to develop new insights based on reinterpretations, I am unable to completely escape my inherent conceptualisations of central concepts, such as the state. I think I immediately took the state to be an important entity, even a coherent one, and it has become central to my analyses, even though I have later come to draw on critical state theories' understanding of the state as an arena for struggles of interests rather than a monolithic entity. Norwegian social science research on Latin America has previously been characterised as having an 'obsession with the state', as the social democratic state–society relations that we know mean that we tend to understand the state as something we are a part of and something which is a part of us (Bull, 2015, p. 248, author's translation; Ekern, 2015). Such conceptualisations form the 'horizons' within which I am able to formulate my research questions.

Second, I have approached my research with the lens of someone trained in human geography. I immediately recognised the politics of scale in the state–society interactions and processes I studied, and scale has become a central geographical concept through which I have made sense of the space-making processes involved in ensuring continued oil revenues. A political scientist or anthropologist would surely see different things and develop different analytical frameworks. This difference does not mean that my interpretations and findings should be discarded; it simply underscores how knowledge production is situated and provisional.

### **3.3.2 Informed consent**

Informed consent is a central ethical principle in social science research. The research participants must make an informed choice to become involved in a research project, which means that they have received sufficient information about the project and the potential consequences of participating. For every interview, I brought a written informed consent form in Spanish, which briefly described the research project and aims. I stated that participants could withdraw at any time, in which case all data originating from them would be erased immediately. The informed consent form also stated that participants could decide to remain anonymous if they wished. The participants were also asked to consent to the information being published and stored in a safe server. They were also informed that they had the right to access, correct and restrict their personal information. This form also provided the contact information of the Norwegian Centre for Research Data (NSD), where complaints could be addressed. This informed consent form complied with the

EU's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). The entirety of the research project, including interview questions, topics, storage of data and the informed consent form, has been approved by the NSD.

I also communicated this information orally. I started each interview by thanking the interview partner for taking the time to answer my questions. I told every participant what I was researching and why, and why their contribution would be valuable, and I emphasised that they could withdraw their participation at any time and remain anonymous. I also asked for permission to use an audio recorder during the interviews. Every participant declined to remain anonymous, and no one minded the interview being recorded. I ended every interview by asking whether they wanted to add something or had questions for me, providing the opportunity to clear up any uncertainties or misunderstandings. Some interview partners took the opportunity to enquire into why I was interested in the topics at hand, what my perceptions were and how my fieldwork had been going so far. Sometimes, it would lead to a more informal chat, ending with a good rapport.

I stored the interview transcripts on a password-protected secure server. I did not ask questions that would divulge personal information from the interview partners. Many of them had discussed similar topics publicly or answered my questions in their professional roles. It is highly unlikely that their participation would have had any negative consequences for them. Nevertheless, I have stored their data in a safe way, as I have kept the voice recordings that could be used to identify interview partners. GDPR defines this as personal information, and it must therefore be stored on a secure server – in this case my home institution's integrated cloud storage service.

### **3.4. Research Quality**

Qualitative research, particularly critical and constructivist research, does not claim objectivity, a central tenet to traditional notions of research quality. Concepts such as validity, reliability and transferability are originally linked to objectives of verifiable, accurate and objective research, which now seem anachronistic in human geography research, where an understanding of knowledge as situated, produced and (inter)subjective is more or less taken for granted. These terms have therefore been given new meanings based on transparency and credibility. In this section, I use the general notion of trustworthiness as a quality marker, as it encompasses transparency, reflexivity, credibility and adequacy of explanations (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). In the following section, I discuss how I have attempted to ensure a high degree of trustworthiness

through a rigorous research process. I also discuss how, instead of aiming to achieve generalisable and transferable findings, I have aimed for analytical generalisations.

### 3.4.1. Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness of research is established by ensuring rigour at every step of the research process (Bradshaw & Stratford, 2010). Two main tools for ensuring rigour and trustworthiness in qualitative research are transparency and critical reflexivity. In this chapter, I have been transparent regarding data production and the reasons underlying all my analytical choices, including the weaknesses of the research and potential blind spots and sources of misinterpretation. Such transparency is a way to let others assess the quality of a research project. As the foundation of the research is the researcher's interpretation, the validity of the study is enhanced through a high degree of reflexivity. Reflexivity has been defined as the examination of your own situation 'as if it were something you were studying' (Dowling, 2010, p. 31), or the interpretation of your own interpretations. A strong awareness of one's own role in the construction of knowledge is important, as the researcher has a monopoly on the interpretation of data (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). For this reason, I have discussed my positionality and how it has influenced my approach to data production and analysis and my relations in the field.

Trustworthiness is reached through demonstrating that findings and conclusions are credible, i.e. convincing, sensible, well-founded and warranted (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). Proving trustworthiness entails demonstrating the suitability of methods and theoretical frameworks and presenting convincing interpretations of phenomena in the social world that are well founded in the empirical material. In short, credible research is able to demonstrate an 'adequacy of explanation and analysis', i.e. 'explanatory coherence of the argument' (Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2012, p. 108). This coherence arises from (1) the consistency of evidence from different sources, (2) the ways in which conflicting interpretations have been engaged and (3) the logics with which the argument has been developed (Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2012). The first point can be reached through the triangulation of information gathered from different sources or by employing different research methods and ensuring exposure to different meanings and interpretations of phenomena of the social world. I have utilised three different types of information gathering for this research project: document analyses of newspaper articles, interviews with relevant actors and an analysis of a wide range of secondary information and literature. The different data have been used to develop and answer research questions, and I have attempted to interpret and understand data

from different sources within a coherent whole. The second and third points have been achieved through the abductive process of making sense of a research puzzle, which entails engaging conflicting interpretations and constantly moving back and forth between theory and data to finally provide the most convincing interpretation of events.

Trustworthiness is also enhanced through different 'checking procedures' throughout the research process (Bradshaw & Stratford, 2010, p. 77). Such checks include the abovementioned utilisation of different sources in the analysis and checking preliminary conclusions against others' research. They also include attempting different theoretical explanations to verify the adequacy of the researcher's explanations. Other checks on the researcher's interpretations include presenting and discussing them with supervisors and colleagues and receiving peer reviews and other types of feedback from relevant research communities (Bradshaw & Stratford, 2010; Thagaard, 2009). The findings presented in the research articles in this thesis have gone through several such checks. All of the findings have been discussed multiple times with supervisors, with subsequent adjustments. I also presented them to colleagues and received feedback and suggestions for changes. The third article was also presented at an international conference; however, the other articles could not, as most conferences were postponed due to the Covid-19 pandemic. My explanations and interpretations have been challenged in journals' peer-review processes. Based on the reviewers' comments, I have altered and adapted my analytical frameworks and conclusions, and their feedback has required me to engage with conflicting interpretations and forced me to account for the logics with which my arguments have been developed.

The weakest point of my checking procedures has been member checking: checking my interpretations with the participant community (Bradshaw & Stratford, 2010; Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2012). Although my interviews functioned as a member checking on my preliminary interpretations based on the analysed news items, I have not stayed in touch with my interview partners or continued to engage with them in a way that I probably should have. This has to do with me carrying out one longer fieldwork instead of several shorter ones. I had planned and secured funding for a shorter follow-up fieldwork to present my preliminary findings, obtain feedback and ask follow-up questions, but the pandemic made this impossible. I could nonetheless have attempted to get in touch with informants through email and perhaps video calls, something which I was hesitant to do. This hesitancy is related to my positionality and personality. I did not wish to be a burden and take up more of interview partners' time. As discussed above, I will present them



with my final work, but I have, as mentioned, not felt as if I have the insider status or the experience to develop a truly participatory research project.

### 3.4.2 Analytical generalisations

Ensuring a high degree of research quality also entails providing insights and findings that are relevant beyond the specific case study to contribute to a cumulative body of research. While variable-based case studies are typically designed to be ‘one manifestation of a broader phenomenon’ (Baxter, 2010, p. 86) and chosen for their ability to say something about a ‘larger class of (similar) units’ (Gerring, 2004, p. 342), this process-based case study research design is not designed for generalisability, and the cases have not been chosen with the idea of being representative of a larger population. I have been very careful with any statements that try to generalise from these cases’ trajectories. Instead, I attempt theoretical or analytical generalisations by ‘creating useful theory that is neither too abstract nor too case-specific’ (Baxter, 2010, p. 94). Generalisation therefore occurs through developing theoretical concepts that are used to ‘enable a more general perspective’ (Halkier, 2011, p. 787).

My research aim and first research question are particular and embedded in context, but as is apparent from the second research question, I also think they are able to say something general about changing geographies of oil dependency, as they shed light on certain tendencies that could form the basis for further research in different contexts. These tendencies are further discussed in Chapter Five. The research project develops analytical generalisations in two ways: through developing transferable theoretical insights and through developing analytical frameworks that shed light on social phenomena in new ways, which can also be transferred and further developed in other research areas. Examples of the former are an expansion of the extractivism concept to understand it as multi-scalar and, more concretely, to develop theory on a local and Janus-faced form of extractivism. One example of the latter is how the conditioned moratorium attempt in the Yasuní can be understood as a state spatial strategy to ensure continued revenues from oil in the face of shifting struggles of interests within the Ecuadorian state. Another example is how analytical frameworks based on state space can explain the spatiality of resource mobilisation. Therefore, my findings can contribute to a broadened applicability of analytical concepts, such as state space and state spatial strategy, as explanatory frameworks. On a more general level, this research also discusses how current geographies of oil are a combination of old and new – a proposition that can be further explored in future research. What my findings do *not* do, however, is say something

general about contentious oil politics in Ecuador and Peru based on these two cases; this would have required a different research design.

This chapter has provided transparency and critical reflexivity regarding the research project. I have elaborated on my analytical choices and reasons for the research design and have discussed the pros and cons of my research methods. In summary, while my research necessarily has blind spots and provides interpretations that can be objected against, it nonetheless constitutes theoretically informed explanations for social phenomena, which can be built on for, *inter alia*, further critical resource geography research, in the cumulative way that research works.

## 4. Summary of Articles

The space-making processes involved in ensuring continued oil revenues in Ecuador and Peru are examined in the three articles constituting Part Two of this thesis. This chapter provides both a schematic overview of the three articles and a summary of each. The research project has involved both a within-case analysis of each case (Articles 1 and 2) and an across-case comparison of the two cases (Article 3). All three analyses have resulted in the identification of changing spaces of political interaction arising from the imperative to ensure continued revenues from oil in Ecuador and Peru in the case of Yasuní-ITT and Block 192 (RQ1). Nonetheless, they utilise different analytical approaches and engage with different theoretical debates, as outlined below.

Table 3: Overview of Articles

Title of Article and Journal	Empirical Focus	Knowledge Gaps/Framing	Theoretical Approach	Main Arguments
<p><b>1: The Janus Face of Local Extractivism</b></p> <p>Published in <i>The Extractive Industries and Society</i>, June 2021.</p> <p><a href="https://doi.org/10.1016/j.exis.2021.100903">https://doi.org/10.1016/j.exis.2021.100903</a></p>	<p>The cycles of protests and occupations of oil installations by local actors in Block 192, and the Peruvian government's response.</p>	<p>Expanding extractivism as a concept to also encompass the local scale and examine how it generates conditioned spaces for negotiations between local communities and the state.</p>	<p>The extractive imperative and the teleological primacy of continued extraction.</p>	<p>The extractive imperative provides local actors with disruptive power, resulting in a dynamic of permanent negotiation between the state and local population, and a local dependency on oil as a bargaining chip.</p>
<p><b>2. Leaving Oil in the Ground: Ecuador's Yasuní-ITT Initiative and Spatial Strategies for Supply-Side Climate Solutions</b></p> <p>Submitted to <i>Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space</i>, August 31, 2021. Under review.</p>	<p>The Ecuadorian Yasuní-ITT Initiative to leave the oil in the ground for international compensation.</p>	<p>How the internationalisation of the Yasuní oil should be considered a state spatial strategy to ensure continued revenues from oil in the face of the changing conflicts of interests within the state, rather than a long-shot paradoxical development.</p>	<p>Strategic-relational state space understanding the state as an arena for struggles of interests with space-making outcomes.</p>	<p>Oil moratorium attempts conditioned upon compensation could be understood as a continuation of petrodependency, albeit reconceptualised and reproduced through rescaling.</p>
<p><b>3: Mapping Terrains of Struggle: State Space and the Spatiality of Oil Mobilisation in Ecuador and Peru</b></p> <p>Revised and resubmitted to <i>Geoforum</i>, July 10, 2021<sup>3</sup>. Under review.</p>	<p>The different spatialities of mobilising strategies over oil production in Block 192 and Yasuní-ITT.</p>	<p>Geographies of contention beyond social movement actors' identities and relation to space.</p>	<p>State spatial strategies to ensure accumulation, and how they shape the 'terrain of struggle' over oil.</p>	<p>Historical state spatial strategies to ensure accumulation, mobilisation over the consequences of these, and the way in which the extractive project in question fits into a hegemonic accumulation strategy shape mobilisation over oil.</p>

<sup>3</sup> The version included in the thesis is a modified version of the text under review. I have edited and tightened the theoretical framework, analysis and conclusion, and fixed some minor formatting inaccuracies.

## Article 1: The Janus Face of Local Extractivism

A clear tendency in research on Latin American extractivism is to understand it as an economic model promoted by national governments, encountering resistance and opposition at the local scale. This article argues for a more nuanced understanding of the local scale, taking into account the conflictual relationship the local population may have with extractive activities, which is not always outright resistance, but one of uneasy coexistence. This argument is based on an exploration of the dynamics between the state and local communities in Block 192. The article relies on data from all news articles discussing Block 192 between 2015 and mid-2018 from the online archives of the two largest dailies in Peru (487 items) and semi-structured interviews with 23 key actors in Lima and Iquitos, Peru, in the autumn of 2018. Additional information has been collected from peer-reviewed research articles regarding Block 192 and statements from the Ombudsman's Office, NGO reports and UNDP Peru's independent technical study of Block 192.

The outcomes of the extractive imperative have tended to be conceptualised as local resistance and a criminalisation of protests by the state, but in this case, the extractive imperative has also led to a subnational political space that can be strategically utilised by communities adjacent to extractive industries to negotiate with the government regarding both conditions for extraction and government services. The indigenous federations representing the local population living in Block 192 set forth claims towards both the operating company and the national state regarding the socio-environmental remediation of local contamination from oil activity and the provision of public services in the area. When these claims are not met, they threaten to occupy parts of the oil infrastructure, shutting down oil production. Top government officials are dispatched to the area to negotiate with local indigenous federations when this occurs, implying that without oil production, there would be no base for negotiation. Local actors have some leverage, as in a neoliberal political economy context, continued and expanded extraction is dependent on international investments. It is not in the Peruvian state's interest to have an oilfield marked by repeated socio-environmental conflicts and shutdowns of production by the local population. For this reason, the extractive imperative can paradoxically result in opportunities for demanding and achieving socio-environmental improvements.

This article thus calls for a broadened analytical focus on conditioned spaces for cross-scalar negotiation as an outcome of the extractive imperative and more diversified representations of the local scale beyond sites of resistance. The strategic usage of extractive activity as local com-

munities' sole bargaining chip towards the government has created a local dependence on oil, which can be understood as Janus-faced local extractivism. The very activity that has had detrimental effects on local communities' livelihoods for decades is also their only hope for achieving public goods, welfare and income-generating opportunities. Extractivism as a concept, therefore, needs to be expanded geographically to make it applicable to local forms of dependence on extractive activities, both concretely for local livelihoods and as the local population's sole bargaining chip to demand any sort of services from the government. The state's presence in the area is tied to continued oil production, and this is what gives local communities disruptive power. Therefore, the aim of local communities is to continue production, albeit under improved conditions. Rather than resistance or rejection, the conflict between the state and the local populations in Block 192 constitutes a conditioned coexistence, resulting in a state of permanent negotiation. This state ensures a fragile continuation of oil production and the implementation of environmental remediation measures and government services. The local room for manoeuvre created by the cross-scalar imperative for continued extraction is a type of dynamic underemphasised in previous literature.

## **Article 2: Leaving Oil in the Ground: Ecuador's Yasuní-ITT Initiative and Spatial Strategies for Supply-Side Climate Solutions**

This article analyses Ecuador's Yasuní-ITT Initiative from a GPE and strategic-relational state space perspective to gain theoretical insights on changing geographies of oil dependency. The analysis is based on readily available factual information regarding processes, actors and events, and a critical reading of assumptions and arguments regarding the reasons for the initiative's failure in academic literature. The article includes points raised in the nine semi-structured interviews carried out in Quito, Ecuador, in November and December 2018. Theory-informed inference from the abovementioned information has resulted in new interpretations of the case study and subsequent theory development.

Most research regarding the Yasuní-ITT Initiative has embraced an 'against all odds' narrative, highlighting how a developmentalist petro-state was willing to abstain from extracting its largest oil reserves, yet encountering a range of national and international obstacles. This article understands the state as an arena in which different political forces contend with each other for control. Political economic resource governance and its space-making processes can therefore be understood as outcomes of struggles and complex negotiation processes within the state. Former Ecuadorian President Rafael Correa's first government constituted a partial and temporal envi-

ronmentalisation of the petro-state, with environmental interests incorporated into the state apparatus yet coexisting with deep-seated oil interests. This resulted in a state partially welcoming the idea of non-extraction, but only in a manner that would *not* compromise the petro-state's reliance on continued oil revenues. The solution was found in a specific intervention with spatial dimensions: the state's accumulation strategy was reconceptualised and reproduced through rescaling. This spatial strategy consisted of the internationalisation of the proposal to leave the oil in the ground and to make the oil in the ITT field a global resource. The Yasuní-ITT Initiative can therefore be understood as a purposeful political intervention resulting from a changing field of social relations within the state.

This rescaling demonstrates how changing geographies of state intervention into socioeconomic processes could ensure continued income from oil, either in the form of compensation, or by legitimising their continued existence as a petro-state and for business as usual if the attempt failed. This spatial strategy implies an expansion of the repertoires of action available for petro-states to profit from oil in new ways and sustain their accumulation strategies.

The analysis presented in this article also contributes to the literature on supply cuts for fossil fuels, which are increasingly discussed as a necessary part of the policy mix to reach international emission reduction targets. Previous literature assumes that public pressure on governments is required to instigate such a major political shift. This analysis of the Yasuní-ITT Initiative demonstrates how, first, such policy innovations can indeed stem from conflicts of interests *within* the state and, second, how such policies represent a continuation of petro-dependency, rather than a disruption of it.

### **Article 3: Mapping Terrains of Struggle: State Space and the Spatiality of Oil Mobilisation in Ecuador and Peru**

This article examines how the spatiality of mobilising strategies over contentious oil projects is shaped by state spatial strategies. This analysis departs from an empirical observation regarding the differences in the spatiality of mobilising strategies regarding Yasuní-ITT in Ecuador and Block 192, where the former has been national, removed from its spatial embeddedness and regarding oil extraction itself, while the latter has been local, linked to territory and regarding the terms and conditions of extraction. Rather than considering the differences in the spatiality of mobilisation as simply a question of different national contexts, this cross-border comparison functions as a deconstruction and reassessment of context, with the aim of uncovering central explanatory factors

for the spatial differences of mobilisation. The analysis is based on secondary sources and literature, both peer-reviewed and a large sample of news items from the online archives of the two largest dailies of both countries, and twenty-three research interviews with key actors in Peru and nine research interviews with key actors in Ecuador in the autumn of 2018.

Research on geographies of contention largely focuses on social movement actors' identities and their relation to space, which are unquestionably fundamental to action. To analyse the spatiality of mobilising strategies, however, this article draws on approaches from critical state theory. Taking a political economy approach, the study assumes that ensuring economic growth is a core function of the state and that this constitutes an underlying driver for state spatial strategies, the indirect socio-spatial effect of government policies. According to Brenner et al. (2003), socio-political actors' actions are conditioned upon already 'established, emerging or potential state spaces' (p. 10), and evolving state space therefore shapes the 'terrain of socio-political struggle' (Brenner et al., 2003, p. 11). This argument suggests that state space is an important dimension of political opportunities for mobilising. Moving iteratively back and forth between data and different analytical approaches, the article finds that three processes in particular have shaped the different political spaces for mobilising over oil in the Yasuní-ITT and Block 192: Historical state spatial strategies to ensure the accumulation and mobilisation over the consequences of these, and the way in which the extractive project in question fits into a hegemonic accumulation strategy.

The Amazon areas of both countries have been subject to historical space-making processes representing them as peripheral and distant sites for extractive accumulation. The indigenous and environmental movements in Ecuador have, through decades of mobilising experience, enabled a national positioning of the detrimental socio-environmental consequences of oil extraction in the Amazon. In Peru, a more dispersed indigenous movement has not been able to push a broad agenda onto the national political arena. General attention to oil extraction in the Amazon is also higher in Ecuador due to the relative economic importance of the oil industry, which takes place in the Amazon.

If the state accumulation strategy has a hegemonic position and is accepted by the population through material concessions and a 'rentist compromise', where the state, through its management of natural resources, is seen as able to ensure development, then there is still room for protest over the management and conditions of resource extraction. The hegemonic position of the state accumulation strategy can explain the local and regional protests in Peru regarding the



management of oil production in Block 192, socio-environmental remediation, and the terms and conditions for continued extraction. Ending oil production in the oilfield is not a desired outcome for any party. In the particular case of Yasuní-ITT, there was a discursive de-coupling of the oilfield from the state accumulation strategy through the government-led Yasuní-ITT Initiative of leaving the oil in the ground for international compensation. Through this initiative, the Yasuní has been represented as unique at a planetary scale and as a space to be protected. When the initiative was cancelled, mobilisation could therefore be regarding non-extraction rather than the terms and conditions of production. Mobilisation occurred nationally, involving people who were not directly affected and did not have a local origin.

Connections between state spatial strategies to ensure economic growth and the spatiality of mobilising strategies could probably be expressed through different mechanisms than those established here, which are case specific. This article nonetheless makes the case for a cross-fertilisation of critical state theory with contentious politics studies and connects two main strands of literature on contentious resource extraction in Latin America: local-scale resistance and states' extractivism.



## 5. Conclusion

This thesis has explored the consequences of oil extraction beyond local contamination and global climate change, namely space-making processes involved in ensuring continued revenues from oil. To do so, it conceptualises extractivism as an accumulation strategy central to the state, and an underlying driver for state spatial strategies, which can be defined as purposeful political interventions to reconcile conflicts over economic growth, social justice and environmental protection (Kristoffersen & Young, 2010). Through within-case analyses and across-case comparisons, this thesis has examined the socio-political processes surrounding contentious oilfields Block 192 in Peru and Yasuní-ITT in Ecuador as geographical processes, examining underlying processes and their space-making outcomes (Bridge et al., 2013). The findings showed that extractivist state spatial strategies result in new and changing spaces of political interaction and negotiation over oil in both a producer state such as Ecuador and a facilitator state for private extractive activity such as Peru.

As stated in the introduction, this study contributes to ongoing debates on the nature of Latin American extractivism, a concept that has evolved from defining an economic activity based on appropriation and export of raw materials (Acosta, 2013; Gudynas, 2010), to an imperative wherein the need for continued resource extraction has become a goal in and of itself, the defining element for policy and state strategies (Arsel et al., 2016). The contributions of this thesis go beyond the most common foci of research on the consequences of extractivism: local resistance, conflict and displacement, and states' strategies, policy reform and rhetoric to ensure increased extraction. The thesis thus broadens the scope of research on extractivism in two important ways: (1) it finds that the extractive imperative conditions spaces for political interaction and negotiation between scales and (2) it finds that extractivism as a concept should be expanded to include strategies for ensuring continued benefits from oil at different geographical scales. These findings will be expanded upon in sections 5.1 and 5.2. The remainder of this concluding chapter will first elaborate on the key findings of the thesis, addressing the two research questions presented in the introduction in turn, and will then discuss the larger relevance of the findings, reflecting on how they can inform our thinking on the future of oil. What will be the consequence of the extractive imperative in an international context of declining demand? Will this result in the green paradox of accelerated extraction? Or will we see more state spatial strategies to make non-extraction profitable?

These questions will be discussed, along with suggestions for potential fruitful areas for further research.

## **5.1. Spaces of Political Interaction**

The first research question guiding this thesis has been regarding the spaces of political interaction that arise from the imperative to ensure continued revenues from oil in Ecuador and Peru in the case of Yasuní-ITT and Block 192. The articles of the thesis analyse the processes of interaction and negotiation over oil between scales and between state and non-state actors in institutional spaces and spaces of contestation. These analyses found that the extractive imperative conditions spaces for political interaction and negotiation between scales. Extractivist state spatial strategy is also theorised as a contributing factor to the spatiality of mobilising strategies over oil, that is, shaping spaces of contention.

### **5.1.1. Spaces of cross-scalar negotiation**

As discussed in Articles 1 and 2, extractivist state spatial strategies have resulted in new and changing spaces of political interaction and negotiation over oil in Ecuador and Peru. A main feature of these spaces for negotiation is that they occur between scales. The first article of the thesis describes a permanent space of negotiation between representatives from local indigenous communities in Block 192 in Peru and the Peruvian national government. Local actors utilise their ability to impact oil production in their territories through direct action to demand government services, local royalties and socio-environmental services. When they threaten to occupy, or occupy, parts of the oil infrastructure, high-level government officials have repeatedly offered dialogue and negotiation. State action is based on a fear of loss of oil revenues, and without oil production in their territories, the indigenous federations would lose their bargaining chip. This dynamic has resulted in a local form of extractivism, which I describe as Janus-faced, as the local population depends on the very accumulation strategy that has had detrimental socio-environmental and health impacts on their communities for five decades to remediate these same impacts. Given this current context, dwindling reserves and uncertainty regarding future production is thus a source of insecurity for local actors, as it entails a potential loss of bargaining power.

Another example of a space for cross-scalar negotiation resulting from the state's fear of loss of oil revenues is the Yasuní-ITT Initiative to leave the oil in the ground for international compensation, which is the topic of the second article. This attempted oil moratorium is understood as a state spatial strategy to ensure continued revenues from oil in the face of shifting strug-

gles of interests within the state after it, for a brief period, was open to environmental interests, while still remaining heavily dependent on oil revenues. To ensure continued revenues from oil despite this new convergence of interests, an internationalisation of the oil in the Yasuní-ITT field and a conditioned moratorium attempt based on international financial compensation was attempted. This purposeful rescaling of the space for political interaction over oil to now encompass negotiations between the national and the international scale, with no space for civil society or local actors, therefore served as a tool for an oil-dependent state in the face of increased pressures from environmental interests within the state.

### 5.1.2. Spaces for mobilising

In Article 3, the thesis shifts its analytical lens towards another type of space of political interaction that arises as a result of the imperative to ensure continued revenues from oil: spaces of contention. The article lays out how the spatiality of mobilising strategies can be explained by *inter alia* historical state spatial strategies to ensure accumulation, mobilisation over the consequences of these and the way in which the extractive project in question fits into a hegemonic accumulation strategy. In Peru, where development as economic growth through resource export has until recently been hegemonic, contention over oil has been localised and regarding concrete conditions for oil extraction in a particular space, extraction in itself is not a major subject of national mobilisation. Actors act *from* space, and their grievances are framed as local and particular. In Ecuador, the Yasuní-ITT Initiative entailed a discursive de-coupling of the oilfield from the state accumulation strategy, as the oil in the ITT field was represented as an internationalised resource and thus global 'reserve' if it remained un-extracted. After the cancellation of the initiative, mobilisation could therefore be over non-extraction rather than the terms and conditions of production.

## 5.2. Changing Geographies of Oil Dependency

The second research question addresses the changing geographies of oil dependency resulting from spaces of political interaction, as summed up above. These changes to the geographies of oil dependency stem not only from (i) state strategies to ensure continued revenues from oil and (ii) subsequent space-making consequences of the extractive imperative, but also from (iii) the different ways in which oil is constituted as a resource. These changing geographies imply that extractivism should be understood as a cross-scalar phenomenon.

### 5.2.1. Oil as a resource in new and changing ways

Resources are not; they become (Zimmermann, 1951). Resources are constructed in relation to social, economic and political configurations (Koch & Perreault, 2018). These configurations are changing at a particularly rapid pace in the case of fossil fuels due to international climate policy attempting to shift our reliance on fossil fuels and an international political economy context of impending declining demand due to a decarbonisation of society. These processes make the future of oil reserves uncertain and a necessary object of further scholarly enquiry.

The findings of this thesis highlight the need to expand on this notion to understand oil as a resource beyond its combustibility and immediate use value. Two geographical processes that have changed and reinforced oil as a resource have been examined here. Article 2 argues that in the case of the Yasuní-ITT Initiative to leave the oil in the ground for international compensation, the Ecuadorian state attempted to convert un-extracted oil into a resource through rescaling, reconceptualising the oil as a global resource as it would benefit the world if left untapped. Ecuador has been characterised as a 'first-mover' internationally to develop a supply-side climate policy measure (Carter & McKenzie, 2020). Studying the Yasuní-ITT Initiative as a geographical process might therefore be useful to further understanding how the extractive imperative will play out in an international political economy context of declining demand, or in a context where supply-side measures become a more established part of the policy mix to reach international carbon emission reduction targets. Will recasting oil as a resource while remaining in the ground become a more prominent state strategy for states with oil extraction as a main accumulation strategy moving forward?

The second process that has recast oil as a resource examined in this thesis occurs at the local scale and is examined in Article 1. The usage of oil production as a bargaining chip by local actors in Block 192 can be understood as the strategic utilisation of oil to demand state services and remediation, i.e. an attempted bottom-up reworking of state spatial strategies, to become a targeted area of state intervention, based on being a site for extraction. Through the utilisation of the state's extractive imperative to demand state services, oil is converted into a political resource. This dynamic nonetheless creates local dependence on oil as a political resource, which means that the declining demand and profitability of oil extraction is a highly worrisome scenario for actors at all scales. This local reliance on oil as a resource beyond its economic contribution is another factor that could become increasingly important to study in a changing international context, as it

demonstrates that the local scale has a role in reinforcing extractivism and shaping political geographies of extraction.

### 5.2.2. The increasingly cross-scalar nature of extractivism

While these examples of resource-making practices are particular for this study, they bring into focus how the use value of oil is broadened at different scales by both state and non-state actors. This broadening of the use value reinforces a fundamental dependency on oil, whether it be as a foundation for local-scale bargaining power, as a national-scale revenue source or as a conditioned supply-side climate solution at the international scale. Extractivism could therefore benefit from a conceptual expansion to include strategies for ensuring continued benefits from oil, also in current contexts of declining demand and international discussions of oil moratoriums as supply-side climate policies. These new ways of using oil as a resource change the geographies of oil dependency. Extractivism is typically understood as the state's accumulation strategy shaped by its position as a resource exporter in the international political economy, meeting resistance at the local scale. This scalar portrayal of extractivism is too simplistic. Extractivism is multi-scalar and multi-faceted. Not only the international political economy but also the sub-national plays a key role in re-shaping political geographies of extraction. As extractivism's logics, practices and 'there is no alternative to oil' ideology is (re)shaped at different scales, it should thus be considered a relational and cross-scalar phenomenon.

### 5.3. Reflections on Changing Geographies of Oil Dependency and Avenues for Further Research

The remainder of this chapter reflects on the implications of these reconceptualisations of the extractive imperative and the changing geographies of oil dependency, as sketched out above. I consider how the conclusions of this study open areas for further research and discuss their implications in the context of international efforts to combat the climate crisis.

The malleability of oil as a resource and multi-scalar extractivism are different sorts of findings from prior research on extractivism, which tends to use the extractivism concept to characterise the politics of the state based on international capital's national expansion, where the local scale is hit with the negative consequences of resource extraction. A human geography lens on extractivism, with its emphasis on relational space-making and the politics of scale, has rendered apparent scaled processes and processes of political interaction, negotiation and strategic utilisation of oil as a resource between scales, i.e. demonstrating the space-making outcomes of extractiv-

ism. The sub-field of critical resource geography in particular, with its emphasis on the contextual constructions of resources and situational analyses of resource making, has been useful for conceptualising the broadened utilisation of oil as a resource.

However, this study of Block 192 and Yasuní-ITT should only be understood as a first attempt at outlining new and changing geographies of resource dependency, and it has some limitations. The analyses could have been stronger and the findings more convincing if I had spent more time in the field, had a larger data sample and a research design involving a larger degree of participation and feedback from research participants. Another clear limitation is the study's empirical foundation, which consists of two highly specific and particular cases with well-known negotiations between scales.

Nonetheless, I hope that this research project can function as a call for further studies on a wider range of outcomes of extractivism. Analyses of space-making processes involved in ensuring revenues from oil in contexts other than the specific ones studied here are needed to both consolidate and corroborate this thesis' theoretical contributions and gain a fuller understanding of the implications for changing geographies of oil dependency. It is therefore necessary to conduct in-depth case studies of strategies across scales to ensure the continuance of oil as a source of income and to examine the room for manoeuvre created by the teleological primacy of extractivism beyond emblematic cases. Comparative case studies and larger-N synthesised studies across sites, scales and the political spectrum are also required.

### **5.3.1. Beyond Oil in the Global South**

Further studies should include cases of other types of resource extraction and energy production beyond oil. I think the way in which oil as a resource has been changed through rescaling is specific to resources where there seems to be a potential for international compensation, i.e. something that would have benefits remaining unextracted, as is the case for fossil fuels. The state-society relations encompassed in the dynamics I characterise as local extractivism, on the other hand, could probably also be applied to local dependencies stemming from strategic utilisations of renewable resources, such as wind and solar, especially when these gain prominence in states' accumulation strategies. Most research on wind projects, in particular, is currently regarding new and proposed projects and resistance to these (e.g. Avila-Calero, 2017; Normann, 2021; Rygg, 2012). In areas with more mature wind and solar farms, it would be interesting to find out whether similar



states of permanent negotiations and conflictual coexistence could be detected and analysed, and if the state is leveraged from below through energy production.

To gain a fuller picture of the changing geographies of oil dependency and the space-making consequences of the extractive imperative, research on oil dependency in a Global North context is also necessary. The extractivist state spatial strategies identified in this thesis are shaped by conditions that are more pronounced in the Global South context. Janus-faced local extractivism arises in areas neglected by the state. In an undiversified, export-led economy, the potential for a green paradox is seemingly larger. Moreover, it would be hard to imagine a Global North country demanding compensation for leaving its oil in the ground and legitimate oil extraction in vulnerable areas by stating that ‘the world has failed us’. Ecuador’s state spatial strategy must be understood as a relational response founded upon its status as a Global South developing country.

This does not mean that the extractive imperative does not exist in the Global North. It is nonetheless framed in different ways, with typical statements related to how their oil is ‘cleaner’ and more well-managed than oil in many other areas, and therefore that it would be more beneficial to continue extraction in well-managed fields with less socio-environmental impact. Research on the consequences of the extractive imperative could be expanded by first looking into whether differences in the discursive framing of continued oil extraction in a Global South and a Global North context imply that the extractive imperative has different space-making outcomes and if it leads to other spaces of political interaction and negotiation across scales. This includes differences in mobilising over oil production. If an accumulation strategy based on oil production is to a lesser extent legitimised through its direct connections to poverty alleviation and economic growth, political opportunities to mobilise against oil production in itself, not just the conditions of production, may be larger.

### **5.3.2. A context of declining demand?**

At the time of writing this conclusion, the United Nations’ Framework Convention on Climate Change’s 26<sup>th</sup> Conference of the Parties in Glasgow (COP26) had just come to a close. The outcomes of COP26 have the potential to impact the geographies of oil dependency in different ways. Twenty-four countries and a group of leading car manufacturers signed an agreement to sell only zero-emission vehicles by 2040 or earlier, pointing towards the declining demand for oil (gov.uk, n.d.). Thirty countries and financial institutions also committed to halting all financing of fossil fuel development overseas by the end of next year and instead diverting it to green energy

(ukcop26, 2021b). Therefore, future investments in oil production in countries such as Ecuador and Peru are not guaranteed. Additionally, over a hundred countries committed to ending deforestation by 2030 (ukcop26, 2021a). New ground rules for carbon markets were also established, which along with pledges to reach net-zero emissions by 140 countries will mean that carbon credits through schemes protecting forests could become an important export article for rainforest countries (Spring & Abnett, 2021). In addition to these concrete agreements, there is a more general shift towards renewable energy sources, an electrification of mobility and a decarbonisation of society for countries to reach their carbon emission reduction targets, and supply-side measures are increasingly discussed as viable policies for carbon emission reductions (Carter & McKenzie, 2020; Gaulin & Le Billon, 2020).

How will these developments impact oil extraction in areas such as the Amazon? If deforestation is to be avoided and preserved forest becomes a profitable resource through carbon quotas, will it follow that untapped oil in these areas will become so as well? Or will surface-level ecosystem services become a new revenue-generating 'resource'? These questions reflect how the temporal and long-term prospects of oil are insecure. If oil becomes an insecure investment in the medium-term, will we see new spatial strategies to make non-extraction profitable in the short-term? While this thesis is unable to provide answers to this range of pertinent questions, its findings firstly suggest that the teleological primacy of continued and amplified extraction continues to be central to state spatial strategies, which in an international context of declining demand will give rise to the green paradox and a rapid expansion of the extractive frontier in oil dependent countries wary of stranded assets, and secondly point towards the importance of employing a temporal perspective alongside a spatial perspective on oil.

Another focus of this thesis is the impact of shifting state spatial strategies to ensure accumulation of the spatiality of mobilising. What does this entail for future mobilisation over resources? Will international divestment and demand destruction lead to local mobilising to ensure continued revenues from oil in areas that experience the 'misery of missing alternatives' and Janus-faced local extractivism? If carbon quotas, forest preservation and un-extracted oil become resources of the near future, they will potentially comprise an accumulation strategy that would enjoy a higher degree of legitimation both nationally and internationally, due to its contribution to both national economic growth and international carbon emission reductions. Such an accumulation strategy would surely result in uneven and combined development (Smith, 2008), where old

inequalities would be carried over to new markets. If such an accumulation strategy nevertheless becomes hegemonic, then the findings from this thesis suggest that mobilisation will be over the conditions of carbon capturing and maintaining a larger piece of the revenues locally, rather than over the accumulation strategy in itself.

The recent developments discussed here demonstrate how the geographies of oil dependency are undergoing rapid changes. Acknowledging that extractivism has multi-scalar expressions implies that the consequences of dependency on oil as a resource in various ways in a context of declining demand internationally should be further studied at different geographical scales. Declining demand is not just a global issue; it is a national, regional and local issue. How will responses at these different scales play out? How will they, in turn, influence strategies across scales? Both the strategies of oil-dependent national governments to safeguard continued oil revenues and local strategies to ensure local benefits from oil constitute new areas of research on the political geographies of oil. What it will entail to continue to rely on oil revenues and how this will play out spatially are topics that will only gain increased salience in the coming years, especially in the context of cross-scalar energy transitions that the Paris Agreement calls for.



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# Part II



## Article 1: The Janus Face of Local Extractivism.

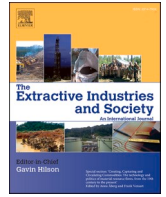
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Original article

## The Janus face of local extractivism

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### ABSTRACT

This qualitative case study of Block 192, Peru's largest oilfield, makes the case for a local form of extractivism. Local extractivism is triggered by firstly a dependence on the only economic activity there is in the area, and secondly by the strategic usage of extractive activity as local communities' sole bargaining chip towards the government. An analysis of news items and interviews with actors involved in processes regarding Block 192, finds that repeated socio-environmental conflicts and production shutdowns have led to an increased state presence and willingness to negotiate. The very activity that has had detrimental effects on local communities' livelihoods for decades is as such also their only hope for achieving public goods, welfare and income-generating opportunities: This is the Janus face of extractivism. The Janus-faced political space for permanent negotiations between communities and national government regarding both conditions for extraction and government services unrelated to the extractive activity, is created by the state's overarching imperative to continue extraction. This article thus calls for a broadened analytical focus on conditioned spaces for cross-scalar negotiation as an outcome of the extractive imperative, and more diversified representations of the local scale beyond sites of resistance or grounds for particularistic local agreements with industry only.

### 1. Introduction

In Roman mythology, Janus was the god of *inter alia* duality, and he is depicted as having two faces facing opposite directions. In vernacular terms, having a Janus face is understood as having two sharply contrasting sides. In the Peruvian Amazon rainforest, local indigenous communities that have lived next to oil extraction facilities for five decades have a similar dualist and contradictory apprehension of extractive activity. This contradiction is apparent in two different ways. The first one concerns local income opportunities. Oil production has introduced a monetary economy, and resulted in substantial local contamination (Guzmán-Gallegos, 2017; O'Callaghan-Gordo et al., 2018; Orta-Martínez et al., 2018; UNDP Peru, 2018). Both factors have meant that the local population has moved away from only relying on subsistence activities, to a condition where the foremost source of employment and income is the oil industry. This reflects the dual function of oil as a local resource-making practice: one that both destructs and enhances local livelihoods.

The second duality regards local actors' recurring threats and actions to shut down oil production. Oil production is local communities' sole bargaining chip to draw the national government's attention to their plights. Through simply occupying parts of the oil production

infrastructure, local indigenous communities' federations have repeatedly been able to halt production. This has proven to be an effective manner of gaining the state's attention. In an area devoid of state presence, oil production has as such become an instrument for demanding measures to mitigate and remediate the detrimental effects of the very same oil production, and provision of public services in the area.

These dynamics demonstrate an inherently contradictory local dependence on extractive activity, and the article argues that this can be understood as *local extractivism*. Extractivism has been defined as an economic activity or development strategy based on the appropriation and export of raw materials, but also as an imperative achieving 'teleological primacy' (Arsel et al., 2016b, p. 878). A main propensity in literature on Latin American extractivism is to understand extractivism as promoted by the national government, encountering resistance and opposition at the local scale. While recognising the important scholarly work carried out on local resistance and socio-environmental conflicts caused by states' extractivism, this article nonetheless argues for a more diversified understanding of the local scale, taking into account the conflictual relationship the local population may have with extractive activities, which is not always outright resistance, but one of uneasy coexistence. Studies that account for the conflictual relationships

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between local communities and extractive industries beyond outright resistance, mainly focus on negotiations between local communities and extractive companies (e.g. [Helfgott, 2013](#); [Himley, 2013](#); [Manky, 2020](#)). The case of Peruvian oilfield Block 192 demonstrates that in addition to negotiations between communities and companies, the overarching imperative of continued extraction opens up a political space for negotiations between communities and national government regarding not only the conditions for extraction, but also government services unrelated to the extractive activity.

This article therefore refutes two main tendencies in recent literature on Latin American extractivism: a focus on the early 2000s left-leaning governments in the region, and a clear scalar logic where the local scale is framed as resisting extractive projects imposed on them by the national state. It emphasises how extractivism eschews a left-right political divide, as it is also a structuring principle on which action is based in countries not part of the Latin American Left Turn, in this case Peru. The dynamics between the Peruvian state and the local inhabitants in Block 192 demonstrate that extractivism facilitates a state of permanent negotiation. The state's extractive imperative, the lack of local development alternatives and local communities' abilities to shut down oil production to demand socio-environmental benefits have led to a convergence of aims, with both parties now aiming for continued extraction but with high socio-environmental standards.

## 2. Tendencies in extractivism research

A reliance on extraction and export of unprocessed natural resources has been the historically dominant economic model of the Latin American region. Following the European colonisation of the Americas, Latin America came into being as a provider of raw materials, shipped back to Europe to high human and environmental tolls ([Galeano, 1973](#)). Extractivism as an economic activity in Latin America is as such not a recent phenomenon by any means, and primary commodities continue to be the main export for all countries in the region alongside agricultural products. The concept of extractivism has however experienced an upsurge in scholarly attention during the last decade and a half, caused by the Latin American left's increased dependence on resource rents. With important exceptions, most research on Latin American extractivism has focused on the centre-left and left governments in the region, their increased involvement in extractive industries and the socio-environmental consequences of expanded extraction. To fund increases in social spending and public investments, these governments needed revenues from continued and expanded extractive activity, a more uncontentious solution than aggressive redistribution ([Arsel et al., 2016b](#); [Farthing and Fabricant, 2018](#)). Alongside their rhetoric of independence, there has been a deepening dependence on a single commodity, foreign operating companies, demand from other countries, particularly China, and a fluctuating international commodity market ([Acosta, 2013](#); [Lang, 2011](#)).

These dependencies conjointly lead to a continuing need to expand the extractive frontier, a tendency which is strengthened by another contradiction: as international oil prices have plummeted, governments' stance is that more oil needs to be discovered and brought on stream, to gain the same levels of expected income. In the face of this deepening dependence on resource rents, understandings of extractivism have broadened from a more narrow focus on the economic activity of large scale export of unprocessed raw materials ([Acosta, 2013](#); [Gudynas, 2010](#)), to a style of development (e.g. [Dietz and Engels, 2017](#)). [Arsel et al. \(2016a\)](#) launched the concept extractive imperative to describe the weight of extractive industries in the countries of the Latin American left. They deem extraction an imperative, as it 'needs to continue and expand regardless of prevailing circumstances' (p. 880). This they argue, is a self-sustained form of extractivism, which has taken over 'the logic of other state activities, reorienting policy objectives to further justify and advance extractivism' (p. 881). The authors use the political economy of the Latin American left as context for their analysis of the

extractive imperative, and argue that it was born from resource extraction financing social policy expenditures, through strong involvement of a developmental state in extractive activities and revenue flows. When more extraction emerges as the response to all internal and external challenges, extractivism assumes 'teleological primacy', and becomes the goal in and of itself.

This article analyses the extractive imperative's resulting political space in Peru, a country with a highly neoliberal and open economy, which did not undergo a turn to the left in the 2000s. This is in line with [Svampa's \(2012\)](#) argument that a 'commodity consensus' has replaced the Washington consensus in Latin America, and that this consensus can be understood as a new economic and political-ideological order extending beyond political differences of Latin American governments. [Smart \(2020\)](#) demonstrates that there has been an increased dependence on extractive activities in the whole Latin American region, notwithstanding political ideologies of national governments. In the case of Peru, [Campanera Reig, 2019](#) finds that environmental policy is purposely weak towards extractive industries and [Silva Santisteban \(2016\)](#) demonstrates an othering and criminalisation of opposition to mining, due to cross-political agreement on the need to extract. Extractivism has reached a Gramscian 'common sense' position ([Gudynas, 2019](#); [Silva Santisteban, 2016](#); [Svampa, 2012](#)).

A second feature of recent literature on Latin American extractivism is its aforementioned scalar logic, which tends to be as follows: Extractivism is instigated due to the national state reacting to international patterns of trade, moving down to the local scale in the form of new extractive projects at the extractive frontier, colliding with locally formed resistance, which occasionally gains national traction. Socio-environmental conflicts are often portrayed as binary conflicts between indigenous organisations or socio-territorial movements on one side, and governments and/or large economic corporations on the other ([Avci and Fernández-Salvador, 2016](#); [Bebbington et al., 2008](#); [Llave Huamancha, 2020](#); [Svampa, 2019](#)). Local sites close to extractive activities are therefore represented as the resistant other to state power and global capitalism, or its 'sacrifice zone' (e.g. [Bebbington et al., 2013](#); [Dietz and Engels, 2017](#); [Shade, 2015](#); [Smart, 2020](#); [Szablowski, 2019](#)).

In these representations of the local scale as sites of conflict and resistance, there is a propensity to implicitly understand indigenous as 'natural conservationists' (e.g. [Acuña, 2015](#); [Stammler and Ivanova, 2016](#)). The expansion of the extractive frontier means that the local scale and those living closest to extraction sites are often indigenous communities. There is a tendency to understand indigenous peoples as guardians of traditional livelihoods and therefore as 'incapable of anything but confronting and rejecting change', and furthermore as 'natural allies of the natural environment' ([McNeish, 2012](#), p. 39). This is a potentially reductive and one-dimensional representation of indigenous response to extractive projects, which risks interpreting indigenous peoples as subject to circumstance.

Exceptions to this tendency are found in literature on relations between local communities and private extractive industries, which finds a more complex local relationship with extractivism in negotiated agreements with companies, and in labour relations. [Wanvik and Caine \(2017\)](#) demonstrate the agency of indigenous Metis communities in Alberta, Canada, in their engagement with the oil sand industry. They conclude that 'indigenous engagement with extractive industry developments is neither static nor responsive in character', arguing that this requires a re-thinking of indigenous communities as not just 'passive victims or as only responsive to external pressure; we now see indigenous communities as goal-motivated [and] pragmatic' (p. 603). According to [Kuokkanen \(2019\)](#), 'the most common form of indigenous engagement include negotiating agreements with resource companies and participating in environmental impact assessment processes' (p. 16). Community-industry impact benefits agreements have become standard practice in Canada and Australia. These are privately negotiated and confidential, but typically include clauses on employment, infrastructure, social, cultural and environmental programmes and

educational and training opportunities (Kuokkanen, 2019; Peterson St-Laurent and Billon, 2015; Wanvik and Caine, 2017). Some local governments in the US have adopted Memorandums of Understandings with fracking companies, with input from local communities (Zilliox and Smith, 2017). In mining projects in both the Global North and South, gaining a Social Licence to Operate has become an increasingly normal practice to manage community relations (Mulhern et al., 2020; Nguyen, 2020; Ofori and Ofori, 2019; Wilson, 2016)

In case studies from the Global South, Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs) have been covered (e.g. Aguilar-Stoen and Hirsch, 2015). These are required in extractive projects, and are bureaucratic procedures with some participatory mechanisms to establish baselines and identify impacts. Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) have also been found to create an arena for local engagement, if local communities have the leverage to demand CSR measures specific to local needs (Hayk, 2019). In a study on the Pieira gold mine in Peru, Himley (2013) sketches the outlines of a limited political space, where the international company operating the mine accepted demands for temporary employment for locals, as long as it was able to place it in a CSR framework. When local demands rose to also include wage increase and unionisation, it resulted in violent clashes.

A number of case studies highlight how local communities function as both affected communities and employees, and how possibilities for local employment are a main point of pragmatic local negotiation efforts towards the company. Manky (2020) finds that in the case of the Antamina copper mine in Peru, even local negotiations between the operating company and local communities regarding environmental issues resulted in clauses on local employment. Helfgott (2013) finds the same attempts to use the mining companies for local development efforts in the Central Highlands of Peru, where mining companies were subjected to demands for local employment, scholarships and support for local production activities.

Contentious action as not just resistance to extraction but also as a local level negotiation strategy has been covered by Orta-Martínez et al. (2018) and Hudayana et al. (2020), who argue that the most effective indigenous strategy to improve conditions of local extractive activities can be open conflict. Hudayana et al. (2020) find that in the case of nickel mining industry in Indonesia, activist instigators mobilised community masses to protest and sabotage as a strategy to successfully negotiate compensation for the negative impacts of mining. Orta-Martínez et al. (2018) analyse oilfield Block 192 and neighbouring Block 8 and argue that direct action is sometimes required to overcome environmental injustices. Dialogue between affected communities, industry and government is not a goal in itself, if it is characterised by consistent bureaucratic stalling and low levels of goal achievement.

The abovementioned studies examine local positions beyond outright resistance, but largely focus on relations between local communities and extractive industries. In these particularistic local arrangements, be they community-industry impact benefits agreements, local input in EIAs and CSR measures or pragmatic decisions to occupy, protest or accept extraction, affected communities have been able to negotiate *inter alia* compensations, local hiring practices, environmental remediation and funding for local development initiatives, from *industry*. Oil production is also realised by private actors in Block 192. Nonetheless, local actors have been able to strategically utilise their possibilities to impact oil production as a bargaining chip to leverage the *state*, and demand environmental remediation and public services. This state-society dynamic is analysed below.

### 3. A case study of Block 192

Block 192 is Peru's largest and oldest oilfield, located in the Northern Peruvian Amazon, by the border to Ecuador. Operation commenced in 1971 under its previous name Block 1AB. It encompasses an area totalling 4970 km<sup>2</sup>, with 118 oil wells currently active, producing approximately 11,000 barrels a day, around 15 per cent of the total oil

production in Peru (UNDP Peru, 2018). The oilfield overlaps with the Corrientes, Pastaza and Tigre river basins, with an indigenous population of 45,000, from the Achuar, Kichwa and Quechua people (Instituto del Bien Común, 2016, as cited in Orta-Martínez et al., 2018). 101 indigenous communities are organised in four federations: FEDIQUEP (the Quechua indigenous federation of Pastaza); FECONACOR (the federation of native communities in the Corrientes river basin); OPI-KAFPE (organisation of the Kichwa Amazonian Indigenous peoples of the Peru-Ecuador border); and ACODESCOPAT (the Kukama development and conservation association San Pablo de Tipishca), the latter representing Kukama communities in the Marañon river basin, downstream from the oilfield. Since 2011, these federations have addressed the state and oil companies collectively through PUINAMUDT (abbreviated from Spanish *Pueblos indígenas amazónicos unidos en defensa de sus territorios*, Amazonian indigenous peoples united in defence of their territories) a platform interchangeably called the *Cuatro Cuencas*, the Four River Basins in Spanish (PUINAMUDT, 2020a).

The following analysis of the dynamics between the state and local communities in Block 192 is based on an abductive research design involving a two-step data collection process. Firstly, all articles and opinion pieces (487 items) discussing Block 192 between 2015 and mid-2018 from the online archives of the two largest dailies in Peru, the centre-left *La República* and the conservative *El Comercio* were downloaded, systematised and analysed. This first step provided a timeline of events and an overview of the actors involved and their positions. This facilitated intermediate research questions and an interview guide for the second phase, which consisted of semi-structured interviews with twenty-three key actors in Lima and Iquitos, Peru in the autumn of 2018. These were representatives from NGOs with experience working with the indigenous communities in Block 192 (9), government officials directly involved in negotiations and policies related to Block 192 (7), one representative from the oil sector, engaged academics (2), advisors to PUINAMUDT (3) and one leader of the indigenous federations representing the communities within Block 192. There is an underrepresentation of indigenous voices in this sample, although their views align with those of their advisors. To nonetheless properly encompass their points of view, the analysis relies extensively on news items from PUINAMUDT's website and their social media postings, and indigenous actors' statements and comments to the media. In addition to peer-reviewed research articles regarding Block 192, the analysis also rely on statements from the Ombudsman's Office, NGO reports and UNDP Peru's independent technical study of former Block 1AB.

### 4. Local extractivism

The National Office for Natural Resource Assessment established already in 1984 that Block 192 was 'the most polluted region in the country' (Guzmán-Gallegos, 2017, p. 1114). From 1972 until 1997, oil production in then Block 1AB produced a daily average of 762,000 barrels of produced water, the water extracted from the oil wells along with oil, compared to a daily average of 52,286 barrels of oil (Ministerio de Energía y Minas, 1998). This wastewater contains high levels of hydrocarbons, chlorides and heavy metals such as barium, cadmium, lead and mercury (Campanario Baqué and Doyle, 2017; Orta Martínez et al., 2007; Yusta-García et al., 2017). Produced water has a salinity level four times that of seawater, impacting the fresh water biotope (Doyle, 1994). Produced water was until 2009 freely dispatched into surrounding bodies of water, when reinjection mechanisms were put in place, an outcome of indigenous protest and negotiation (Orta-Martínez et al., 2018).

Other environmental problems include dumping of solid waste and drilling mud, and abandonment of open waste pits, without any remediation (Ministerio de Energía y Minas, 1998; Orta Martínez et al., 2007). Petroleum spills are a frequent and reoccurring problem, and visible petroleum spills have been documented in rivers, soils and production facilities (Orta Martínez et al., 2007; UNDP Peru, 2018). Oil

production has moreover led to deforestation, and 400 km of roads and pipelines have been built in the area, which have caused an intensification in illegal logging and hunting (Orta Martínez et al., 2007).

Levels of heavy metals in sampled fish tissues indicate bio-accumulation, and are above those fit for human consumption (Orta Martínez et al., 2007; Rosell-Melé et al., 2018). Several studies have found levels of lead, cadmium, barium, mercury and arsenic in blood and urine samples from locals above permissible limits (O'Callaghan-Gordo et al., 2018; Orta Martínez et al., 2007). Elevated levels of lead is linked to hypertension and cardiovascular disease, mercury is linked to neurological diseases, and cadmium to increased risks of cancer (Defensoría del Pueblo, 2018). Allergic reactions to the skin and eyes are also possibly linked to oil contamination (La Torre Lopez, 1998). Additionally, the awareness that the water the local populations rely on for cooking, cleaning and consumption is contaminated with heavy metals and oil residues leads to anxiety and uncertainty (UNDP Peru, 2018). Locals have heard that they should not consume local fish and water, but have no other available options (Campanario Baqué and Doyle, 2017).

Despite the grave environmental and public health consequences of oil production in Block 192, a termination of oil production is not a desired solution for any parties involved. This is due to the economic dependence on oil activity, which has increased as subsistence agriculture and fishing have declined due to the environmental impacts of oil extraction. Locals testify that their agricultural yields have declined, along with sales to local markets due to known pollution in the area (Campanario Baqué and Doyle, 2017; UNDP Peru, 2018). The enclave-like nature of the local oil economy and local inflation has meant that any goods and merchandise are highly priced locally (Campanario Baqué and Doyle, 2017). Consequently, there are few income opportunities that are not related to oil production. In Block 192, several local community service companies tied to oil activity have been created, and these carry out low-paid menial work such as cleaning up oil spills, road management and waste management, without insufficient safety measures and supervision (Campanario Baqué and Doyle, 2017; UNDP Peru, 2018). Pluspetrol, the transnational company operating the field until 2015, used the selective contracting of local companies to form clientelistic relations and create internal divisions (Campanario Baqué and Doyle, 2017). The current operating company, Frontera Energy, employs close to 3000 people directly, 35% of these are from the area. The local economy has consequently become an oil economy, and this undermines the possibilities of alternative development strategies.

The local position towards operating companies was summed up by Diandra Torres of the NGO DAR (*Derecho, Ambiente y Recursos Naturales*, Law, Environment and Natural Resources) as 'remediate, but stay' (interview with author, October 2018). Indigenous leaders have repeatedly stated that they are not against oil production, as they are not against development. Carlos Sandi, leader of FECONACO, stated in 2015 that 'we are not against oil production, we are not against development, we agree, but we want it to be a responsible production. Respecting our environment, us, our rivers, our children' (La República, 2015b). Similarly, during protests and occupations in 2017, Aurelio Chino, leader of FEDIQUEP stated that 'we are not against oil production in our territories, we just ask the government for previous consultation' (AFP, 2017). Tedy Maca, leader of Nueva Andoas, one of the communities in the area, stated that 'this is a peaceful strike. We are guaranteeing the company that there will be no damages to their infrastructure, because what we want is that the benefits will be fair for everyone, for the state, the company and the population' (DPAES, 2017).

These are articulations of local extractivism. Local mobilising actors operate within a hegemonic discourse understanding development as dependant on extraction, but the aspiration is that the oil production should result in benefits locally. This observation echoes that of Arsel et al. (2019) regarding oil extraction in the Ecuadorian Amazon, where inhabitants are also well aware of the detrimental effects oil extraction

has had on their livelihoods and health. Due a lack of alternative strategies to deliver material improvements however, limited and partial benefits of oil-led development is the only path to improvement. This 'misery of missing alternatives' they name 'Maria's paradox' (p. 215).

## 5. Bargaining chip

The second reason why the duality of local extractivism is emphasised, is that it has proven the most effective way of gaining government attention to an area characterised by a historical lack of state presence. The Amazon region of Peru is the most neglected and marginalised area of the country (Espinosa, 2009; Grillo and Sharon, 2012). Any welfare services were first provided by missionaries, then later oil companies, in a distorted but well-known pattern of appeasements for their dispossession. Indigenous federations' possibilities to influence ongoing oil production is a means to achieve state attention, gain concessions, compensation or public goods. Orta-Martínez et al. (2018) find that in the case of Block 192, open conflict is required to achieve real progress in negotiations with state and company and to overcome environmental injustices. This study complements Orta-Martínez et al.'s thesis with an analysis of the structures allowing for the effectiveness of open conflict in gaining concessions from the state. The state apprehends extraction as imperative at all costs in any circumstance, and this lends the indigenous federations in the oilfield agency and negotiation power, due to their capacity to easily halt oil production through take-overs of oil installations. The conflict between the state and the local populations in Block 192 however is not of resistance or rejection, but of conditioned coexistence (Carlos Monge, Natural Resource Governance Institute, interview with author August 2018). This type of conflict results in a state of permanent negotiation, which is not a means to an end, but the situation that is seemingly most beneficial to all parties.

The dynamics between the indigenous federations in Block 192 and the government follows a clear pattern. Claims are set forth by the indigenous federations, both towards the operating company, regarding remediation and payment for the use of their territories, and towards the national state, regarding health services, development programmes and ultimately previous consultation. When these claims are not met, the indigenous federations either threaten to occupy, or occupy, parts of the oil infrastructure, shutting down oil production. High-level government officials have tended to arrive to the area to negotiate when this occurs, and negotiations have led to a series of agreements – accords – between the federations and the government. In some of these accords the operating company also agrees to carry out measures. The Ombudsman have had an observatory role. Repeatedly, there are large delays in implementation or measures never materialise, leading to new rounds of occupations, negotiations and agreements.

These rounds of negotiations have so far resulted in seven accords (*actas* in Spanish) between the indigenous federations pertaining to PUINAMUDT and the government. FECONACO shut down half of the country's oil production in 2006, after a failed meeting with government officials regarding a health programme and the creation of a multisector commission, to address the findings of the first Ministry of Health study demonstrating high rates of heavy metals in blood samples. This was the first time an Amazonian indigenous group used this type of direct action as a negotiation strategy (Bebbington and Scurrah, 2013). Government delegations arrived within two days, and negotiations resulted in the Dorissa Accord, an agreement between the government, the then operating company Pluspetrol, FECONACO and their advisors. This agreement included the reinjection of produced water, completed in 2009, a comprehensive health plan funded by Pluspetrol, a small hospital, a comprehensive development plan managed by the regional government, and an inclusion of the local population in the national basic health service (Bebbington and Scurrah, 2013). The health plan and the hospital never materialised however, and the development plan was not implemented (Bebbington and Scurrah, 2013).

The unsuccessful implementation of parts of the Dorissa Accord



eventually led to new direct actions and threats to occupy oil installations in 2012, and a new round of negotiations as top government officials such as the Ministers of Health and Environment were dispatched to the area (Orta-Martínez et al., 2018). This resulted in a new agreement, the Alianza Topal Accords, where the parties agreed on local development demands to be executed by the regional government, a comprehensive health plan this time managed by the Department of Health, and the creation of a multisector commission to investigate oil contamination, this time for the whole area of Block 192, as the four federations had started organising jointly through PUINAMUDT in 2011 (Orta-Martínez et al., 2018). The results of the latter led the government to declare an environmental and later health emergency in the area (Orta-Martínez et al., 2018). This required establishing action plans, regarding inter alia installations of water treatment plants. As these were also delayed, the federations responded with a new threat to occupy production facilities in 2014, and were through these means able to demand new deadlines. The first water treatment plant was installed in March 2015, inaugurated by the then Peruvian President, Ollanta Humala (Orta-Martínez et al., 2018; PUINAMUDT, 2015c).

In 2015 three accords were agreed upon by the government and the indigenous federations. The Lima Accord in March was an outcome of the third multisector commission, created in 2014 (UNDP Peru, 2018). It promised an independent technical study of the oilfield, which was executed by UNDP Peru, and published in 2018 (UNDP Peru, 2018). A contingency fund for environmental remediation was agreed upon, the implementation of a health care system, further water treatment installations, electrification, remediation of polluted sites, and an agreement to undertake an epidemiological and toxicological study (Ministerio del Ambiente, 2015). Yet again, the failure to implement parts of the Lima accord led to new protests already in September 2015, when the federations blocked the operations of all oil wells in Block 192 for 15 days. The blockade came to an end through the signing of a new agreement, the Teniente Lopez accord (PUINAMUDT, 2015a). This agreement follows up on the Lima accord, with a deadline to start the health study, further promises of electrification and an agreement that all communities within block 192 shall receive 0.75 per cent of oil revenues (as opposed to the 2.5 per cent demanded) (PUINAMUDT, 2015a). The third accord of 2015 was signed in José Olaya, and the agreements here in large parts concern the follow-up of previously agreed upon courses of action, further operationalising, deciding responsibilities and setting deadlines (PUINAMUDT, 2015b).

Parallel to the cycles of protests and agreements between the government and the local communities, there was a change in ownership of the oilfield. Pluspetrol's contract expired in 2015, and before the entry of a new company, the federations demanded previous consultation and free, prior and informed consent, which had been codified into national law in 2011. No companies expressed interests in a new thirty year-long contract after an international bidding process in 2015, and Canadian company Pacific Stratus Energy, since Frontera Energy, accepted an interim operating contract for two years after direct negotiation with the Peruvian government. A previous consultation was carried out, but hastily, and no agreement was reached between the government and PUINAMUDT, only with two other federations downstream from the area, of competing interest with the PUINAMUDT platform (El Comercio, 2015).

There have been several periods of prolonged halts in oil production in Block 192, due to temporary stops in the operation of the North Peruvian pipeline transporting the crude from the Amazon to the coast due to oil spills and lack of maintenance, or production halts caused by indigenous occupations. These stops are deemed instances of *force majeure*, a legal definition which automatically extends the contract with Frontera Energy. At the time of writing they are still the operating company. Meanwhile, resource nationalist protests at the regional level and similar sentiments in Congress resulted in a change in legislation allowing the national oil company Petroperú to assume a joint venture ownership (El Peruano, 2015).

A major recent source of contention has consequently been a potential second round of previous consultation. Government actors have claimed that this is not a legal requirement, as despite Petroperú assuming ownership, there are no major changes in how it affects the local population (Javier Aroca, Subsecretary for dialogue and sustainability, Presidency of the Council of Ministers, interview with author October 2018). In October 2017 however, PUINAMUDT resorted to its most effective means to ensure previous consultation: the occupation of oil installations. In October 2017, after 44 days of complete shut-down of oil production, the government and the indigenous federation signed a new agreement, the Andoas act, which stated that if and when Petroperú and an operating partner enter into a new contract period, there will be a new previous consultation process (PUINAMUDT, 2017). This process is now ongoing, albeit with repeated delays (e.g. El Comercio, 2019; PUINAMUDT, 2019a; PUINAMUDT, 2020b; PUINAMUDT, 2019b).

The latest accord between the government and the local population was agreed upon in 2019, again in Andoas, after a week's occupation of the oilfield's airfield and pumps. Main achievements here were promises to build a previously guaranteed mini hospital in 2020, and a trust fund for environmental remediation of close to 54 million USD, implemented after a year's delay (PUINAMUDT, 2019b). Halting oil production was once again used as a bargaining chip to speed up delayed processes of public service provision.

Local communities' negotiation power is caused by their ability to disrupt spatially fixed oil production. If their territories had not been incorporated into an oilfield, then they would not have had this particular negotiation power. Top government officials are dispatched to the area to negotiate with the federations when they threaten to halt, or halt, oil production, implying that without oil production, there would be no foundation to negotiate. The resulting leverage has a self-sustaining effect, as the recent history of disruptions also impacts local communities' current negotiation power, and how government actors act towards them. If the state wants oil operation, they have to negotiate. Discussing whether previous consultation is required again or not, Javier Aroca from the Presidency of the Council of Ministers, an advisory body to the government, argued that this should not be a main preoccupation, exactly because of the recent history of forceful measures by the communities, stating that 'if the state wants this to work, the only thing they have to do is to consult' (interview with author, October 2018).

The political space for bargaining through occupations is shaped by the extractive imperative and the Peruvian state's neoliberal strategy to entice companies to invest in the country. Bebbington and Scurrah (2013) understand the actions of the local communities in Block 192 as attempts at 'bringing the state back in' (p. 189), to regulate and deliver services, and treat the local population as citizens with rights. The state has never been here in the first place however, except in the capacity to facilitate extractive activity by private companies. It has mostly played an enabling role for international investment, rather than a regulatory role (Urteaga-Crovetto, 2012). The repeated delays inherent in the scalar dynamics imply that continuing oil production is the main goal guiding political action, not local development efforts. Nonetheless, achievements have been reached, and implemented (albeit slowly and after repeated protests). The state of permanent negotiation ensures a fragile continuation of oil production, and the implementation of some environmental remediation measures and government services. The only way to draw in the state as service provider seems to be within an extractivist framework, with resulting promises that are particular to that area.

## 6. Convergence of aims

Local and national extractivism, coupled with a state of permanent negotiation, results in a discourse where seemingly both the state and the local indigenous communities have the same objectives: continued

extraction with high social and environmental standards, and remediation of past contamination. Alfonso López, leader of ACODECOSPAT, recognises the local dependence on oil activity which has been detailed above, and states that based on this, what they do demand is ‘environmentally and socially responsible politics that respect the lives of human beings’ (interview with author, October 2018). Similarly, the Ministry of Energy and Mines (MEM) argues that what they aim for is to execute well-planned processes of environmental remediation, and to have a ‘healthy field’ (Wendy Perez, Specialist in the General Office of Social Management, MEM, interview with author September 2018). MEM works locally to try to solve problems of access to health care, education and to clean up past contamination. Because if not, Perez stated ‘[the company] will not want to come in and work’ (interview with author, September 2018). MEM was furthermore having discussions with the Ministry of Finance to have more money for remediation (Fernando Castillo, Director General of the General Office of Social Management, MEM, interview with author September 2018). Again, this demonstrates that socio-environmental measures is conditioned upon continued extraction.

It is important to emphasise that this seeming convergence of aims is not based on autonomous decision-making within the state and the indigenous federations, it is rather a relational response founded on the Peruvian state’s extractivism. Continued extraction is imperative for the state, but extraction is not realised by public companies. The state therefore needs the oilfield to appear attractive for international investments, and it is not in its interest to have an oilfield marked by repeated socio-environmental protests and shut-downs of production by the local population. It is unclear how much oil is left in the oilfield, and whether increased exploration in the oilfield would lead to discoveries of any untapped reservoirs. It is an insecure investment at best, and more so if it risks repeated unrest and production halts. Due to local extractivism and ‘the misery of missing alternatives’, local communities also act with the aim of continued extraction, albeit under improved conditions. As such, both the local population represented by the four indigenous federations, and the national state represented by MEM, desire a ‘healthy’ oilfield, i.e. continued production but with high socio-environmental standards.

The more ideological notion of extractivism being ‘the logical thing to do’ in any case also has material consequences of sunk costs and path-dependencies. 3.5 billion USD have been invested in the modernisation of one of Peru’s main refineries, in Talara on the northern coast, and there are also plans to modernise the Norperuano pipeline transporting oil from the Amazon to the coast (Gestión, 2019; La República, 2015a). For these investments to make sense, oil needs to continue to flow from Block 192. In this sense, extractivism requires a planning for continued existence of oil regardless of how much of the reserves actually remain. There are very heavy-weighting incentives for the extraction of the oil that there is.

This analysis of the political space created by cross-scale extractivism points towards a major concern for all actors: What will happen when there is no more oil in Block 192? All activity discussed here is motivated by continued oil extraction. There is general agreement that the imminent contract with a duration of thirty years will be the last contract of Block 192, remaining reserves will most likely have been extracted by then. The concern for peak oil is present everywhere, in both producing and consuming areas, due to the fundamental importance of oil to any economic activity (Bridge, 2010; Bridge and Le Billon, 2017). The concern here takes on the added importance of the population in Block 192 losing their bargaining chip. The end of oil production in Block 192 will mean that both the sole local income generating opportunity, and the state’s presence, will evaporate. These are the prerequisites for both day-to-day survival and for larger improvements and local development needs. The state has economic interests in the area now, which is what gives local communities disruptive power. The local communities will as such be left with a net negative. They will have a degraded local environment and no income-generating opportunities. The dynamics of

permanent negotiation and conflictual coexistence unfortunately lead mostly to immediate and short-term gains. There is no diversification of the local economy, and no planning of what will come next for this remote and deprived area, which is moreover the most polluted in Peru.

## 7. The Janus face of local extractivism

The recent history of Block 192 and the dynamics between the local population and the government demonstrate that there are local positions towards extractive activity which are neither outright resistance, nor acceptance or approval. There is a local dependence on oil activity for both income opportunities and as a bargaining chip towards the government. Analytically, this implies that extractivism should be understood as a cross-scalar phenomenon, where also the sub-national level plays a key role in (re)shaping its logics, practices and ‘there is no alternative to oil’ ideology. These insights are key to understand local extractivism, and how and why it is Janus faced. The very same extractive activity which has caused the damage in the first place, is relied upon to remediate it.

Previously, extractivism has mostly been used to characterise the politics of the state, based on international capital’s national expansion, where the local scale is hit with the negative consequences of resource extraction. The imperative of continued extraction as the solution to any policy challenge and needing to take place under any circumstance can explain why expanding the extractive frontier is seen as the solution to both high and low commodity prices. Extractivism has taken on a political-ideological functioning to become a panacea and the ‘common sense’ course of action (Arsel et al., 2016b, 2016a; Svampa, 2012). The outcomes of the extractive imperative are mostly understood to be resistance and a criminalisation of protests by the state (Arsel et al., 2016a; Llave Huamancha, 2020; Silva Santisteban, 2016; Svampa, 2019). The extractive imperative has however also created a sub-national political space that can be strategically utilised by communities adjacent to extractive industries to negotiate with not only the operating company, but also the government regarding both conditions for extraction and government services. In Block 192, local indigenous federations have managed to accumulate negotiation power through collective action, and when they mobilise and halt production, top officials, including ministers, are quickly dispatched to negotiate particularistic agreements with measures specific to the area.

Conflict therefore does not necessarily entail outright rejection, there can also be a conflictual coexistence which enables a state of permanent negotiation. This is a position which can probably also be found in other areas with mature extractive industries, where the national state has been mostly a facilitator for private extractive activity, not a regulating state and certainly not a welfare state. In Block 192, this has entailed a grave lack of public services and remediation of local oil contamination. This is now demanded by the indigenous federations representing the communities in Block 192, and they have gained important concessions from the government based on their confrontational negotiation patterns. There is a limit to how much change can be achieved with this kind of militant particularism however (Harvey and Williams, 1995). Without continued oil extraction, it will break down. Local improvements are therefore based on a continuation of extractivism, and there can be no socio-environmental improvements in the area without allowing the system to continue. There is an extractivist lock-in effect.

Local actors’ room for manoeuvre is caused by commodity exporting states’ limited leeway: their position on the global market as commodity exporters demands that extractivism and export of natural resources need to continue, and this requires extractive projects without excessively disrupting socio-environmental conflicts. This understanding of the room for manoeuvre for negotiation and demand created by extractivism can be upscaled. I expect that it can be relevant for analyses of any actors demanding socio-environmental improvements that do not fundamentally challenge extractivism itself, such as certain parts of environmental civil society.

## 8. Conclusions

Notwithstanding important exceptions, a majority of research on extractivism in Latin America has been carried out in the context of the Latin American left, characterised by a strong state involvement in extractive industries. Within this context, the notion of extractivism as an imperative has been developed by Arsel et al. (2016b), who argue that continued and increased extraction has gained a teleological primacy, 'reorienting policy objectives to further justify and advance extractivism' (p. 881). Research from Peru demonstrates that state-led production and revenues directed to national budgets are not prerequisites for an extractive imperative, to extract all resources that can be extracted is the logical 'common sense' thing to do also in a country characterised by a neoliberal political economy (Gudynas, 2019; Silva Santisteban, 2016). The imperative of continued extraction has been emphasised in recent research from Peru, which demonstrates a delegitimisation and criminalisation of protest and lax environmental regulation (Campanera Reig, 2019; Llave Huamancha, 2020; Silva Santisteban, 2016). These analyses are characteristic of research on the consequences of extractivism, which have mostly been discussed in terms of their detrimental socio-environmental effects and the state's assaults on resistance. These are important consequences that need to be well-known, but they are not the only outcomes of the imperative to continue extraction.

This article chronicles the recent history of Peruvian oilfield Block 192. It does so through analysing 487 news items, reports from NGOs and the Peruvian Ombudsman and communications from the indigenous umbrella organisation PUINAMUDT, together with twenty-three interviews with actors involved in the Peruvian oil sector or directly in the processes regarding Block 192, carried out in Lima and Iquitos, Peru, in the autumn of 2018. It argues that the patterns of interactions between the Peruvian state and local actors in Block 192 demonstrate that the teleological primacy of continued extraction and a 'there is no alternative to oil' dogma creates room for manoeuvre that local actors can pragmatically utilise. This reading of state-society relations differs from those analyses examining local-scale resistance towards extractive projects (Avci and Fernández-Salvador, 2016; Bebbington et al., 2008; Llave Huamancha, 2020; Svampa, 2019). The literature that examines more diverse local responses to extractive activity, overwhelmingly focus on negotiations between local communities and operating company (Kuokkanen, 2019; Wanvik and Caine, 2017; Wilson, 2016). These have resulted in particularistic agreements regarding local employment, socio-environmental programmes and financing of local development efforts (Helfgott, 2013; Himley, 2013; Manky, 2020). Other mechanisms for managing social relations include EIAs and CSR, both of which may include limited local participation. The state apparatus does not have a protagonist role in these lines of research.

In Block 192 local actors utilise their demonstrated ability to impact privately run production to negotiate local 'oil for development' agreements with the national government. In these negotiations, local indigenous federations demand both remediation of past contamination caused by oil extraction, but also public services that are not directly related to extraction, such as health and education service provisions and local development programmes. Local actors have some leverage, as in a neoliberal political economy context, continued and expanded extraction is dependant upon international investments. The Peruvian state therefore needs the oilfield to appear attractive for international oil companies. It is not in its interest to have an oilfield marked by repeated socio-environmental conflicts and shutdowns of production by the local population.

For this reason, the extractive imperative can paradoxically result in opportunities for demanding, and achieving, some socio-environmental improvements. This local room for manoeuvre created by the cross-scalar imperative for continued extraction is a type of dynamic under-emphasised in previous literature. Extractivism as a concept therefore needs to be expanded geographically, to make it applicable to local

forms of dependence on extractive activities, both concretely for local livelihoods and as the local population's sole bargaining chip to demand any sort of services from the government or oil company. I liken this local scale position to a duality, the Janus face, as the very activity that has had detrimental effects on their livelihoods for decades is also their only hope.

The Janus face of local extractivism illuminates changing political geographies of the subsoil. State power and subsoil resources have been theorised to be closely connected. The state, through its role as a custodian of subterranean resources, exerts state power to secure sub-surface spaces for extraction, at the expense of populations depending on surface lands for their livelihoods (Bridge, 2014; Coronil, 1997; Shade, 2015). The findings presented in this article suggest that processes and conditions that include the local scale re-shape political geographies of extraction, as state strategies and hydrocarbon governance is partially shaped from shifting relations of leverage and veto power between the national and local scale.

To understand the continuous shaping of extractivism and its social, material and political effects, this article calls for further case study research on local actors' expectations of the state apparatus in areas where extractive activities have impacted livelihoods for decades. Research on Janus-faced extractivism across sites and political spectrum, including comparative case studies and synthesised studies, could offer purposeful insights into how resource conflicts are negotiated 'on the ground' and potentially shape strategies across scales, not least in the face of current sustained declining demand. Such research would further understanding regarding changes to the spatialities of state-society relations, mediated through the political geographies of extraction.

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## Article 2: Leaving Oil in the Ground: Ecuador's Yasuní-ITT Initiative and Spatial Strategies for Supply-Side Climate Solutions.

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# Leaving Oil in the Ground: Ecuador's Yasuní-ITT Initiative and Spatial Strategies for Supply-Side Climate Solutions

## Abstract

Rather than a surprising and illogical move to leave oil in the ground for international compensation, Ecuador's Yasuní-ITT Initiative should be understood as a spatial strategy to ensure continued profits from oil in the face of increased pressure from environmental interests within the state. In this landmark oil moratorium attempt, launched in 2007, the Ecuadorian government offered to forego extraction of its largest oil reservoir, projected to contain 20% of the country's oil reserves, if they received international compensation totalling half the expected revenues. The initiative was cancelled in 2013, after only a fraction of the requested sum had been received, and oil production is now ongoing. Most academic literature highlights how a developmentalist petro-state was willing to abstain from extracting its largest oil reserves, yet encountered a range of national and international obstacles. This article defies this 'against all odds' framing. It examines the initiative as a space-making process and understands the attempted internationalisation of the Yasuní oil as the state's spatial strategy to ensure continued income from oil, either in the form of compensation, or by legitimising their continued existence as a petro-state and for business as usual if the attempt failed. It therefore represents a continuation of petro-dependency, but through a novel strategy of non-extraction. This analysis demonstrates how understanding political economic resource governance and its space-making processes as outcomes of struggles and complex negotiation processes within the state could bring new insights into energy transition processes.

## Keywords

Ecuador, oil, strategic-relational state space, supply-side, Yasuní

## 1. Introduction

Ecuador's Yasuní-ITT Initiative to keep the oil in the ground in the Ishpingo, Tambococha and Tiputini areas of the Yasuní National Park in the Ecuadorian Amazon has been heralded as innovative and unprecedented in several ways. Ecuador, a Global South 'petro-state' relying on oil for a third of its export earnings and public revenues, developed the first major international attempt to leave oil in the ground in exchange for international compensation. The Ecuadorian government offered to forego extraction of its largest oil reservoir, projected to contain 20% of the country's oil reserves, if they received international compensation totalling half the expected oil revenues. Launched in 2007, the initiative was cancelled in 2013, after only a fraction of the requested sum had been received. Previous studies have framed the initiative as occurring against all odds and understand its ultimate failure as the outcome of a range of national and international obstacles, external to the initiative itself (Kingsbury et al., 2019; Martin, 2011b; Pellegrini et al., 2014; Sovacool & Scarpaci, 2016).

This article follows up Environment and Planning A's 2020 Theme Issue on New Energy Spaces: Towards a geographical political economy of energy transition, through analysing the Yasuní-ITT Initiative as a space-making process. It finds that the attempt to leave the oil in the ground for international compensation should be understood as a petro-state's spatial strategy to ensure continued revenues from oil, in a context of changing conflicts of interests within the state. As such, this article presents a re-interpretation of the case, not as a surprise development occurring against all odds and which failed as a result of extrinsic factors, but rather as a resource policy shaped by the co-existence of environmentalist and oil interests within the state apparatus. The analysis is premised on Bob Jessop's conceptualisation of the state as a changing field of social relations and 'terrains of struggles' for competing interests. It considers the Ecuadorian state's spatial strategy as attempts to reconcile the ongoing, multiple conflicts of interests within the state (Kristoffersen & Young, 2010). It subsequently understands the internationalisation of the Yasuní oil as a result of the *least* risky spatial strategy of the petro-state for governing contested oil resources: towards an international strategy where the financial costs are *shared*, rather than towards more local-scale decision-making. Employing a political economy perspective, the objective of this article is thus to couple changing geographies of oil dependency with strategic-relational state space theory.

A relatively new but burgeoning literature on supply-side climate change mitigation efforts classify and analyse different types of supply-side measures and their levels of effectiveness and

equity (Carter & McKenzie, 2020; Gaulin & Le Billon, 2020; Le Billon & Kristoffersen, 2020; Muttitt & Kartha, 2020). Carter and McKenzie find that efforts have been led ‘primarily by rich developed states with the capacity to transition, but *without* significant reserves or high dependence on fossil fuel extraction (2020: 2, original emphasis). The Yasuní-ITT Initiative is an outlier according to this overview, and Ecuador is considered a ‘first-mover’ internationally to carve out a policy that would leave the oil in the ground due to climate concerns. Understanding firstly the factors at the state level for why a state developed an international initiative, and secondly the reason for its failure, are important contributions to nascent work on international supply-side climate change mitigation efforts. This is a field in which there have been calls for further analysis of the ‘conduciveness of supply-side policies in international policy cooperation’ (Green & Dennis, 2018, p. 73), of national policy trajectories and what makes an initiative successful or not (Carter & McKenzie, 2020), and for going deeper into specific cases, to better understand ‘the intricacies of power relations’ that have prevented effective supply cuts (Le Billon & Kristoffersen, 2020, p. 1087).

The analysis of the Yasuní-ITT Initiative presented in this article is mostly based on readily available factual information regarding process, actors and events, and a critical reading of assumptions and arguments regarding the reasons for its failure in academic literature. It moreover includes points raised during nine semi-structured interviews carried out in Quito, Ecuador, in November and December of 2018. The targeted interview sample consisted of former government officials who had worked directly with the Yasuní-ITT Initiative (4), representatives from NGOs heavily involved in contesting extraction (2), current government officials (2) and one academic. In the reading of the Ecuadorian state and the Yasuní-ITT Initiative presented below, theory-informed inference from the above-mentioned information has resulted in new interpretations of the case study and subsequent theory development.

After describing the Yasuní-ITT Initiative, the progress of the proposal and its ultimate cancellation, the article goes on to point out some key tendencies in the post-mortem academic articles dissecting the reasons for its failure. Most articles engage the abovementioned ‘against all odds’ narrative, and point to various tensions within the government and between the Ecuadorian government and the international scale as reasons for its lack of success. This article argues that conditioned non-extraction as a policy solution should instead be understood as a spatial strategy to ensure continued profit from fossil fuels, but by way of upscaling the issue through a novel

strategy of non-extraction, resulting from shifting relations of power between environmental interests and entrenched oil interests in a new national political administration.

Theoretically, this article thus argues that supply-side climate policy measures do not necessarily constitute a rupture from oil dependency, as they can indeed represent a continuation of it, demonstrating how ‘novelty as an emergent property arising from recombination of old and new’ (Bridge & Gailing, 2020, p. 1041) is an important component to changing geographies of oil. Bridge and Gailing argue that energy transitions are space-making processes, and this is also found in the case of the Yasuní-ITT Initiative, which held the potential of a creative-destructive effect on the energy landscape as well as on social relations across space (Bridge & Gailing, 2020). Further insights on national policy trajectories for supply-side measures can therefore be gained from using perspectives from strategic-relational state theory and geographical political economy.

## 2. The Yasuní-ITT Initiative

The Yasuní National Park is located in the upper Napo Basin of the Western Amazon, by the Ecuadorian border with Peru. It has been one of the most intact areas of the Amazon basin, and is one of the most biodiverse areas on the planet. It is home to the highest number of amphibians and reptiles on Earth, and over 600 avian species (Martin, 2011a). One hectare of forest in Yasuní contains more tree species than are native to the whole of North America (Bass et al., 2010). It is furthermore part of the traditional territories of the Kichwa and Waorani indigenous groups, and of at least two indigenous groups living in voluntary isolation, the Tagaeri and Taromenane (Larrea & Warnars, 2009). The area was established as a national park in 1979. The current Ecuadorian constitution, adopted in 2008, establishes that extractive activities are prohibited in national parks in Ecuador, except when it is within national strategic interests. This has been evoked several times, however, also in the case of extraction in the ITT field.

Within the national park, oil in the Ishpingo, Tambococha and Tiputini (abbreviated ITT) areas of the Yasuní were discovered in the 1990s and early 2000s. These oil reservoirs are estimated to contain 846 million barrels of oil, accounting for approximately 20% of Ecuador’s national reserves (Martínez, 2009). Activists began calling for an oil moratorium in vulnerable Amazon areas in the mid-1990s. The idea of an oil moratorium arose on the coattails of previous efforts to draw attention to the detrimental effects of oil extraction in the Ecuadorian Amazon. Since the late 1980s, the indigenous and environmental movements have worked together through campaigns such as *Amazonía por la vida* (Amazon for life) to increase attention to the damaging socio-

environmental effects of oil extraction in the Amazon. Other important precedents include an international lawsuit against Texaco, later Chevron – where 30,000 indigenous and local small-scale farmer plaintiffs carried out international litigation efforts against the oil company’s dumping of oil and toxic waste, and its social and health consequences – and the Sarayaku indigenous community’s resistance to oil activity in their territories, a case they argued before the Inter-American court and won. Due to these antecedents, actors from the environmental movement argue that there is a relatively high degree of consciousness of the environmental and social costs of oil extraction in Ecuador (Alberto Acosta, interview with author, December 2018; Lewis, 2016).

In 2006, Rafael Correa won the presidential election with promises to break with the neoliberal past. He ran as the leader of the new political alliance *Alianza PAÍS* (‘country alliance’, but also the acronym of ‘proud and sovereign fatherland’ in Spanish), initially a broad platform including indigenous, environmentalist, statist and developmentalist voices (Novo, 2014). Its post-neoliberal political project, named the Citizens’ Revolution, aimed to rebuild the public sector and expand welfare through social programmes and government spending on health, education and infrastructure (Conaghan, 2011).

The organisations *Acción Ecológica* and Oilwatch had developed the idea of leaving the oil in the ground in vulnerable areas of the Amazon into non-extraction of the oil in the ITT field specifically in 2005 (Oilwatch, 2005). Alberto Acosta, a prominent public academic and environmental activist who had been involved in the development of the moratorium idea, was Correa’s first Minister of Energy and Mines, between January and June of 2007. He had a personal relationship with President Correa, and introduced the idea to him while he was Minister. This was developed into the Yasuní-ITT Initiative, and an oil moratorium conditioned upon international compensation was adopted into state policy in the summer of 2007.

An agency was set up to define the initiative, to investigate its international feasibility and to promote it internationally. To legitimate and institutionalise the initiative internationally, a trust fund managed by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) was established. Initially, the payments were for keeping the oil in the ground in a vulnerable area to protect indigenous livelihoods and biodiversity, but this was later reconceptualised as concerning the avoidance of carbon emissions, to better align the initiative with international carbon trading agreements (Pellegrini et al., 2014). The revenues would be directed towards biodiversity conservation, renewable energy sources, social development in the surrounding areas and in innovation and science in the

fields of bio-knowledge, energy and water management (Larrea & Warnars, 2009; Pellegrini et al., 2014).

Despite a high degree of civil society and celebrity support internationally, uncertainty regarding the long-term survival of the initiative and commitment from the Ecuadorian government prevailed amongst potential donors. By May 2013, approximately USD 37 million of the expected USD 3.6 billion had been committed, and only USD 13 million had actually been deposited in the fund (Pellegrini et al., 2014; Sovacool & Scarpaci, 2016). President Correa cancelled the initiative on August 15, 2013, stating that ‘the world has failed us’ (Presidencia de la República del Ecuador, no date). The deposited money was refunded, and oil extraction began in Tiputini in 2016, in Tambococha in 2018, and production in Ishpingo is planned for 2022.

### 3. Literature Review

Several analyses of the initiative and why it was ultimately unsuccessful take as their starting point the sheer unlikeliness of the initiative. Describing its development, Espinosa calls it ‘astonishing’, ‘puzzling’ and ‘a riddle’ given Ecuador’s oil dependency (2013, p. 27). Fierro concurs, opining that ‘the unthinkable happened’, when ‘a country highly dependent on oil revenue was willing to refrain from exploiting its largest oil reserves in exchange for partial compensation’ (2017, p. 265). Kingsbury et al. offer similar statements, arguing that ‘the initiative defied expectations’, and that ‘if anything, that the Yasuní-ITT Initiative emerged in a place like Ecuador at all offers at least some hope for future responses to the challenges of climate change and development’ (2019, p. 531). They further bolster the unlikeliness of it being precisely in Ecuador that the initiative occurred, by concluding that ‘if a petrostate like Ecuador could contemplate leaving the oil in the ground, why can’t others do the same?’ (p. 536). The reoccurring idea that the Yasuní-ITT Initiative occurred despite all odds in effect mirrors Ecuadorian President Correa’s own framing. When he announced the initiative at the UN General Assembly in 2007, he stated that ‘for the first time, an oil producer country, Ecuador, where a third of the resources of the State depends on the exploitation of the above mentioned resources, forgoes this income for the well-being of the whole of humanity and invites the world to join these efforts through a fair compensation’ (Correa, 2007).

The underlying idea is that the government worked against ‘entrenched’ institutions and ‘enduring’ structures of the petro-state, this arguably being a main reason for the initiative’s failure, according to Kingsbury et al. (2019). This includes public opposition from both the Ministry of Energy and Mines and the public oil company Petroecuador, but also generally ‘clientelism, opacity, political verticalism and rent-seeking’ (p. 536). Kingsbury et al.’s analysis of the petrostate, how-

ever, also includes more intangible notions of ‘political culture’ and ‘policy pathways’, where oil extraction is always part of the policy conversation and always understood as the solution. In their article, Kingsbury and colleagues go on to argue that the cancellation of the Yasuní-ITT Initiative boils down to the ‘inability – or unwillingness – to depart from patterns, relationships, and dynamics of the developmentalist petrostate’, and again, that what is most notable is ‘that it emerged at all’ (p. 542).

Another term for the petrostate’s ‘policy pathways’ could be the ‘extractive imperative’, a term conveying how extractivism has taken over ‘the logic of other state activities, reorienting policy objectives to further justify and advance extractivism’ (Arsel et al., 2016, p. 881). Arsel and colleagues developed this term to describe the sheer weight of the extractive industries in Latin America, and the particular paradox of the left-leaning administrations of the early 2000s, including the Correa government, increasing their dependence on extractive activity, and subsequently on a volatile international commodity market, to fund their political projects. This tendency has been coined ‘progressive neo-extractivism’, entailing a more active role of the state, through re-nationalisation, joint ventures and re-negotiation of taxes and royalties (Gudynas, 2011). With this political background of continued and increased extraction framed as the solution to policy issues and a prerequisite for welfare, the Yasuní-ITT Initiative seems even more of an anomaly, as oil extraction was framed as a prerequisite for a generous welfare state.

While the entrenched structures of the petro-state and of oil’s sheer economic importance form a common explanation for its failure, the second common denominator in the literature on Yasuní-ITT is the surfacing of multiple tensions – between state actors, between state and civil society and between geographical scales – understood to directly undermine the initiative’s success (Finer et al., 2010; Martin, 2011a; Pellegrini et al., 2014; Sovacool & Scarpaci, 2016). The public opposition to the initiative by the powerful public oil company Petroecuador, the existence of a Plan B to drill and the ongoing production in the five other oilfields in the Yasuní National Park led to international scepticism about the permanency of the initiative (Certomà & Greyl, 2012; Martin, 2011a). The international legitimacy of the initiative was further questioned, as it did not fit into current international governance frameworks for climate change mitigation (Pellegrini et al., 2014). The Ecuadorian government attempted to increase the initiative’s legitimacy internationally through linking it to carbon emission trading. National civil society was dissatisfied with this turn, as the original proposal to leave the oil untouched was to protect less quantifiable sources

of value, such as the survival of indigenous groups and the preservation of biodiversity (Martin, 2011a; Martínez, 2009). These tensions are portrayed as obstacles to the initiative, somehow external to the initiative itself. By employing strategic relational state theory as laid out below, the same tensions can be understood as inherent features of the social relations that constituted the state at the time, and which also made the initiative possible in itself.

#### 4. Theoretical Framework

The Yasuni-ITT Initiative is here examined as a geographical process, which entails examining the underlying processes that give rise to patterns and scales of activity (Bridge et al., 2013). This analysis is inspired by recent scholarship on energy transitions, which emphasises the space-making properties of energy transition processes: how energy transitions are processes that are constituted by space but are also constitutive of space (Bridge et al., 2013; Bridge & Gailing, 2020; Gailing et al., 2020; Kirshner et al., 2020; Le Billon & Kristoffersen, 2020). Le Billon and Kristoffersen argue that, in particular, supply-side carbon reduction measures can constitute a ‘negotiated’ reshaping of energy spaces, and a more purposeful political intervention compared to market-driven demand reduction. This has spatial implications, as new spaces of political interactions are constituted through energy transition processes (2020). Such spaces range from the local to the geopolitical, and can include local spaces of supply constraints through e.g. blockades (Gaulin & Le Billon, 2020; Le Billon & Kristoffersen, 2020), national public spaces for contesting contentious extractive projects (as in the case of Yasuni-ITT after its cancellation), negotiations between oil industry trade unions and environmental movements (Jordhus-Lier et al., 2021), international divestment campaigns and transnational justice and solidarity networks (Carter & McKenzie, 2020; Le Billon & Kristoffersen, 2020) and international policy coalitions to avoid carbon leakage through other suppliers increasing their production in tandem with decreases elsewhere (Blondeel et al., 2021; Gaulin & Le Billon, 2020).

Bridge and Gailing call for employing a geographical-political-economy perspective with regard to energy transitions. Geographical political economy examines the spatialities of capitalism, and how geography co-evolves with processes of commodity production, market exchange and accumulation (Sheppard, 2011). This perspective facilitates a relational and processual approach to space, and one of its main contributions is the analysis of ‘how sites, scales and spatialities of energy systems are key contemporary sites of struggle, through which broader questions of political economic governance (and the social relations of capitalism) are being worked out’ (Bridge & Gailing, 2020, p. 1040). This perspective provides a useful lens through which the condi-



tioned oil moratorium attempt in the Yasuní can be analysed, and how it is constituted spatially through rescaling.

The concrete way in which this is done in this article is to engage with strategic-relational state theory. Analyses of the national policy trajectories regarding supply-side carbon reduction initiatives could benefit from understanding the state not only as a resource actor, but also as an arena in which different political forces contend with each other for control. This type of analysis is based on Nicos Poulantzas' conceptualisation of the state as a social relation, and as the 'material condensation of societal power relations' (Poulantzas, 2014, p. 127). Bob Jessop further developed this assertion into his strategic relational approach (SRA), where he conceptualises the state as 'reflecting' changing balances of power, and as a 'site', 'arena' or 'terrain of struggles' for different forces (e.g. Jessop, 2007, 2016). The state is therefore a 'presupposition, an arena and an outcome of continually changing social relations' (Brenner, 2004, p. 80). Understanding the state as a 'contested and changing field of discourses, policies and social relations' (Kristoffersen & Young, 2010, p. 578) allows for analyses to give weight to the 'heterogeneity, complexity and contradictoriness of state institutions' (Painter, 2006, p. 764).

The state is thus not a coherent entity or a black box, but an arena in which different political forces contend with each other for control. This entails understanding the tensions and obstacles pointed out by other authors above, not as external factors *affecting* state policy, as there is no sharp divide between state and society, but rather as examples of the type of conflicts of interests that continually *constitute* statehood, at that particular point in time. This argument goes against the notion of the petro-state as a static entity, or as an unwieldy machinery resistant to change, and instead portrays it as a malleable and changing social relation, based on conflict of interests and political struggles.

A strategic-relational approach to studying the state entails understanding the state as a key site for contestation, and political economic resource governance and its space-making processes as outcomes of struggles and complex negotiation processes within the state. As supply-side measures constitute a 'negotiated' reshaping of space, they can potentially constitute climate policy interventions across scales, with the state playing a key role in such potential interventions. Whether successful or not, they are therefore an expression of changing geographies of state intervention into socio-economic processes to reconcile conflicts between interests that attempt to work through the state (Brenner, 2004; Kristoffersen & Young, 2010). Strategic relational state

theory is therefore particularly useful for analysing the political opportunities and obstacles facing 'keep it in the ground' measures.

The spatial dimensions of the strategic-relational state are grasped through the notion of state space. State space is defined by Kristoffersen and Young as 'the spatial strategies through which the state seeks to reconcile conflicts over economic growth, social justice and environmental protection' (2010, p. 578), and by Brenner as 'the changing geographies of state intervention into socio-economic processes' (Brenner, 2004, p. 78). This means that the spatiality of the state is seldom, if ever, permanently fixed, but instead 'represents an emergent, strategically selective, and politically contested process' (Brenner, 2004, p. 89). It is 'actively produced and transformed through socio-political struggles at various geographical scales' (Brenner, 2004, p. 80).

There are, however, some limiting parameters to state spatial strategy. As state space is 'molded into the (territorially differentiated) geography of capital' (Brenner, 2004, p. 16), state action is still conditioned by its position in the international political economy, in the case of Ecuador as a resource exporter. As such, Ecuador's dependence on petroleum rents sets structural limits for state action (Nelson, 2019). Ecuador's extractivism can be conceptualised as the country's accumulation strategy, which, within Marxist state theory, is the specific economic 'growth model', and the 'extra-economic preconditions and general strategy for its realisation', including state institutions and policies capable of reproducing it (Jessop, 1990, p. 198). According to Jessop, the state apparatus is centred around sustaining accumulation strategies, and this is defining for the political and ideological framework within which conflicts of interests are resolved (Jessop, 1990).

In a related argument, Hunold and Dryzek (2005) utilise the term economic imperative, and argue that securing economic growth is one of the state's core functions. The accumulation strategy and economic imperative will influence what is politically possible for environmental interests working through the state to achieve. Hunold and Dryzek find in their historical analyses of relations between environmental movements and the state in different countries that if the environmental movements' aims can be connected to the economic imperative, then there are greater possibilities for these aims to be incorporated into the core of the state. The Yasuní-ITT Initiative demonstrates how non-extraction of oil became official state policy in a country highly dependent on oil revenues, but only in a way that would ensure continued revenues from oil, that is, only in a way that could fulfil the economic imperative. Through this recombination of old and new, the accumulation strategy and economic imperative of the state could both be upheld.

This section has demonstrated how strategic relational state theory can be useful for examining energy transition, including oil moratorium attempts, as geographical processes, as it provides a useful analytical lens through which underlying drivers for spatial patterns and scales of activity can be identified. It can further provide an understanding of the logics of states' political economic governance of resources, including 'keep it in the ground' state policies and other supply-side measures. In the next section, I operationalise this theoretical framework to identify the 'changing fields of social relations' constituting the state and why and how it gave rise to the Yasuni-ITT Initiative but also led to its cancellation, and in the subsequent section I analyse the spatial strategies through which the state seeks to reconcile conflicting interests.

## 5. Changing Field of Social Relations

The state as a field of discourses, policies and 'condensed' social relations went through an upheaval with Rafael Correa's ascendancy to the presidency. Correa's political alliance, *Alianza PAÍS*, was hatched by a small group of academics and intellectuals, and environmental and indigenous organisations originally looked favourably upon his new government (Conaghan, 2011; Nelson, 2019). Persons with long trajectories in environmental organisations gained important positions as both political officials and bureaucrats (Lewis, 2016). As Carlos Larrea, the technical coordinator of the initiative, summed it up, the first few years of the Correa government were a 'unique window of opportunity' for environmental civil society to exert influence on the state apparatus (interview with author, December 2018). The state was open and inclusive of environmental interests, as demonstrated by the adoption of a new constitution incorporating environmentalist propositions, and environmentalists in key government positions.

Correa's first act as president was to call for a referendum on a new constitution, which gained overwhelming popular support. A constituent assembly was tasked with writing the new constitution, which was adopted in 2008. The constituent assembly was characterised by an openness towards new ideas, and was a highly participatory process, with a high degree of civil society input (Gudynas, 2009). One outcome of this was the inclusion of the rights of nature, making Ecuador the first country in the world to provide nature with intrinsic rights (author, X). This move towards a more biocentric understanding of the human–nature relationship was also central to the new official development model of Ecuador, named *Buen Vivir*, or good living, after the indigenous concept of living well in harmony with nature (Lalander, 2016; Radcliffe, 2012; Villalba, 2013). When Correa officially endorsed the Yasuni Initiative in the summer of 2007, it was framed

as a concrete policy measure within the *Buen Vivir* framework (Goeury, 2021; Le Quang, 2016; Lewis, 2016).

With the inclusion of key actors from the environmental movement in government, and environmental civil society's ability to influence the constitution in a biocentric direction, it can be argued that Ecuador experienced an 'environmentalisation of the state' (Kristoffersen & Young, 2010). Despite this vibrant and temporal environmentalisation of the state, extraction in the ITT oilfield was never completely ruled out. Correa's political programme, the Citizens' Revolution, required increased public spending towards state projects and social programmes. The Correa government is characterised by the same set of contradictions as other states that are also part of Latin America's pink tide: while proclaiming change, sovereignty and social justice, their political projects remained dependent on immediate revenues from natural resource extraction, giving rise to neo-extractivist logics and practices, a 'pink state' extractivist imperative (Arsel et al., 2016).

There were tensions between the Acosta-led Ministry of Energy and Mines and the public oil company Petroecuador, whose 'historical place' within government hierarchy is significant (Martin, 2011a, p. 68). The President of Petroecuador publicly disputed the initiative, and argued for the necessity of revenues from oil extraction in the ITT field. Oil prices soared in 2007, and a Plan B to start oil production was developed, with Petroecuador discussing possible deals to develop the ITT fields with Venezuelan, Brazilian, Chinese and Chilean oil companies (Martin, 2011b). The leadership of Petroecuador hoped that their negotiating would convince Correa to decide to extract the fields (Martin, 2011a). In January 2009, the Minister of Mining and Petroleum (renamed from the Ministry of Energy and Mines in 2007), Derlis Palacios, actually announced future biddings for the ITT blocks, stating that keeping the oil in the ground would be considered if an immediate solution was found, but that the country needed money. The Minister of Foreign Affairs, Fander Falconí, rebutted this announcement and apologised for the miscommunication, while President Correa reiterated his endorsement of the initiative and made it official foreign policy without a deadline (Martin, 2011b).

While supporting the initiative, Correa grew increasingly hostile to what he deemed special interest groups, including environmental NGOs and activists who were increasingly criminalised and harassed (de la Torre, 2013; Goeury, 2021; Lewis, 2016). He also famously called environmentalists 'infantile' and argued that 'we cannot be beggars sitting on a sack of gold' (Becker, 2011). Eduardo Pichilingue, an official in the Ministry of the Environment during these first few years

and a founding member of *Yasunidos*, a national movement opposing extraction, argued that when Correa made the initiative state policy, he still had not 'felt the pressure from the oil sector'. His later zig-zagging on the issue can be explained by an increased awareness of this pressure, from both within and outside government (interview with author, December 2018). President Correa's contradictory public statements and his 'zigzag policy approach' (PL Martin, 2011: 33) reflect the condensation of the social power relations of a greening oil-dependent state. While actors from a relatively strong national environmental movement influenced Correa's political project initially, the project also continued to rely on revenues from the oil industry to finance its social policy, and co-existed with entrenched oil interests in government.

The partial commitment to non-extraction was also apparent in the spaces of government related to the initiative. There was a lack of clarity regarding where the responsibility lay among the Ministry of the Environment, the Ministry of Energy and Mines, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Finance (Rival, 2012). Three Ministers of Foreign Affairs and three negotiating teams resigned due to disagreements with Correa (Sovacool & Scarpaci, 2016). Carlos Larrea, technical coordinator of the initiative, argued that the government was always doubtful of the initiative, and did not give the Administrative and Leadership Council, the government agency responsible for the initiative, the necessary resources to promote it internationally (interview with author, December 2018).

The confusion surrounding its institutionalisation and the mixed signals from the tensions described above meant that no official dialogue with civil society or participatory mechanisms were initiated in the design of the international proposal, despite several key actors having recently transitioned from civil society to government. The environmentalisation of the state 'did not require civil society actors to keep a (confrontational) distance from the state', as they saw it as taking initial steps in the right direction (Arsel and Angel, p. 216). Civil society actors believed that the initiative was safe once it was made into state policy, and they 'committed a very grave error: they withdrew' (Acosta, interview with author, December 2018). This meant that civil society was not putting constant pressure on the government, nor gaining international allies to put pressure on supporting countries (Acosta, interview with author, December 2018). Once the initiative had been adopted into national (foreign) policy, the political space for civil society participation shrunk, and they were largely left out of the process (Arsel & Angel, 2012). This is in line with Hunold and Dryzek's comparative historical analysis of relations between environmental movements and the

state, where they find that in an actively inclusive state, where environmental interests are given a voice and gain access to the core of the state, there is a weak independent critical green public sphere, with more moderate demands (Dryzek et al., 2003). While their analysis is of comparative longitudinal history, some features of the actively inclusive state were present in the Ecuadorian state during the Yasuní-ITT Initiative, including that of grassroots with diminished power.

To sum up, Correa's first government constituted a partial and temporal environmentalisation of the petro-state, apparent from the discourse of the new constitution and development model, and from key actors from the environmental movement gaining important positions in both government and bureaucracy during Correa's first government. These coexisted with deep-seated oil interests, not only in the political standing and influence of the public oil company Petroecuador, but also in the Correa government's increased reliance on revenues from extractive industries to finance an expanded welfare state. As a result of the constellations of interests involved in government at that certain point in time, an idea from environmental civil society was incorporated into the core of government, yet in such a manner that it would *not* compromise the petro-state's reliance on continued oil revenues.

## 6. State Spatial Strategy

The previous section establishes how the Yasuní-ITT Initiative can be understood as a purposeful political intervention resulting from a changing field of social relations within the state. The partial and temporal environmentalisation of the Ecuadorian state meant that it was partially welcoming to the idea of non-extraction, but with certain conditions, and there was a need to diverge and share the risk. The solution was found in a specific intervention with spatial dimensions: the state's accumulation strategy was reconceptualised and reproduced through rescaling. This spatial strategy consisted of the internationalisation of the proposal to leave the oil in the ground, and to make the oil in the ITT field a global resource. When President Correa presented the initiative internationally, he stated that, while Ecuador did not ask for charity, they did 'ask that the international community shares in the sacrifice and compensates us' (Martin, 2011a, p. 44). He went on to argue that 'in economic terms, what we would be doing is compensating for the generation of value', and by value meaning preservation of biodiversity, the protection of indigenous lives and ways of life, and mitigation of climate change through avoiding pollution (Rival, 2010, p. 358).

The Administrative and Leadership Council for the initiative met extensively with international actors and other national governments to garner support and promote compensation, at-

tempting to utilise the global scale to their advantage. However, the international scaling of the initiative did not fit into the existing frameworks of global environmental governance focusing on curbing emissions through demand-side efforts. Reaching an international institutionalisation required negotiation and bargaining within the existing governance framework, and, throughout the six years of the existence of the initiative, there was a gradual process to align it more with avoided carbon emission trading schemes, to better fit into the Kyoto-era framework of global environmental governance. In addition to direct donations from governments, organisations and individuals, the secretariat created Yasuní Certificates of Guarantee, which were given the value of one tonne of CO<sub>2</sub>. These were pegged to the European Emission Trading scheme, but they were not tradeable. Through these certificates, the value of non-extraction of oil in ITT was re-conceptualised. From emphasising leaving the oil in the ground for biological diversity and the rights of indigenous groups as a value in itself, there was a gradual economisation of its benefits, to make the initiative fit into discourses on and schemes for avoiding carbon emissions.

Le Billon and Kristoffersen argue that supply-side measures would benefit from (re)assertions of ‘non-carbon’ values of places, for example, through indigenous values and territorialities (2020). In the case of the Yasuní-ITT Initiative, the attempt to align it with non-carbon values was not conducive to international support. This is also a question of timing. Ecuador was a ‘first-mover’ among states proposing to keep oil in the ground, and its timing was premature. There has later been a rapid growth in supply-side interventions to reduce carbon emissions in the past decade, and they are increasingly part of discussions on how to reach the emission reduction targets of the Paris Agreement (Carter & McKenzie, 2020; Gaulin & Le Billon, 2020).

State spatial strategy is produced and transformed by processes at various geographical scales, and this includes supra-national scales. In Ecuador, new spaces of national political economic resource governance were attempted through rescaling, but this had to be aligned with existing political spaces of climate change mitigation as part of the demand-side reduction of carbon emissions. The initiative was therefore both constituted and constitutive of space. The ITT oilfield has been moulded into the global geographies of capital and the geographies of climate change mitigation, which encompass the global scale.

While the initiative developed through an interplay between the national and the international scale, it was characterised by a complete non-involvement of the local scale. One of the main strands of argumentation for protecting the Yasuní is that it is the territory of indigenous peoples

living in voluntary isolation. These groups are naturally not participating in national politics, and their continued isolation and survival is defended by national civil society. Within the Yasuní there are, however, also Waorani and Kichwa groups, and *colonos*, small-scale farmers who have originally migrated from other parts of the country. Neither local people living in the Yasuní, nor local mayors and governors, nor organisations or local leaders had any input in the design of the initiative (Martínez, 2009; Rival, 2012).

The purposeful re-scaling efforts of the Ecuadorian government demonstrate how the petro-state, despite a partial environmentalisation, does not have confidence in the local scale to impact the most important industry in the country, leading to a diminishing political space for local grassroots movements. This implies that, when a state is so dependent on continued extraction, the local scale does not have the same room for manoeuvre, as the national oil apparatus would not risk concessions in oil production, either through leaving the oil in the ground with no compensation, or through costly local demands. It is therefore easier to attempt an upward scale-shifting to seek alternative extractivisms, rather than risking bottom-up approaches against extractivism. Moving towards the international scale is the less risky spatial strategy of the extractivist state.

Upon cancelling the Yasuní-ITT initiative on August 15, 2013, President Correa stated that ‘the world has failed us’ (Presidencia de la República del Ecuador, no date). Internationally, Ecuador was able to uphold a green image of a supply-side first mover, trying to establish new structures and mechanisms in global environmental governance, but ultimately not finding the means. Nationally, the state spatial strategy of making the initiative global meant that blame could be placed on the international community and on their refusal to compensate Ecuador, a country in need of oil revenues, for avoided emissions. Throughout the six years of the initiative’s existence, there was, however, a concerted government effort to educate the Ecuadorian public on Yasuní’s value and singularity on a global scale. The initiative’s cancellation led to public demonstrations, and opposition has remained large. The lack of support internationally has therefore needed to be complemented by additional arguments for extraction, from the state.

The state has attempted to legitimate extraction of the ITT oilfield through two main strands of argumentation: firstly, through connecting the revenues from the ITT oil directly to immediate and particular national economic needs, such as paying international debt and balancing the national budget, and more generally to developmentalist and Keynesian arguments to finance public services. Being able to demonstrate that oil extraction in the Yasuní has favourable



economic results is 'the principal weapon' of the government to stave off public opposition to extraction, which the government previously cultivated (Dania Quirola, former Environmental Advisor to the Minister of Planning and Development and member of the Government's Yasuni-ITT team, interview with author, December 2018). Secondly, government officials and representatives from Petroecuador keep assuring that oil operations in the ITT are of the highest socio-environmental standards and that 'cutting-edge technology' is utilised, with oil operations utilising platforms and horizontal perforations, to minimise the area affected, alongside reforestation projects (Tarcisio Granizo, former Minister of the Environment, interview with author, December 2018). The need to legitimate oil production in the ITT oilfield is a direct political outcome of the state spatial strategy stemming from the partial and temporal environmentalisation of the petro-state, and its failed attempt to sustain an extractivist accumulation strategy through reconceptualisation of the value of oil and re-scaling of the political space for political economic resource governance.

## 7. Concluding Discussion

The analysis presented in this article contributes to three different theoretical debates. Its first contribution is case-specific. Previous analyses of Ecuador's Yasuni-ITT Initiative to avoid extracting its largest oil reservoir in vulnerable areas in the Yasuni National Park have emphasised the unlikelihood and incredibility of it being precisely an oil-dependent country in the Global South that proposed the first major oil moratorium attempt internationally. Its cancellation is attributed to external pressures from the oil sector, and tensions between state actors and state and civil society (Finer et al., 2010; Martin, 2011a; Pellegrini et al., 2014; Sovacool & Scarpaci, 2016). This article has examined the initiative as a geographical process, and presents a re-interpretation of the reasons for its enactment and cancellation. Through adopting a state space approach, it argues that an oil moratorium attempt conditioned upon international compensation should be understood as state strategy attempting to reconcile conflicts of interests within the state, as an idea stemming from environmental civil society was converted into state policy in a manner that would also appease entrenched oil interests.

This strategy constitutes a re-scaling of the political space and tools available for an oil-dependent state in the face of increased pressures from environmental interests within the state. This re-scaling demonstrates how changing geographies of state intervention into socio-economic processes could ensure continued income from oil, either in the form of compensation, or by legitimising their continued existence as a petro-state and for business as usual if the attempt failed.

Most petro-states continue to push for increased extraction (Le Billon & Kristoffersen, 2020). Fossil fuel producers tend to place the responsibility to act on emission reduction on the demand-side, implying that they will not do anything before they are forced to. The Ecuadorian government's official discourse is that they attempted to be first-movers, but the world failed them: a different type of legitimation that nonetheless legitimises business as usual, and the petro-state's status quo. This risk sharing internationally is as such a *result* of 'the entrenched institutions of the petro-state' (Kingsbury et al., 2019), rather than a long-shot paradoxical development facing numerous obstacles from the petro-state.

The second contribution of this article is towards the literature on supply cuts for fossil fuels, where there have been calls for further analysis of national policy trajectories and what makes an initiative successful or not (Carter & McKenzie, 2020). Supply-side measures such as keeping the oil in the ground are increasingly discussed as a necessary part of the policy mix to reach international emission reduction targets, with calls in 2021 from both the United Nations and the International Energy Agency (IEA) to put an end to oil exploration (IEA, 2021a; UN Secretary-General, 2021). The timing of the initiative was, in this regard, premature. If supply-side policies are to become part of the 'climate policy "toolkit"' (Green & Denniss, 2018), then the next steps of the Paris Agreement might entail a role for moratoriums, with or without compensation.

Carter and McKenzie identify the most conducive conditions for 'keep it in the ground' policies, and find that locally rooted campaigns, alliances between organisations both nationally and internationally, political opportunities and convincing issue frames are key factors (2020). Their analysis assumes that 'keep it in the ground' initiatives stem from civil society, as was originally the case for the Yasuní-ITT Initiative, but it also assumes that contentious politics and pressure on government is required to instigate such a major political shift. The analysis of the Yasuní-ITT Initiative offered here demonstrates how, firstly, such policy innovations can indeed stem from conflicts of interests *within* the state, and, secondly, such policies represent a continuation of petro-dependency, rather than a disruption of it.

The latter point feeds into discussions on the spatialities of supply-driven energy transition (Le Billon & Kristoffersen, 2020), pointing to the third contribution by this article. The Yasuní-ITT Initiative was still an attempt to profit from fossil fuels, but through a novel strategy of non-extraction. Conflicts of interests continually constitute state strategy, and the Yasuní-ITT Initiative was a spatial outcome of the state's attempt at political economic governance encompassing both

environmentalist and oil interests within the state apparatus, attesting to Bridge and Gailing's assertion that energy transitions are space-making processes (2020). The state spatial strategy entailed a re-scaling of the political space for resource governance, and changes to the geographies of petro-statehood and its spaces of state intervention.

From a geographical-political-economy perspective, it can be argued that an internationalisation of attempts to move away from extractivism was a more likely choice than engaging with the local scale, where non-extraction without compensation could be risked. This implies an expansion of the repertoires of action available for petro-states to profit off of oil in new ways and sustain their accumulation strategies. Therefore, beyond calls for further analysis of state-civil society relations in supply-side energy transition research, studies of the changing spatialities of energy production and consumption, including moratorium attempts, could benefit from employing a strategic-relational state space conceptual approach, understanding political economic resource governance as outcomes of conflicts of interests within the state.



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# Article 3: Mapping Terrains of Struggle: State Space and the Spatiality of Oil Mobilisation in Ecuador and Peru

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# Mapping terrains of struggle: State space and the spatiality of oil mobilisation in Ecuador and Peru

## Abstract

The analysis presented in this article departs from observing the differences in the spatiality of mobilising strategies regarding the most contentious and politicised oil projects in neighbouring Ecuador and Peru: Yasuní-ITT and Block 192. In the case of Ecuador's Yasuní-ITT, mobilisation has been national, removed from the oil project's spatial embeddedness and directed at oil extraction in itself. In the case of Peru's Block 192, mobilisation has been local, linked to territory and directed at the terms and conditions of extraction. The deconstruction and reassessment of context emerged through an exploratory and process-based cross-border comparison. The article analyses secondary literature, a large sample of news items regarding the two oilfields, and research interviews with key actors in Ecuador and Peru. It argues that approaches from critical state theory can be applied to explain the spatiality of mobilising strategies. Historical state spatial strategies to ensure accumulation through extractivism, mobilisation over the consequences of such strategies, and the way in which the extractive project in question fits into a hegemonic accumulation strategy are found to be important dimensions shaping the spatiality of mobilisation.

## Keywords

Ecuador, mobilization, oil, Peru, state spatial strategy

## 1. Introduction

Resource extraction is among the main reasons for social conflict in Latin America (Bebbington & Bury, 2013). Over the last few decades, both neoliberal and ostensibly post-neoliberal governments have promoted extractive mega-projects, either through state-owned companies or through facilitating international investment and extractive activity by multinational companies. A 'commodity consensus' has replaced the Washington Consensus (Svampa, 2012b), leading to displacement, detrimental local socio-environmental effects, and social conflict. There is a large body of literature on contentious resource extraction in Latin America, which can broadly be divided into two main strands. The first examines the local scale, and local (often indigenous) communities' strategies for

resistance and encounters with the state apparatus through processes of protest and dialogue (e.g., Acuña, 2015; Avcı, 2017; Avcı & Fernández-Salvador, 2016; Bebbington & Scurrah, 2013; Guzmán-Gallegos, 2017; Laastad, 2021; Orta-Martínez & Finer, 2010; Orta-Martínez et al., 2018). The second strand is the study of national governments' extractivism, their discursive legitimations and the degree to which there has been a real difference between self-proclaimed post-neoliberal governments and neoliberal governments in Latin America (e.g., Andreucci & Radhuber, 2017; Bebbington, 2012; Bebbington & Humphreys Bebbington, 2011; Humphreys Bebbington & Bebbington, 2012; Kingsbury et al., 2019; Pellegrini, 2018; Van Teijlingen, 2016; Wilson & Bayón, 2017).

This article contributes to this body of literature through an analysis of the spatiality of mobilisation. The empirical point of departure is the spatial differences in mobilisation regarding oil extraction in the most politicised and controversial oilfields in Ecuador and Peru. The Ecuadorian oilfield Yasuní-ITT and the Peruvian oilfield Block 192 are a mere hundred kilometres apart, on either side of the border between Ecuador and Peru in the Amazon. They are located in one of the most biodiverse areas of the world and superimposed on indigenous territories. In Ecuador, oil extraction in the ITT field (abbreviated from Ishpingo, Tambococha, Tiputini) in the Yasuní National Park has on several occasions led to nation-wide mobilisation (Coryat, 2015). It has been evoked in national political discourse, and it 'flows beyond its spatial specificity' (Kingsbury et al., 2019, p. 543). Block 192 in Peru is a mature oilfield which has been operating since 1971. Ongoing socio-environmental conflicts here are issue-based, and local actors engage in militant particularism, attempting to condition oil extraction upon service provision, local royalties and environmental remediation, rather than questioning oil extraction itself.

This article's understanding of mobilisation over oil production in these oilfields as geographical processes allows for an examination of the underlying processes and drivers that give rise to patterns and scales of economic and social activity (Bridge et al., 2013). Rather than considering the differences in spatiality of mobilisation as simply a question of different national contexts, this cross-border comparison functions as a deconstruction and reassessment of context, with the aim of uncovering central explanatory factors in the spatial differences of mobilisation.

Evolving state spatial strategies to ensure economic growth through extractivism are found to be important dimensions shaping the political space in which mobilising over oil takes place. State spatial strategies both shape and are shaped by socio-political struggle, and an analytical ap-

proach inspired by theories of state spatial strategies therefore allows for a relational understanding of state action and civil society mobilisation, cutting across analyses of both local opposition and state extractivism. The aim of this article is, therefore, to examine how the spatiality of mobilising strategies over contentious oil projects is shaped by state spatial strategies. It is guided by the following research questions: *Which are the most important processes producing the 'terrain of socio-political struggle' over oil in Ecuador and Peru? How do they impact the political space for mobilising over oil production in Block 192 and Yasuní-ITT?*

After presenting the theoretical framework and analytical strategy of this study, the article elaborates on the different spatialities of mobilising strategies in the two cases. It seeks answers to the first research question through the use of secondary literature, tracing first, how historical state spatial strategies have incorporated the Amazon into state space as sites for extractive accumulation; and second, how indigenous movements in each country have mobilised in different ways over the detrimental socio-environmental consequences of such strategies. A third important process characterising the dynamics of mobilisation concerns the changing state discourse on economic growth and accumulation in Ecuador, epitomised by the Yasuní-ITT Initiative, in which oil was attempted left in the ground in return for international compensation.

Historical state spatial strategies to ensure accumulation, mobilisation over the consequences of these, and the way in which the extractive project in question fits into a hegemonic accumulation strategy constitute the 'terrain of socio-political struggle' over oil in Ecuador and Peru and impact the political space in which mobilising over oil production can take place. In the case of Block 192, mobilisation occurs at the regional and local level. It concerns the conditions of extraction and does not challenge oil extraction in itself. In the case of Yasuní-ITT, the discursive decoupling of the Yasuní from the extractivist state accumulation strategy allowed mobilising actors to demand non-extraction per se at the national level. In conclusion, the article calls for further analyses identifying connections between the ongoing production and transformation of state spatial strategies and the spatiality of contention over the production processes of hegemonic accumulation strategies (Jessop, 1990).

## **2. Theoretical Framework and Analytical Strategy**

After reviewing previous research on geographies of contention, this section argues that a state space theoretical approach can be useful for understanding the spatiality of mobilisation. It concludes by presenting the methodology and methods employed to achieve this understanding in this

study. Research on mobilisation and protest over resource extraction tends to focus on social movements' political opportunities, strategies and struggles (e.g., Bebbington, 2012; Brown & Spiegel, 2017; Cezne, 2019; Dukpa et al., 2018; Engels, 2018; Houeland, 2020; Mai-Bornu, 2019; Walter & Urkidi, 2017). Contentious politics is a commonly applied framework for analyses of those political opportunities for social movements which arise from the varying forms of interactions between governments and political actors, as well as the ways in which such political opportunities structure movements' repertoires of contention, that is, the methods of protest that actors use (Tilly & Tarrow, 2015). Tarrow (1998) posits that most political opportunities and constraints are situational. They will vary according to the uneven geography of state power and prior history of contention (Crossley, 2002). To further their claims and inspire mobilisation, social movements utilise ideas and meanings to develop collective action frames through which sense is made of events, blame, responsibility and solutions. Benford and Snow (2000) argue that cultural as well as political opportunities and restraints are important, as successful frames require cultural resonance. These arguments point towards the fundamental importance of geography to understand how and why actors mobilise, since social movements' political opportunities, repertoires and frames are both contextual and situational.

Several authors have called for spatial perspectives to be incorporated in studies of contentious politics to 'produce more illuminating understandings of how people perceive, shape, and act upon grievances and opportunities' (Martin & Miller, 2003, p. 143). Most scholarship which applies spatial perspectives to contentious politics focuses either on social movements' spatial representations and how they are utilised (e.g., Kurtz, 2003; Martin, 2003, 2013) or on how geographical location impacts mobilisation and protest (e.g., Sewell, 2001; Wolford, 2003). These works concern spatial practice (Lefebvre, 1991).

Notions of space more aligned with Lefebvre's representational space – the lived experience of space and the layers of meaning ascribed to it – have also been utilised in accounts analysing contentious politics. An example of this is Routledge's 'terrains of resistance', which he defines as 'the specific geographical, historical, political economic, ecological, and cultural contexts of movement agency' (Routledge, 1994, p. 560). Terrains of resistance encompass both the geographical ground and the representational space of social movements' action, and identifying its components can help explain why movements occur where they do (Routledge, 1996).



Such accounts provide situated and contextual analyses of contentious politics, eschewing mechanistic explanations in favour of processual ones. They do, however, employ a more contained notion of space, focusing on social movement actors' spatial representations, and how surrounding space mediates mobilisation. A similar emphasis on the spatial representations of movement actors is found in more recent geographic scholarship on resistance to resource extraction in Latin America, in which several studies employ territory as a main analytical lens. Territory is related to representational space, as it has more recently been defined as the 'totality of social relations historically produced in a particular space and the meanings different groups have assigned to it' (Avcı & Fernández-Salvador, 2016, p. 912). Laing (2020) finds in her analysis of the *Territorio Indígena y Parque Nacional Isiboro-Sécure* (TIPNIS) conflict in Bolivia, which concerned a road project that would have facilitated hydrocarbon exploration in a national park and indigenous territory, that throughout the conflict between the national government and indigenous organisations, territory was 're-inscribed, re-worked and re-signified' (p. 36). She argues that 'contentious politics is used to confront hegemonic forms of territorial power and control and open space for a plurality of alternative understandings of territory' (p. 29). Avcı and Fernández-Salvador (2016) demonstrate how territorial claims are a central factor in explaining the different trajectories of two mining conflicts in Ecuador. In sum, territory is a main signifier through which actors ascribe meaning to resource extraction, and it directly impacts their degree of opposition.

Movement actors' identities and their relation to space are unquestionably fundamental for action. These are useful concepts for grounded and contextual analyses of the internal factors of resource conflicts, and how local actors represent their resistance. To analyse the spatiality of mobilising strategies, however, this article draws on approaches from critical state theory. According to critical state theory, socio-political struggles involving governments and political actors, as examined in contentious politics literature, can also be reflected within the state (Jessop, 2007, 2016). Critical state theory understands the state as a 'presupposition, an arena and an outcome of continually changing social relations' (Brenner, 2004, p. 80) and a 'contested and changing field of discourses, policies and social relations' (Kristoffersen & Young, 2010, p. 578). The spatial dimensions of such a processual understanding of the state are encompassed in the notion of state space. Rather than understanding the state as a permanent and monolithic entity, state space is cast as an 'emergent, strategically selective, and politically contested process' (Brenner, 2004, p. 89).

This article takes a political economy approach to argue that ensuring economic growth is one core function of the state (Hunold & Dryzek, 2005; Jessop, 1990). Jessop (1990) discussed how the state apparatus is centred around consolidating support and facilitating a hegemonic position for the state accumulation strategy. Accumulation strategy, defined as ‘a specific economic ‘growth model’ and the ‘extra-economic preconditions and general strategy for its realisation’ (Jessop, 1990, p. 198), emerges when ‘a model of economic growth is linked to a framework of institutions and state policies that are capable of reproducing it’ (Brenner, 2004, p. 84). The main strategy for achieving economic growth and state revenues in both Ecuador and Peru is the export of unprocessed commodities, and ‘justifying and advancing’ extractive activity is a main policy objective (Arsel et al., 2016, p. 881). This article therefore defines extractivism as an accumulation strategy.

Accumulation is an underlying driver for state spatial strategy, which can be defined as ‘the indirect socio-spatial effects that flow from apparently aspatial policies’ (Brenner, 2004, p. 80) and ‘the capacity of state institutions to influence the geographies of accumulation and political struggle’ (Brenner, 2004, p. 91). According to Brenner et al., socio-political actors’ actions are conditioned upon already ‘established, emerging or potential state spaces’ (2003, p. 10), and evolving state space therefore shapes the ‘terrain of socio-political struggle’ (2003, p. 11). Socio-political struggle at different scales also has the potential to produce and modify state space, however, through representations and articulations of space. Thus, there is also a representational dimension to state space. Understanding state space as the outcome of changing social relations and political practices implies that state space is negotiated and articulated, as well as continually produced and transformed, through a range of discursive and representational strategies, by both state and non-state actors (Brenner et al., 2003). This dialectical proposition suggests first, that state space is one important dimension of political opportunities for mobilising, and second, that examining both historical processes for articulations and production of state space, and previous processes of socio-political contention, can help explain current spatialities of mobilising strategies.

Jessop argues that for a state’s accumulation strategy to be accepted by the state’s population, there is a need for a ‘flow of material concessions’ (1990, p. 161) – concessions which are themselves dependent on promoting accumulation. Within the state’s strategies for accumulation there is still room for conflicts over policies, as long as they occur within an ‘acceptable “policy paradigm” setting the parameters of public choice’ (Jessop, 1990, p. 161). This policy paradigm

constitutes a space within which 'conflicts over competing interests and demands can be negotiated without threatening the overall project' (Jessop, 1990, p. 210).

Valdivia (2008) introduces the term 'rentist compromise' to argue that when a state becomes responsible for national development through the use of ground rent, opposing extraction in itself would equal opposing progress; by governing petroleum, the state therefore also governs what is politically possible for citizens to opine. The 'rentist compromise' can be understood as a policy paradigm whereby the underlying conditions for economic growth through extraction are accepted, but the conditions for extraction and the distribution of benefits are subject to conflictual negotiation. In the case of Ecuador in the 1990s and 2000s, this has meant that protest regarding oil production has not concerned stopping production but, rather, the conditions of production, including improved management and revenue distribution (Valdivia, 2008). Perreault and Valdivia similarly argue, by comparing mobilisation over hydrocarbon resources in Bolivia and Ecuador, that the goal of opposing 'hegemonic practices of hydrocarbon governance' is not to stop production or abolish state structures, but 'to intervene in the terms and intentions of such governance' (2010, p. 697).

This goal changed with mobilisation over Yasuní-ITT, as will be discussed below. The 'rentist compromise' does, however, suggest two things. First, it is likely that the flow of material concessions and the policy paradigm within which conflict can occur will shape the political space for mobilisation. Second, upholding the hegemony of state accumulation strategy affects mobilising strategies, while the governing of oil – and the ways in which state accumulation through oil is articulated and represented – has implications for mobilisation over oil and the spatiality of mobilising strategies. If economic growth through extractivism has a hegemonic position, then the political space for mobilising will only allow negotiation of local and particularistic measures. If the hegemonic position of extractivist accumulation is somewhat destabilised, however, or decoupled from the oil project in question, then mobilisation can potentially address oil extraction in itself and break loose from its spatial specificity.

After analysing mobilisation regarding Yasuní-ITT and Block 192 as geographical processes and highlighting how they constitute spatially different strategies, this article identifies processes through which the spatial dimensions of underlying state accumulation strategies shape the terrain of struggle over oil in Ecuador and Peru. *Where* mobilisation can take place, that is, at which geographical scale, is influenced by past consolidation of state space and prior socio-political struggle.

*What* can be mobilised over is dependent on the degree to which economic growth through extractivism is hegemonic.

Understanding state space as constituting the ‘terrain of socio-political struggle’ but also as continually produced and transformed through a range of discursive and representational strategies by both state and non-state actors implies, as stated above, that explanations of current features of state space can be found in historical and political processes and, consequently, sought in different points in time and space. Finding such explanations can be facilitated by a process approach to case studies, as was taken for this article. Unlike variable-oriented approaches to causal relations, which aim to generate generalised relations between variables, the process approach deals with events and the processes that connect them, resulting in contextually grounded findings and revealing processes and patterns to expand on theory (Maxwell, 2004). This approach entails a flexible, abductive and interpretive methodology, basically enabling the researcher to ‘follow the inquiry’ (Bartlett & Vavrus, 2017, p. 120).

The oil projects examined were chosen for their similarity and dissimilarity. They are geographically proximate to each other, and both are located in mega-biodiverse areas of the Amazon, superimposed on indigenous territories. They have both been the source of long-term controversies in multiple parallel processes, as well as the subject of mobilisation and conflict. They are, however, highly dissimilar in terms of temporality (production has been ongoing in Peruvian Block 192 since 1971, whereas extraction in the ITT commenced in 2016), public reaction to oil extraction in the areas, and spatiality of mobilisation. To compare two cases that are similar (instances of the same thing) and dissimilar (in timing and context) can be particularly fruitful for theory development, as it entails a re-assessment of what is taken for granted about a social phenomenon, enabling it to be approached in a novel way and cast in a different light (Bartlett & Vavrus, 2017). Comparing processes in two neighbouring countries, in particular, is a way to establish which explanatory factors are central in regard to differences in trajectories (Bebbington et al., 2019).

In practice, this approach entailed finding out as much about each case as possible, with the aim of identifying patterns. This analysis relies on peer-reviewed secondary sources and literature as well as a large sample of news items from the online archives of the two largest dailies of both countries. As major new developments occurred regarding Block 192 in 2015, the sample from Peru encompasses 487 articles from 2015 until mid-2018 from *La República* and *El Comercio*.

*cio*. The sample from Ecuador encompasses 317 articles from August 2013, when the Yasuní-ITT Initiative was cancelled, until mid-2018 from *El Comercio* and *El Universo*. These newspapers are not politically neutral, and I have been careful not to use them for causal analysis but, rather, to understand the context and timeline of events. This analysis was followed by semi-structured interviews with key actors in the two countries<sup>1</sup>. The analysis is thus the result of both within-case analysis and across-case comparison. The first of these involves an in-depth exploration of the case, while the latter facilitates the identification of themes and relationships between them (Ayres et al., 2003). Themes were finally synthesised into an analysis of the causes of the differences in the spatiality of oil mobilisation in Ecuador and Peru.

### 3. Spatiality of Strategies

#### 3.1. Block 192

Block 192 is Peru's largest and oldest oilfield, located in the Northern Peruvian Amazon next to the border with Ecuador. Operation commenced in 1971 under its previous name, Block 1AB. It encompasses an area totalling 4970 km<sup>2</sup>, with 118 oil wells currently active, and produces approximately 11,000 barrels a day, which represents around 15% of the total oil production in Peru (United Nations Development Programme [UNDP] Peru, 2018). The oilfield overlaps with the Corrientes, Pastaza and Tigre river basins, where an indigenous population of 45,000 Achuar, Kichwa and Quechua people live (Instituto del Bien Común, 2016, as cited in Orta-Martínez et al., 2018). In 2015, the operating contract with the transnational company Pluspetrol expired. An international bidding round for new operators followed; however, it concluded without any international company expressing interest (El Comercio, 2015a). Fearing it would have to close down operations completely, the national government resorted to direct negotiations with three oil companies, which resulted in an interim contract with Canadian oil company Pacific Rubiales (renamed Frontera Energy in 2017) (El Comercio, 2015b). The public oil company Petroperú assumed ownership and production responsibilities in July 2021 (La República, 2021). There is general agreement that the contract with Petroperú and an operating partner with a duration of

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<sup>1</sup> In Peru, this consisted of representatives from NGOs with experience working with the indigenous communities in Block 192 (9), government officials directly involved in negotiations and policies related to Block 192 (7), one representative from the oil sector, engaged academics (2), advisors to the indigenous federations from Block 192 (3) and one leader of the indigenous federations representing the communities within Block 192. The sample in Ecuador consisted of former government officials who had worked directly with the Yasuní-ITT Initiative (4), representatives from NGOs heavily involved in contesting extraction (2), current government officials (2) and one academic.

thirty years will be the last contract negotiated for Block 192, as the remaining reserves will most likely have been extracted by then.

The unsuccessful bidding round in 2015 and fears of a complete end to production led to considerable popular protest in Iquitos, the capital of Loreto, Peru's Amazon region where Block 192 is situated. The protests were instigated by the regional governor and his base organisations. They demanded that the national oil company, Petroperú, assume production responsibilities, arguing that it might be able to do so without expecting to discover new deposits and great future revenues, unlike international companies. In August 2015, a 48-hour general strike in Loreto, and a protest attended by 70,000 people in Iquitos, the region's capital, enabled these demands to be shifted upwards in scale. Public ownership became the subject of debate in Congress, where a law was ultimately passed allowing Petroperú to assume ownership in a joint venture partnership.

Parallel to regional protests calling for public ownership as a way to ensure continued production, indigenous federations representing the communities living inside Block 192 have carved out a political space resting upon the state's hegemonic accumulation strategy, attempting to shape state space through forcefully drawing attention to the local scale. Local indigenous federations have the capacity to easily halt oil production through takeovers of oil installations. They have demanded environmental remediation, health services, development programmes and prior consultation. When these claims are not met, the indigenous federations threaten to occupy oil infrastructure, shutting down oil production. High-level government officials have tended to travel to the area to negotiate when such threats are made, which has led to a series of agreements between the government and the federations regarding some (heavily delayed and partial) government services and environmental remediation programmes (Bebbington & Scurrah, 2013; Guzmán-Gallegos, 2017; Laastad, 2021; Orta-Martínez et al., 2018).

### **3.2. Yasuní-ITT**

Yasuní-ITT holds the largest oil deposits in Ecuador, totalling 850 million barrels, or 20% of Ecuador's reserves (Rival, 2010). These deposits are located within the Yasuní National Park, one of the most biologically diverse areas on the planet (Bass et al., 2010). It is, furthermore, part of the traditional territories of the Kichwa and Waorani indigenous groups, and at least two indigenous groups living in voluntary isolation, the Tagaeri and Taromenane. In 2007, Ecuador offered to leave the oil in the ground indefinitely in return for international compensation totalling half the expected foregone revenues, equalling 3.6 billion USD (Larrea & Warnars, 2009). Former Ecuado-

rian President Rafael Correa cancelled the Yasuní-ITT Initiative in August 2013, after a trust fund administered by the UNDP had only received 116 million USD in pledges and only 13 million USD in actual donations. The national oil company, Petroamazonas, began production in Tiputini in 2016 and in Tambococha in 2018, while production in Ishpingo is planned for 2022.

The decision to cancel the Yasuní-ITT Initiative caused nationwide protests (Coryat, 2015; Vidal, 2013), not least by the *Yasunidos*, a collective formed immediately after the decision to cancel was made. The *Yasunidos* consist mostly of disillusioned young people in urban areas who had grown up hearing about Ecuador's leading role internationally in keeping oil in the ground for the benefit of the planet. The Ecuadorian Constitution states that a referendum can be invoked on any issue, if signatures totalling 5% of the electorate, equalling 583,324 signatures in 2013, were collected. In the months following the cancellation of the initiative, the *Yasunidos* collected over 757,623 signatures for a national referendum on leaving the oil in the ground in the ITT oilfields. Of these, the National Electoral Council disqualified 350,000, a decision that has been widely disputed. The number of signatures points towards the large degree of public support for non-extraction at the national level. The *Yasunidos* have continued to challenge the National Electoral Council's decision through legal and institutional means, a process which continues to be covered in the national media (e.g., El Universo, 2014, 2018, 2019, 2020).

Another factor suggesting the oilfield is a matter of national importance is how it has continued to be utilised politically. It was brought up in a presidential debate in 2021 (El Comercio, 2021) and in a national referendum in 2018, instigated by Correa's successor, Lenin Moreno, with the clear political purpose of distancing himself from his predecessor. Citizens were asked whether they would agree to increase an untouchable zone which surrounded the area of oil exploitation, in order to protect the indigenous groups in voluntary isolation, thus reducing the area of oil exploitation. Although 67.5% voted in favour, and the untouchable zone has indeed been expanded, the government has allowed oil platforms to be built in the untouchable zone's buffer zone, in effect increasing the area in which oil extraction is permitted (Narváez et al., 2019).

Within environmentally concerned elements of civil society, the discursive emphasis of opposition to extraction has changed. The initial government outreach to the international community emphasised climate change and a novel supply-side carbon emission mitigation measure. When the initiative was cancelled, Yasuní-ITT evolved from a global proposal which positioned the Yasuní as an international space whose protection has planetary consequences to a national-

level space. The focus is now on the country's responsibility for peoples living in voluntary isolation, particularly as operation in Ishpingo is set to commence. Ishpingo is particularly contentious, because it is not only the field with by far the largest oil reserves, but also the territory in which the uncontacted tribes live, overlapping the untouchable zone, in which extraction activities are vetoed, and its buffer zone. Two Ministers of the Environment have resigned upon being required to sign off on the final permit to exploit the area (Tarsicio Granizo, former Minister of the Environment, interview with author, December 2018).

#### 4. Historical Consolidation of Amazonian State Space

This section uses the above cases to demonstrate the space-making outcomes of state accumulation strategy, and how this constitutes the present terrain of struggle shaping the spatiality of mobilising strategies. It does so through examining how the Amazon areas have been incorporated into Ecuadorian and Peruvian state space through an extractivist state spatial strategy, and it argues that this state spatial strategy has continued to condition the present terrain of struggle regarding oil extraction.

Historical studies help us understand how the incorporation of the Amazon into national state space in Ecuador and Peru has been conditioned by colonial and capitalist expansion. There have been three military border conflicts between Ecuador and Peru over Amazonian areas, and these areas were the last to be incorporated into national territory. Their incorporation into national state space is therefore of sentimental importance in patriotic understandings of the country (Esvertit Cobes, 2001), but it has nonetheless remained marginalised and peripheral. Grillo and Sharon (2012) argue that in Peru, the Amazon-as-space was quickly made part of the national territory through resource extraction and internal colonisation, but the Amazonian-as-subject was left out of national debates: being Amazonian constituted a continued marginalised identity. The Amazon has simultaneously been deemed empty (or with only dispersed indigenous communities spread over a vast area) and imagined as full of underutilised natural riches available 'to fuel the nation's growth' (Grillo & Sharon, 2012, p. 126). In Ecuador, the Amazon has similarly been represented as both *terra nullius*, or no man's land, (Potes, 2018, p. 171), and 'a land of superabundant natural wealth' (Wilson & Bayón, 2017, p. 57). Internal colonisation was encouraged, and in 19<sup>th</sup> - and 20<sup>th</sup>-century Ecuador, spatial imaginaries such as a 'promised land' full of natural riches were used (Esvertit Cobes, 2001). In Peru, President Fernando Belaúnde encouraged small-scale farmers to colonise the Amazon in the 1960s by evoking the Amazon as 'a land without men for men without land' (Espinosa, 2009, p. 143, author's translation).



The colonial spatial imaginary of the Amazon in both countries has been coupled with an extractivist state spatial strategy. State space is melded into geographies of capital, and in the case of Ecuador and Peru, their position in the international economy as resource exporters impacts state strategies to ensure economic growth. The Amazon has been subject to an influx of economic activities caused by different resource booms, such as natural rubber, timber and oil. State strategy for the Amazon has been one of facilitating private extractive industries, with enormous detrimental socio-environmental effects for local populations. Dean (2002) argues that state presence has been contingent on interests emanating from beyond the Amazon, suggesting that 'state intervention in Amazonia has often followed on the heels of particularly brutal entrepreneurs' and that extractive projects and missionaries have substituted a state presence in the Peruvian Amazon (p. 201). Similarly, Sevilla (2013) argues that in Ecuador, the Amazonian areas were 'nationalised' and controlled through missions, whose function was to convert 'tribes of savages'. States' accumulation strategy has been to accumulate by dispossession (Harvey, 2004) by proxy.

Oil was first discovered in the Peruvian Amazon in 1939 (Chavez-Rodriguez et al., 2015). In Ecuador, massive oil deposit discoveries were made in its Northern Amazon in 1967 by the Texaco-Gulf consortium, and production started in 1972 (Gerlach, 2003). This development led Peru to take a renewed interest in the Amazon, and there was a major push for oil exploration in the area in the 1970s in both countries. This period has been named the 'first oil exploration boom' (Finer & Orta-Martínez, 2010). A second hydrocarbon exploration boom occurred from the early 2000s, triggered by high international oil prices due to sustained demand from China and other emerging economies, as well as a concern about the approach of peak oil (Bridge, 2010; Finer & Orta-Martínez, 2010). Both Ecuador and Peru had, by then, passed legislation to encourage foreign direct investment and exploration activity in the hydrocarbon sector, with the aim of increasing production. High prices meant that even remote areas with low-quality heavy crude oil were deemed financially feasible to operate, expanding the extractive frontier (Orta-Martínez & Finer, 2010). In 2008, 72% of the Peruvian Amazon had been zoned for hydrocarbon activities, permitting the government to lease it to companies for exploration and production; in Ecuador, this was about 65% (Finer et al., 2008). The extent of zoning for hydrocarbon activities demonstrates how state spatial strategy regarding the Amazon in both Ecuador and Peru continues to be founded on state accumulation.

Ecuador and Peru have similar histories of internal colonisation of their Amazon areas, state strategy facilitating accumulation by dispossession, and oil extraction. There is, however, a great difference in the relative economic importance of oil in the two countries. Oil is Ecuador's main export article, totalling 34.6% of total export earnings in 2019, equalling 7,731 million USD (Banco Central del Ecuador, 2020). Peru's total oil export is worth 2,997 million USD, approximately a fourth to that of Ecuador, which, due to a much larger economy, totals only 6% (Instituto Nacional de Estadística e Informática [INEI], 2020). Ecuador also has the largest estimated crude oil reserves of the two: 8.3 billion barrels in 2019, compared to Peru's 1.2 billion barrels (US Energy Information Administration [EIA], 2020). Peru is actually a net importer of oil (EIA, 2020). While the national economic importance of oil extraction in the Amazon is well known in Ecuador and a topic which can gain national attention and traction, oil extraction in the Peruvian Amazon is not as important for Peru's economic development. Mining, predominantly of gold and copper, is far more important (INEI, 2020).

## 5. Prior Socio-Political Struggle

In both Ecuador and Peru, the Amazon has been incorporated into state space as spaces of extractive accumulation. The Amazon has, of course, never been empty land; rather, it has been populated with dispersed indigenous groups, who have been dispossessed by a state accumulation strategy favouring private extractive industries. This dispossession constitutes the present terrain of struggle. Indigenous and environmental movements in both countries mobilise over the negative socio-environmental consequences of the extractive accumulation strategies taking place in the Amazon.

As established above, evolving state space shapes the 'terrain of socio-political struggle', but socio-political struggle at different scales also produces and modifies state space through its representation and articulation of space (Brenner et al., 2003). This dialectical proposition suggests that examining historical processes for the articulation and production of state space, as well as previous processes of socio-political contention, can help explain current spatialities of mobilising strategies. This section outlines the distinct histories of indigenous mobilisation in Ecuador and Peru. It analyses how their mobilisation is both conditioned upon existing state space and, potentially, re-maps that space, as well as the terrains of struggle over oil extraction.

As discussed below, the indigenous movements in Ecuador and Peru are highly different due to their historical and political backgrounds. Part of the explanation for their differing political space for contestation lies in geographies of state space. Peru is marked by a more profound re-

gionalism, which is partly why indigenous groups there have not been able to establish a national organisation with political influence. The highly centralised state power in Lima limits access and participation, as does the geographical isolation of Amazonian indigenous groups (Dean, 2002). Peru's territory is 4.5 times the size of Ecuador's, and the Ecuadorian Amazon is closer to the capital city and better connected by roads than is the case in Peru.

The Ecuadorian indigenous movement is considered to be the most organised and institutionalised in Latin America (Bull, 2013; Macdonald, Jr., 2002). CONAIE, the Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador, organises indigenous people from the coast, the highlands and the rainforest. While the majority of the indigenous population in Ecuador is Andean, indigenous organising grew out of Amazonian groups, who were the first to organise ethnically in the 1960s in reaction to a state spatial strategy of internal colonisation and its consequences for their territories and livelihoods. Several of CONAIE's leaders have been Amazonian, and Amazonian indigenous struggle has been important in shaping CONAIE's strategy (Macdonald, Jr., 2002).

Highland, coastal and lowland ethnic groups all consider themselves to be indigenous in Ecuador, and they make up a significant portion of the total population, although the exact percentage depends on which source is cited (Gerlach, 2003). CONAIE is a consistent and powerful political actor at the national scale, as it has repeatedly mobilised its base groups to organise reoccurring contentious actions, including marches, uprisings, roadblocks, strikes and protests. Since the 1990s, the Confederation has made demands that go beyond strictly 'indigenous' issues in the traditional sense, joining labour unions and environmental and other national organisations to protest government policies such as austerity measures. As CONAIE has been critical towards unpopular government measures, it has had strong public support (Macdonald, Jr., 2002). Its marches into Quito have been joined by many social groups and coincided with general strikes. Macdonald Jr. (2002) argues that by drawing away from single-issue and short-term action, CONAIE has attempted to become part of Ecuadorian society and influence it politically in a plurinational direction, rather than sustain the dichotomy between national and indigenous society.

Synergies and joint objectives have arisen between the indigenous movement and environmental organisations in Ecuador, not least regarding oil extraction in the Amazon. The campaign *Amazonía por la Vida* ('Amazon for life'), initiated in 1989, united several groups with the aim of spreading knowledge about the disastrous consequences of oil extraction in the Amazon,

positioning the Amazon in the national consciousness. Oil production had not been heavily criticised until that point, having been seen solely as a source of national economic development.

Perhaps the most important propeller for national, and international, attention to the detrimental consequences of oil extraction in the Amazon is Ecuador's most famous lawsuit, which was brought against Texaco, later Chevron, by 30,000 local inhabitants who had been affected by large-scale pollution including oil spills and dumping of toxic wastewater. This lawsuit was the beginning of a drawn-out judicial process in several countries, with the most recent ruling in the Hague in 2018, and alleged corruption on both sides. It has nonetheless been framed as a David vs. Goliath-like struggle, positioning local populations of a developing country against a large international corporation, a framing that the Ecuadorian state has also embraced (Lalander, 2016; Lewis, 2016).

This brief description of the recent history of indigenous and environmental organising in Ecuador demonstrates how the Ecuadorian indigenous movement has built up political power through contentious actions which have served as extra-governmental vetoes on government policy, and has joined forces with the environmental movement to highlight and fight against the detrimental socio-environmental effects of oil extraction in the Amazon. Through these actions, the terrain of struggle has been changed so that issues of oil extraction in the Amazon have the potential to be positioned at the national level, rather than being spatially confined and linked to territory.

No similar organised alliances have emerged between highland and Amazonian indigenous in Peru. Historical processes of assimilation have led Andean Quechua-speakers to self-identify as *campesinos*, small-scale farmers, a socio-economic rather than ethnic identity (Merino, 2019), and common ground has not been established between different regional groups. Amazonian indigenous groups have organised into two organisations, AIDSESEP (the Interethnic Association for the Development of the Peruvian Rainforest) and CONAP (the Confederation of Amazonian Nationalities of Peru), both established in the 1980s and both claiming to be the 'sole legitimate and authoritative voice of all indigenous peoples' (Dean, 2002, p. 216). This dispersion of organising power is clearly detrimental to their potential for contention at the national level, and their political power remains relatively weak (Dean, 2002).

Indigenous mobilisation in Peru is territory- and issue-based. AIDSESEP and CONAP have focused on issues such as protecting indigenous territories and intercultural education. Profession-

als within law, public relations and advocacy work in Lima, and increasingly NGOs (such as *Cooperación*, *Oxfam* and *Perú Equidad*) have ‘accompanied’ local indigenous federations and provided professional assistance for their claims of free, prior and informed consent, as well as socio-environmental remediation, as in the case of Block 192. The tighter relations between indigenous federations and Lima-based NGOs have meant a professionalisation of media strategies and advocacy work, but within the parameters of pre-existing terrains of struggle.

## 6. Hegemony of Accumulation Strategy

If extractivism has a hegemonic position, then, according to Jessop’s (1990) ‘policy paradigm’ and Valdivia’s (2008) ‘rentist compromise’, the political space for mobilising will concern the terms and conditions of economic activity. Hence, it will not destabilise the hegemony of the accumulation strategy itself but, rather, maintain it through material concessions. In research interviews carried out by the author regarding extraction and mobilisation over oil in Block 192, interview partners emphasised that in Peru, in general, people have interiorised the idea that development depends on the exploitation of natural resources; there is no way around this situation. Development equals economic growth, achieved through extractivism. The national political debate is subsequently in favour of natural resource exploitation, and Block 192 is one of many extraction sites. Mobilising actors in Block 192 also discursively connect oil extraction and development; indigenous leaders have stated repeatedly that they are not against oil production, as they are not against development (Laastad, 2021).

What local indigenous federations do demand, however, are material concessions from the state, both in terms of socio-environmental remediation of five decades of local contamination, and public services at that particular oilfield, meaning that mobilising actors engage in militant particularism (Harvey & Williams, 1995). Contention regarding Block 192 therefore does not challenge an extractivist development model; instead, local mobilising actors take advantage of the hegemony of the extractivist accumulation strategy to develop bargaining power through their potential ability to impact production by taking direct action. When the local indigenous federations have threatened to occupy or occupied oil installations, high-ranking government officials have offered to negotiate with them over their demands. Consequently, a major concern for all actors involved is what will happen when the oil runs out. With the state losing its economic interests in the area, the local communities will lose their disruptive power, and state presence will evaporate.

In addition to the political space for contesting the consequences of oil locally, the strong regional mobilisation to demand the nationalisation of production in 2015 can be explained by the proposition that the state is ensuring ongoing acceptance of the accumulation strategy through ‘a flow of material concessions’ (Jessop, 1990, p. 161). A clear example of state spatial strategy to ensure accumulation through material concessions, privileging certain spaces in a way which is conditioned upon continued resource extraction in Peru, is the *canon*. The *canon* is a specific tax under which a certain amount of revenue from oil or mining is directly transferred to regional and local governments. This system for local development engenders a strong dependence on extractive activity, and the regional government of Loreto is heavily dependent on the *canon*. The fear of a complete end to production in Block 192, and the resulting effects on the *canon*, resulted in considerable popular protests across the region.

With changing discourses and representations regarding economic growth and accumulation strategies, however, mobilisation may be directed at oil extraction in itself and be removed from its spatial specificity. The spatiality of mobilisation after the cancellation of the Yasuní-ITT Initiative must be seen in relation to the struggles between different interests within the Ecuadorian state. The state is a ‘contested and changing field of discourses, policies and social relations’ (Kristoffersen & Young, 2010, p. 578), and this was seen in Ecuador when left-leaning candidate Rafael Correa won the presidency in 2006. His political platform, *Alianza PAÍS* (‘country alliance’, but also the acronym of ‘proud and sovereign fatherland’ in Spanish), was originally a broad platform consisting of indigenous, environmentalist, statist and developmentalist voices (Novo, 2014). Correa’s political project, the Citizens’ Revolution, therefore initially implied a state which was more open to environmental and indigenous interests, and persons central to the environmental movement in Ecuador were given political and administrative positions in the state apparatus.

As part of its political project, the Correa government established a new development model based on the indigenous notion of *Buen Vivir*. There is no one definition of this term, but it is often suggested that it concerns ‘living well and in harmony with nature’, in contrast to always living better (Lalander, 2016; Radcliffe, 2012). Radcliffe (2012) argues that *Buen Vivir* has been formulated to be in discursive opposition to ‘Western’ and neoliberal development and that it is presented as a paradigm unique and appropriate to Ecuador. Acosta (2009), Escobar (2010) and others argued that this constituted an ontological shift from the hegemonic understanding of de-

velopment as economic growth to understanding the economy as subordinate to ecological criteria.

To carry out *Buen Vivir* in practice, propositions such as changing the production matrix and using oil revenues to move away from oil dependency were launched. Alternative revenue sources, such as bio-prospecting and tourism, were also emphasised through the state project of *bio-socialism* (Wilson & Bayón, 2017). This project's main idea was to use oil revenues to diversify the economy, through investments in strategic sectors such as those mentioned above. Such investments have, however, not materialised or have only partially materialised (Wilson & Bayón, 2017). The idea of living well and in harmony with nature, instead of relying on economic growth through extraction and export of natural resources, has mostly remained on a conceptual level. The need for immediate revenues to expand government services in Ecuador has actually entailed an increase in hydrocarbon and mining activities (Arsel et al., 2016; Bebbington & Humphreys Bebbington, 2011; Lalander, 2016).

Despite the lack of real change to the state accumulation strategy in Ecuador, these developments nonetheless constituted a partial destabilising of the hegemonic project of the extractivist accumulation strategy, for a period of time. Oil extraction in highly socially and biologically diverse areas as an inevitable accumulation strategy was open for discussion, and the country's biodiversity was given a leading role in new political strategies. The proposal for the Yasuní-ITT Initiative – to leave the oil in the ground in return for international compensation – stemmed from civil society, but it was adopted and instigated by the Correa government as a concrete policy measure within the *Buen Vivir* framework in 2007 (Larrea & Warnars, 2009). The Yasuní came to occupy a central position in Ecuador's state space, as a national space with a non-existent regional and local scaling. It became detached from its physical surroundings and lifted up to become a signifier central to national politics in Ecuador. This state spatial strategy has created a different imaginary of the Yasuní to those of other areas of the Ecuadorian Amazon, such as the adjacent Cuyabeno National Park, which, although better connected and easier to reach than the Yasuní, with similar high levels of biodiversity and oil extraction, has not received the same attention<sup>2</sup>.

This de-coupling of the Yasuní-ITT oilfield, specifically, from state discourses on development through an extractivist accumulation strategy has had implications for mobilisation. Mobilisation has not occurred within the policy paradigm of the hegemonic accumulation strategy,

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<sup>2</sup> I thank an anonymous reviewer for raising this point.

where policies and conditions over economic activities can be negotiated. Mobilisation addressed non-extraction by actors at the national level who were not directly affected by the consequences of oil, and mobilisation was not related to territory.

## 7. Concluding Discussion

This article has examined the interlinkages between state spatial strategies to ensure extractive accumulation and the spatiality of mobilising strategies over the two most politicised oilfields in Ecuador and Peru. Geographically, these oilfields are situated a mere 100 kilometres apart, but the geographies of contention regarding oil production in the two fields are opposed: mobilisation has been local, linked to territory and regarding the terms and conditions of extraction in Block 192 in Peru. In contrast, it has been national, removed from its spatial embeddedness and aimed at oil extraction per se in the case of Yasuní-ITT in Ecuador. This empirical observation led to an examination of context. Based on a large sample of news items and semi-structured interviews with key actors in both countries, as well as a back-and-forth process between different theoretical approaches and data, this article argues that approaches from critical state theory can be applied to explain the spatiality of mobilising strategies.

It finds that the historical processes of incorporating the Amazon into national state space as space for extractive accumulation, on the one hand, and mobilisation over the consequences of this, on the other, have shaped the present terrain of socio-environmental struggle in a dialectic fashion. The Amazon areas of both countries have been subject to historical space-making processes which represent them as peripheral and distant, and sites for extractive accumulation. The indigenous and environmental movements in Ecuador have, through decades of mobilising, enabled a national positioning of the detrimental socio-environmental consequences of oil extraction in the Amazon. In Peru, a more dispersed indigenous movement has not been able to push a broad agenda into the national political arena. The general attention to oil extraction in the Amazon is also higher in Ecuador due to the relative economic importance of the oil industry there.

According to Jessop (1990) and Hunold and Dryzek (2005), ensuring economic growth is a core imperative for the state. If the state accumulation strategy has a hegemonic position and is accepted by the population through material concessions and a 'rentist compromise', whereby the state through its management of natural resources is seen as able to ensure development, then there is still room for protest over the management and conditions of resource extraction. This notion can explain the local and regional protests in Peru, which have addressed the management



of oil production in Block 192, socio-environmental remediation, and the terms and conditions for continued extraction. Ending oil production in the oilfield is not a desired outcome for any party. In the particular case of Yasuní-ITT, there was a discursive decoupling of the oilfield from the state accumulation strategy through the government-led Yasuní-ITT Initiative to leave the oil in the ground in return for international compensation. Through this initiative, the Yasuní was represented as unique on a planetary scale and as a space to be protected. When the initiative was cancelled, mobilisation could address non-extraction, rather than the terms and conditions of production. Mobilisation occurred nationally, involving people who would not be directly affected, and it did not have a local origin.

Political opportunities for collective action are 'dimensions of the political environment that provide incentives for collective action by affecting people's expectations for success or failure' (Gamson and Meyer 1996, as cited in Tarrow, 1998, p. 77). Previous studies have emphasised contained notions of space, such as social movement actors' spatial representations, and how surrounding space mediates mobilisation, as main factors shaping the spatiality of contentious politics. Tarrow argues that 'most opportunities and constraints are situational' (p. 77) and, this article would argue, also dependent on the production and transformation of state space. This article argues that processual and evolving state spatial strategies are structuring elements for the spatiality of mobilising strategies. Historical state spatial strategies to ensure accumulation, mobilisation over the consequences of these, and the way in which the extractive project in question fits into a hegemonic accumulation strategy shape mobilisation over oil.

Perreault and Valdivia (2010) argue that, in the case of Ecuador and Bolivia, 'hydrocarbons and their governance shape meanings of the spaces and times of the nation state' (p. 697). The analysis presented here regarding the hydrocarbon struggle in Ecuador and Peru proves that the opposite is also the case: the spaces and times of the nation state shape hydrocarbon struggles. Connections between state spatial strategies to ensure economic growth and the spatiality of mobilising strategies could probably be expressed through different mechanisms than those detailed here, which are case-specific. This article nonetheless makes the case for a cross-fertilisation of critical state theory with contentious politics studies and connects the two main strands of literature on contentious resource extraction in Latin America, namely those on local-scale resistance and states' extractivism. These tentative connections could be further explored through both in-depth studies of singular processes and variable-based comparative case studies.



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