



***Extractivismo* unearthed: a genealogy of a radical discourse**

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ABSTRACT

This article provides a genealogy of *extractivismo* discourse. In South America, the critical discourse of *extractivismo* has shifted political horizons and fomented a protracted intraleft dispute. Decades of neoliberalism unified popular movements to resist austerity and recuperate national sovereignty, but the ascendancy of leftist administrations across the continent fragmented the field of radical politics. Ecuador exemplifies this internecine conflict: environmental and indigenous activists and allied intellectuals crafted the discourse of *extractivismo* to resist President Rafael Correa's '21st century socialism'. State actors assert that oil and mining revenues will trigger economic development. But anti-extractive activists contend that 'the extractive model' pollutes the environment, violates collective rights, reinforces dependency on foreign capital, and undermines democracy. Drawing on 14 months of archival and ethnographic research, I recover the source discourses of *extractivismo* and outline the conditions of their coalescence into a novel problematic. I trace *extractivismo* to the neoliberal period (1981–2006). In that period, I identify the co-existence of two distinct critiques of resource extraction, which I call resource radicalisms: resource nationalism and proto-anti-extractivism. But alongside it, in their struggle for territorial sovereignty and collective rights, Amazonian indigenous groups articulated the discursive elements that would later be unified by the term *extractivismo*. I argue that a particular conjuncture – the election of a leftist President, the rewriting of the Constitution, and the government's avid promotion of extractive projects – enabled the crystallization of *extractivismo* discourse. Anti-extractive resistance in turn triggered a tectonic political realignment: activists that once fought for the nationalization of natural resources now oppose all resource extraction, a leftist President finds himself in conflict with the social movements who initially supported his election, and the left-in-power has become synonymous with the aggressive expansion of extraction. Finally, I consider the tension between *extractivismo*-as-critique and its capacity to generate collective action.

KEYWORDS Extractivism; Latin America; Indigenous movements; environmental movements; oil; mining

In South America, the turn of the millennium occasioned two processes that would profoundly reshape the region: the unprecedented electoral success of

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leftist political parties, and historically high prices for primary commodities. The causes of each process were distinct and independent, but once set in motion they transformed the horizons of political and economic possibility. A decade of sustained global demand for commodities such as oil, copper, and soy translated into government revenues that enabled the left-in-power to begin to pay off the 'social debt'. Many countries left the 'lost decade' of austerity behind by significantly reducing poverty and inequality, increasing access to education and healthcare, and embarking on new infrastructural projects. But the price for improving millions of citizens' socio-economic well-being was further fiscal dependency on the extraction and export of natural resources, and, in many cases, a territorial expansion of the extractive frontier, subjecting indigenous communities to displacement and fragile ecosystems to contamination. This result was a highly contradictory moment marked by, on the one hand, the proliferation of 'counter-hegemonic processes' (Escobar 2010, p. 1) in the halls of state power and in the streets and, on the other hand, the intensification of an export-oriented, resource-intensive model of accumulation, highly dependent not only on North American capital but on investment and credit from China. In response, the indigenous, *campesino*, environmental, urban *barrio*, labour, and feminist activists that protested decades of neoliberal governance, in tandem with the region's leftist, critical, and decolonial intellectuals, developed new modes of critique and forms of resistance. The critical discourse of *extractivismo* is situated within this emergent critical horizon. The terms of this discourse were articulated in the course of struggles over natural resources, territory, and indigenous sovereignty. In turn, the crystallization of this discourse fomented an intraleft dispute over whether emancipation lies in a distinct form of economic development or in alternatives to paradigms of development that are rooted in relations of coloniality.

Prior to the political salience of *extractivismo* discourse, decades of neoliberalism unified popular movements to resist austerity and recuperate national sovereignty. In Ecuador, Bolivia, Peru, Venezuela, and elsewhere, indigenous, *campesino*, trade union, and environmental organizations resisted the deregulation and privatization of resources such as oil, minerals, water, and natural gas. These groups demanded various forms of popular control over resource extraction, ranging from nationalization to local management by the indigenous peoples whose territory overlaps with hydrocarbon reserves. The hegemony of neoliberal policies allowed for this provisional alignment of social movement organizations with distinct political trajectories and positions on extraction. But beginning with the election of Hugo Chavez in Venezuela in 1998, the ascendancy of leftist administrations across the continent fragmented the field of radical politics. Social movement organizations and the governments they had helped to install, and which they often defended against right-wing political forces, became enmeshed in a tense dialectic

between 'constituent' and 'constituted' power, producing varying levels of open conflict (Ciccariello-Maher 2013). As a commodity boom (2000–2010) ushered in historically high prices for oil, minerals, and other primary commodities, resource extraction became a salient site of policy-making and protest. Leftist governments availed themselves of the infusion of resource revenues to make remarkable gains in reducing poverty and economic inequality, and improve health and education outcomes. But in some national contexts, the expansion of the extractive frontier fomented disputes between these administrations and social movement organizations.

Ecuador exemplifies this conflict between, in Escobar's (2010) terms, 'neo-developmentalism and post-development' (p. 20) Environmental and indigenous activists, and allied intellectuals crafted the discourse of *extractivismo* to resist President Raphael Correa's '21st century socialism'. State actors asserted that oil and mining revenues will trigger economic development, strengthening the state and democracy. But activists contended that his government has entrenched a model of development based on the rapacious extraction of natural resources. This model, they argued, pollutes the environment, violates collective rights, reinforces dependency on foreign capital, and undermines democracy. The gravity of the extractive model's political, economic, and environmental consequences is matched by the *longue durée* timescale of its domination: for anti-extractive activists, *extractivismo* originates with European conquest and is only reproduced by the recent (re)turn to developmentalism. This interpretive stance finds no hope in the present. Its political dreamscape is at once retrospective and deferred: activists collectively envisioned a utopia that is both nostalgic for an imagined and pastoral precolonial past and future oriented towards a 'post-extractive' society.

Drawing on 14 months of archival and ethnographic research, I recover the source discourses of *extractivismo* and outline the political conditions of their coalescence into a novel problematic. In doing so, I take an approach distinct from that of extant scholarship on extractivism or the extractive model (e.g. Bebbington and Bebbington 2010, Veltmeyer 2013, Webber 2014, Svampa 2015, Gustafson and Guzmán Solano 2016). This scholarship employs extractivism as a descriptive term to refer to extractive activities, the policies and ideologies that promote them, their socio-environmental effects, and the forms of resistance that they provoke. In contrast, this article analyses *extractivismo* as the central term that unifies an emic discourse articulated by situated actors reflecting on and critiquing historically specific regimes of resource governance.

I take methodological inspiration from Foucault's archaeological and genealogical approaches and identify the conditions of appearance of *extractivismo* discourse (Foucault [1968] 1991, 1981). In this vein, I ask, under what conditions did social movement activists and intellectuals begin to critique 'the extractive model'? What were the political and intellectual sources of

this critique, and what were the political conditions of its crystallization? What are its regularities, its variations, and its pragmatic political effects? This analytic perspective historicizes this critical discourse, and regards social movement activists and intellectuals as protagonists in crafting its conceptual architecture. It is worth noting that this mode of analysis does not regard discourse as ontologically distinct from or epiphenomenal of 'reality', but rather takes discourse to be the linguistic mediation of social relations, and the concrete medium through which actors reflect upon, critique, and (re)make their social worlds.

I trace *extractivismo* to the discourses and strategies crafted by indigenous and environmentalist activists during the neoliberal period. The historical narrative begins in the early 1990s but focuses on the proliferation of oil-related protest in 2005–2006. In those two years, I identify the co-existence of two distinct critiques of resource extraction, which I will refer to as *resource radicalisms*. The more predominant of the two was radical resource nationalism. But alongside it, in their struggle for territorial sovereignty and collective rights, Amazonian indigenous groups articulated the discursive elements that would later be unified by the term *extractivismo*. Next, I argue that a particular space of political possibility – opened up by the election of a leftist president, the rewriting of the constitution, and the government's avid promotion of extractive projects – enabled the crystallization of *extractivismo* discourse. Finally, I show that anti-extractive resistance triggered a tectonic political realignment: activists that once fought for the nationalization of natural resources now opposed all resource extraction, a leftist President found himself in conflict with the social movements who initially made his political project possible, and the left-in-power became synonymous with the expansion of extraction at any cost. I conclude by considering the tension between *extractivismo*-as-critique and its generative capacity to construct the conditions of effective collective action.

Resource radicalisms

In July of 2010, Alicia Granda, activist and researcher at the human rights organization CEDHU, told me that 'extractivism' was responsible for a wide range of problems in Ecuador (Interview, 12 July 2010). She explained to me that extractivism dismantles local productive activities (agriculture, fishing, etc.) in the countryside and causes migration to the city and the urbanization of rural areas. According to Granda, the sale of vast tracts of land for oil and mineral concessions constitutes a 'new colonization.' Her analysis was not all critical, however. She also discussed how the expansion of extractive activity has opened up new possibilities for collective action and the reconstruction of identities. For example, Granda noted the emergent alliance between *indigenas* and *campesinos* in the southern Amazon, two

groups that have historically existed in tension due to the processes of land colonization, but who now see a common enemy in the advancing extractive frontier.

The next week, I sat down with Pablo Iturralde in the offices of the National Assembly (Interview, 20 July 2010). At the time, Iturralde was an advisor to Assembly members from Correa's party (*Alianza País*); he was later appointed to the Coordinating Ministry of Political Economy. He divided the political field in Ecuador into 'two grand projects' that 'are in this moment in contradiction'. On one side was the model of development promoted by the government and President Correa, based on the 'super-exploitation of nature and extractivism', which he described as a 'sin' that 'so many models or regimes, capitalist as much as those called socialist' have committed. As he put it, 'the government and Rafael Correa in particular have said very clearly that the post-oil country is a mining country'. On the other side, he contrasted this with an opposing model, which he called Amerindian or '*sumak kawsay* or the so-called *buen vivir*', a model not so much economic as 'civilizational', which envisions a total reordering of the relationships between individual, community, and nature along the principle of reciprocal collaboration.¹

Both of these interviews evidenced the crystallization of an ideological and discursive realignment, wherein commitment and opposition to 'extractivism' comprised the two poles of the political field. According to its conceptual architects, extractivism is 'the intensive and extensive exploitation of natural resources; little or no industrialization; export as the principal destination; exploitation that impedes natural renovation ... the economic form of the "enclave"' (Chavez 2013, p. 10). It is a syndrome comprising the various pathological effects of economic dependency on resource extraction. In the years that followed my interviews with Granda and Iturralde, talk of extractivism had coalesced into a widely circulating critical discourse, articulated not only by militant environmental activists and members of the national and regional indigenous federations, but even by a subset of bureaucrats who were sceptical about a development model based on oil and mineral extraction.

Why did activists begin to resist what they now called the 'extractive model'? Why did some state actors call for a transition to a 'post-extractive' economy? And why did state officials more committed to resource extraction accuse anti-extractive activists of being traitors to the national interest and tools of imperialist powers? To understand this conjuncture, marked by intra-left conflict over the very desirability of resource extraction and the possibility of an entirely novel model of development (or even alternative to 'development'), it is necessary to follow the discourses back in time, far enough so they lose their coherence and disperse into a set of elements without a unifying grid of intelligibility.

As is the case across the region, recent Ecuadorian politics is typically periodized into 'neoliberal' (1981–2006) and, with much less consensus, 'post-neoliberal' (2007 to present) eras. Given Ecuador's economic dependency on primary commodities, natural resources constitute a key area of policy-making in both of these eras. Cutting across these periods, the global commodity boom from 2000 to 2010 resulted in what some scholars call a 'reprimarization' of South America, a shift that is reminiscent of the mode of accumulation that prevailed in the late nineteenth century (CEPAL 2010, Cypher 2010, Sinnot *et al.* 2010, Ruiz Acosta and Iturralde 2013). Ecuador has historically been dependent on primary resources: cacao (1860–1920), banana (1948–1965), and oil (1972 to present) (Larrea and North 1997, pp. 915–921).² But during the decade of historically high prices, Ecuador was one of the most primary resource-dependent economies in the region. Between 2000 and 2010, its five principal exports (oil, bananas, shrimp, flowers, prepared/canned fish) accounted for on average 74.8 percent of total exports, with oil alone accounting for on average almost half of total exports (Ruiz Acosta and Iturralde, p. 29). From Correa's inauguration in 2007 up until 2014 (and the precipitous drop in oil prices), oil revenues financed over a third of the state budget (Banco Central del Ecuador 2012, 2014). Even when prices were high, social spending outpaced revenues, and Correa increasingly prioritized exploiting Ecuador's untapped gold, copper, and oil reserves. The administration's efforts have resulted in one such contract for a large-scale, open-pit copper mine (the Mirador mine in Zamora Chinchipe), but attracting further investment has been challenging, all the more so that commodity prices have plummeted. Chinese loans, secured by future oil revenues, have covered a substantial percentage of the budget shortfall (Gallagher *et al.* 2012, Schneyer and Mora Perez 2013).

The neoliberal and post-neoliberal periods are each associated with a specific regime for the governance of natural resources: privatization and deregulation, and the reassertion of the state (whether an increase in the state's economic 'take' or expropriation and nationalization), respectively. Although these policy packages were unevenly implemented, the ideologies they indexed constituted the predominant orientation of state (and corporate) actors vis-à-vis resource sectors. In resistance to these prevailing resource governance regimes, indigenous, environmental, labour, and neighbourhood movement activists and allied intellectuals elaborated critical discourses, which constituted a framework for critique and a guide to social movement strategy. These critical discourses, which I call resource radicalisms, were the prism through which 'resources' – or, more precisely, a specific model of resource extraction – became a political-economic problem demanding a radical response (Foucault 2005, pp. 356–358).

Although resource radicalisms are articulated and politically deployed in a mutually constitutive relationship to the governance models that they both

critique (as systems) and construct (as objects), these critical discourses evince a historicity distinct from the aforementioned chronology. First, there is a lag between the shift in governance regime and the mobilization against it, such that radical resource nationalism prevailed from roughly 1994 to 2007, and discourses of *extractivismo*, from roughly 2009 to the present. This is in part because social movements need time to respond to the shifting political terrain, which itself is not instantly transformed but gradually remade as new policies are implemented, and in part because critical discourses developed in prior moments may continue to circulate even when the circumstances for and in which they were developed have changed. Second, in addition to the lag, these critical discourses redeploy (and in the process, resignify) political demands articulated at earlier points in history. Resource nationalism encompassed both a statist nationalism that can be traced to the early 1970s – when it was briefly the policy orientation of the nationalist military dictatorship that inaugurated Ecuador as a ‘petro-state’ – and the ongoing struggle for the recognition of indigenous territory, which grew out of a longer history of peasant organizing and appeared on the national political stage as a unified indigenous movement in 1990. Although these two ideological strains rest on different understandings of the connection between nation, state, territory, and resources, they could co-exist in the discourse of a given organization or even individual activist because they *both* constituted critiques of neoliberal governance: one framed it as an incarnation of capitalism, the other as an incarnation of (neo)colonialism. Meanwhile, elements of *extractivismo* discourse also date to the ‘neoliberal’ period. Specifically, during the mid-1990s through the early 2000s, indigenous and environmental activists began to call for an end to oil extraction in the Amazon, a demand that *extractivismo* discourse subsequently generalized into a critique of all extractive activity. For both these reasons – temporal lag and (re)combination of pre-existing elements – the historicity of critique is distinct from that of regimes of governance in ways that complicate preconceived ‘periods’ and their imputed unity and draw our attention to the moments of discontinuity effaced by basing our historical narratives on the ideological character of policy-making elites.

In addition to its distinct logic of periodization, the narrative that follows evinces a Benjaminian double-temporality: the ‘present’ looks backward at the ‘past’ looking forward, both of which are inevitably refigured in the process of narration. Written in the present, the genealogy of *extractivismo* is inevitably refracted by the contemporary structure of political conflict. It looks ‘back’ in search of *extractivismo*’s source discourses, which are resignified elements dating to prior moments of contention, injecting activists’ statements with the ‘presence of the now’ (Benjamin 1968, p. 261). But, as much as is possible, I will elucidate the perspectives of the past *on their own terms*, as

concrete responses to prevailing conditions that also exceed those conditions, pointing to a (perhaps unrealized) emancipatory future.

Resource nationalism as anti-neoliberal critique

The process of economic reform in Ecuador from the early 1980s up until Correa's election was highly contentious – due to conflicts in the legislature and on the streets – and, in comparison to what was achieved elsewhere on the continent, resulted in a truncated and uneven adoption of neoliberalism. But neoliberal ideology, its 'language and political logic' was the prevailing orientation of state actors (Hey and Klak 1999, p. 68, Bowen 2011, p. 455). Social movement activists – especially the indigenous movement – played a central role in articulating the concept and critique of neoliberalism (CONAIE 1994, Silva 2009: Chapter 6). A decade and a half of social mobilization commenced with the first indigenous uprising in 1990, whereby CONAIE, the national indigenous federation (formed in 1986), burst onto the national political scene. CONAIE grouped together three regional federations: highland (ECUARUNARI), Amazonian (CONFENIAE), and coastal (CONAICE). ECUARUNARI, which was founded first (1972) and built on a historically dense associational infrastructure of peasant communities, took a leading role (Yashar 2005, Becker 2008, Colloredo-Mansfeld 2009, Silva 2009). By the mid-1990s, CONAIE leaders and ECUARUNARI activists, in an emergent coalition with a broad range of groups called the *Coordinadora de Movimientos Sociales*, identified neoliberalism as the contemporary incarnation of capitalist imperialism, and organized a series of 'uprisings' (*levantamientos*) across the highlands and in the capital city of Quito. At the same time, indigenous organizations based in the Amazon were mobilizing in their communities and in the capital to gain legal recognition for their ancestral territories, which were threatened by agricultural colonization and oil extraction (Sawyer 2004, Yashar 2005, pp. 109–130).

Oil extraction emerged as an increasingly salient target of anti-neoliberal critique. This critique comprised two distinct ideological strands. The predominant one, in terms of the breadth of the activist coalition that articulated it, was a radical resource nationalism demanding the expulsion of foreign oil companies, the nationalization of oil, and the channelling of oil revenues to meet social needs. A second strand, proto-anti-extractivism (an inherently retrospective label) identified resource extraction as a threat to the well-being of indigenous communities and defined well-being in terms of territorial integrity, self-determination, and an unpolluted natural environment. This subset of critical discourses demanded indigenous control over extraction (e.g. veto power over particular projects) or, more maximally, opposed oil extraction (especially where it affected indigenous territories), and proposed economic alternatives such as ecotourism.

The remainder of this section will analyse conflicts over oil projects and protests against oil companies from 1992 to 2006, with a particular emphasis on 2005–2006. I emphasize these years for three reasons: (1) the high level of oil-related conflict and protest; (2) the diversity of resistance to neoliberal resource governance; and (3) the increasingly vocal opposition to oil on the part of Amazonian indigenous groups. In the critical discourse that planned, mobilized for, and accompanied this contention, elements of resource nationalism and proto-anti-extractivism co-existed without explicit recognition of their contradictions: they were at times entangled in the same utterance, and at other times mapped onto distinct tendencies within a given political group, even erupting into intragroup conflict over programmatic differences. They constituted a set of possible responses to the prevailing regime of deregulated and privatized resource extraction, their common target. Resource nationalism posed the problem in terms of ownership, sovereignty, and the popular will, whereas proto-anti-extractivism resisted a model of development on the timescale of modernity. Elements of *extractivismo* discourse were first ‘drafted’ in the course of struggles over oil exploration (expanding due to a recent round of concessions) in the 1990s and early 2000s. But several years later, in a new political context, these elements were stitched into an encompassing critique of the extractive model and the damage it wreaks.

In 1992, the Organization of Indigenous Peoples of Pastaza (OPIP) marched for 13 days to Quito.³ They voiced two principal demands: recognition of indigenous territory and the constitutional recognition of Ecuador as a plurinational state. Although these demands resonated with those previously articulated by the CONAIE, they were also inflected with concerns specific to Amazonian indigenous identity: the conception of territory (as opposed to land) as a space of cultural (re)production, rather than as primarily a means to economic livelihood.⁴

This territorialized understanding of cultural identity was historically grounded in Amazonian peoples’ relative autonomy from the state (and often, other indigenous settlements) until the 1960s. The 1992 march, centred on the claiming of land as a cultural right, thrust the concept of territory and the issue of oil extraction onto the national stage.⁵ Although the marchers espoused environmentalist rhetoric, OPIP did not position itself in opposition to oil extraction per se, but rather demanded more substantial participation in environmental and social planning, as well as in the economic benefits (Sawyer 2004, p. 81).

However, this discourse would soon shift. In 1994, during OPIP’s protest of the Seventh Round of Oil Tender (coordinated with radical environmental group *Acción Ecológica*), its principal demand was a 15-year moratorium on oil extraction, linking social and ecological justice under the framework of what Martínez-Alier calls *ecologismo popular* (Sawyer 2004, pp. 97–98; Alier

2007). While not yet elaborated into full-fledged *extractivismo* discourse, OPIP's 1994 statements identified oil extraction as the source of environmental and social ills. They contributed to the existing ecosystem of critiques of resource extraction, which environmentalist and indigenous activists would subsequently draw upon when they retooled their strategies in the context of a left-of-centre, pro-extraction administration.

Throughout the mid-1990s, in a Polanyian double-movement, both neoliberal reforms and protests explicitly targeting neoliberalism picked up pace (Polanyi 2001 [1944], pp. 136–138, Silva 2012). President Sixto Durán-Ballén (1992–1996) aggressively implemented neoliberalism: he slashed consumer subsidies, social insurance, and public services, often by decree.⁶ By 1994, the CONAIE's demands were couched in their recently published political programme, which called for a new constitution to found a 'Plural and Democratic Nation'. Plurinationality included the replacement of capitalism with a 'Planned Ecological Communitarian Economy' (CONAIE 1994).

At this juncture, the CONAIE's political project was *indigenista* and plurinational, but also claimed to speak on behalf of a univocal nation, conceived of in both democratic ('the people') and class ('the poor') terms. The broader identity of 'the poor' was a product of emergent alliances with popular sector groups under the umbrella of the *Coordinadora de Movimientos Sociales* (CMS). This figuration was in turn conducive to a radical resource nationalism: resources, long stolen by profit-seeking foreign capital in collusion with domestic elites, were conceived of as the people's collective subterranean patrimony. In this critical discourse, the problem was not extraction or even export, but the ownership and regulatory regime that funnelled revenues into private coffers, leaving poverty and underdevelopment in its wake. CONAIE's 1994 political programme does not declare a struggle *against* extraction, but instead reclaims indigenous-cum-national sovereignty over natural resources, which should be 'exclusive property of the Plurinational State' (CONAIE 1994, p. 1, 30, 54).⁷

'A problem of sovereignty': Oil strikes, Oxy, and Indigenous territory (2005–2006)

Leaping forward across a decade of social mobilization against neoliberalism, the following key events provide context for the proliferation of oil-related protest between January 2005 and late spring 2006. The CONAIE, in an alliance with the CMS called the 'Patriotic Front', demonstrated its political capacity again in the 5 February 1997 protests against right-wing populist President Abdalá Bucarám (1996–1997), eventually driving Congress to remove him (Andolina 2003, pp. 730–731). Organized into deliberative 'people's assemblies', activists demanded a new constitution; interim President Fabián Alarcón established a popularly elected Constituent Assembly (Andolina

2003, p. 736). The 1998 Constitution fell short of indigenous movement demands, but did recognize new collective rights, giving legal basis to the expansive understanding of territory – as a space of cultural and ecological reproduction – articulated by Amazonian indigenous groups. After this climax of mobilization (including electoral success for *Pachakutik*, CONAIE's political party), the CONAIE declined in capacity and legitimacy. This was in large part due to their collaboration with the military in the 2000 coup that deposed then-President Jamil Mahuad. They were further discredited when President Lucío Gutiérrez (2003–2005), one of the coup leaders, promoted neoliberal policies and co-opted individual leaders. In April 2005, confronted with mass mobilizations (with a substantial participation of the politically unaffiliated) known as 'the rebellion of the *forajidos* (outlaws)' and the abandonment of his allies, Gutiérrez resigned (Conaghan 2008, p. 49, Ramírez Gallegos 2010, pp. 27–29). Rafael Correa entered the November 2006 presidential race riding the coattails of these mobilizations, capitalizing on his pre-established anti-neoliberal credentials.

During this turbulence in the capital, oil was an increasing source of tension in the Amazon, both between oil companies and indigenous communities, and within indigenous organizations. In January 2005, as the Ministry of Energy and Mines attempted to expand oil extraction to the central and southern Amazon, the debate over oil divided CONFENIAE (the Amazonian indigenous federation), pitting indigenous communities in the south, who were more sceptical of oil extraction, against those in the northeastern Amazon (where oil extraction dates to the early 1970s).⁸ According to newspaper coverage, the Sarayaku people (part of the Kichwa nation, whose territory overlapped with oil concession Block 23), and Shuar and Achuar nations (whose territory overlapped with Block 24) '[led] resistance to this *extractionist* [sic] activity'.⁹ These three groups emerged as vocal opponents of oil extraction – and key architects of proto-anti-extractivism. Marlon Santi, who would later become President of the CONAIE and was then President of the Sarayaku Association, advocated declaring 'the untouchability of their [the Sarayaku's] reserves and support their Plan of Life, based on ecotourism', and for a constitutional reform mandating that 'subsoil wealth would be administrated by indigenous [peoples], within their reserves'.¹⁰ A few months later, after talks broke down between Shuar communities, the Minister of Energy and Mines, and state oil company Petroecuador over the operations of oil company Burlington, the Interprovincial Shuar federation (FISCH) announced a 'state of emergency'.¹¹ They declared their opposition to 'extractive activities' but also, as stated by FISCH President Enrique Cunambi, an openness to oil extraction 'if and only it is controlled (*ejecutada*) by the Shuar inhabitants themselves'. Santi's and Cunambi's statements combined (1) an opposition to resource extraction and (2) the call for indigenous control of resource extraction. At the time, these demands were compatible as a set of critical responses

to the neoliberal governance of an oil-dependent economy. Retrospectively, their distinct logics are apparent: the critical discourse of *extractivismo* implies a radical rethinking of the 'extractive' basis of the economy, while the demand for indigenous control potentially leaves that basis unaltered, merely shifting ownership and control.

Although Amazonian indigenous opposition to oil extraction remained doubly circumscribed (*our* collective rights over *our* territory), the focus on the wide-ranging socio-environmental effects of extraction would later become a key element of *extractivismo* discourse. In a similar 'state of emergency' declaration on the part of the interprovincial Achuar organization (OINAE) and the FISCH, the two groups typified themselves as 'the only ones who know the Amazon,' which they described as existing in a pre-extractive idyll ('remote ... intact, uncontaminated') that would be irreversibly altered by 'the exploration and exploitation of oil'. Over time, the document warns, not only would these indigenous nationalities be extinguished, but a whole range of 'negative social, cultural, environmental, and other impacts' would be set into motion.

Protest against oil companies and oil extraction picked up momentum in August of 2005, with a bi-provincial oil strike in the northeastern Amazonian provinces of Orellana and Morona Santiago.¹² The strike, which took place from 13 to 2 August, was organized by residents and local elected officials.¹³ Strikers prevented oil from leaving by occupying airports, roads, and oil wells. Protesters demanded termination of the contract with Occidental. In 2000, Occidental had violated Ecuadorian law and its contract by transferring 40 percent of its economic interest to another oil company without first receiving ministerial approval.¹⁴ Occidental (or 'Oxy') became symbolic of the loss of sovereignty to foreign capital. Strikers also demanded the nationalization of oil to fund social and economic needs; more public investment in, and direct transfer of 25 percent of oil revenues to, the two provinces; and no more oil contracts without Amazonian communities' and local governments' consent. On 25 August, negotiations resulted in more oil revenue for, and public investment in, the two provinces but not in the expulsion of multinationals.¹⁵

Radical resource nationalism guided social movement response to the prevailing resource regime, and, in the case of the oil strike and anti-Oxy protests, yielded concrete political gains. But alongside and intertwined with resource nationalism, indigenous activists were expanding their position from a critique of particular oil companies or ownership structures to a more encompassing critique of oil as a model of development. They crafted the historical narrative that would become a hallmark of *extractivismo* discourse, linking the moment of colonial conquest to the resource policies of a self-identifying leftist President.

On 12 October 2005, the CONAIE and a range of social movement groups joined a continent-wide day of coordinated protests against the 513th anniversary of the Spanish conquest, dubbed '*El día de resistencia de los pueblos*'. Across the region, indigenous groups mobilized to reject a series of free trade deals (linked to the ultimately failed continent-wide Free Trade Area Americas agreement).¹⁶ In Ecuador, 12 October also occasioned oil-related demands. Participants called for oil companies, particularly Oxy, to leave Ecuador, and for the nationalization of oil.¹⁷ However, viewed retrospectively through the prism of contemporary disputes over extraction, 12 October constituted a point of inflection in the genealogy of *extractivismo* discourse. On that day, indigenous protesters explicitly connected oil extraction to a centuries-long history of colonialism. As CONAIE leader Blanca Chancoso put it, '[transnational companies] continue with the same process of exploitation as 513 years ago ... They want to take all of the natural resources of the country and the indigenous people are the most affected'.¹⁸ This historical arc re-contextualized resource extraction in the *longue durée* history of conquest. Although she articulated her critique in the register of sovereignty – those natural resources rightfully belong to the people (*el pueblo*), itself ambivalently defined as national (*del país*) and indigenous ('the most affected') – by connecting the present of extraction to the past of plunder, Chancoso elaborated the sweeping temporal logic of *extractivismo* discourse.

In 2006, Oxy and free trade became increasingly linked as twin symbols of neoliberal hegemony. On 11 January, labour and environmental activists, along with former government and military officials (such as Edgar Isch, who had served as Gutiérrez's minister of environment) came together for the 'Oil and Sovereignty' meeting. Their manifesto framed the problem of oil in terms of popular sovereignty. Neoliberalism, implemented by national elites and foreign capital, 'alienated our hydrocarbon wealth'. Participants demanded the nationalization of oil and nullification of several oil contracts, an end to extraction in environmentally protected areas, and expressed solidarity with indigenous groups resisting oil extraction in the Amazon.¹⁹ In the Amazonian region, ongoing mobilization in Shuar and Achuar communities, in coordination with non-indigenous-identifying *colonos*, culminated in an anti-Oxy and anti-free trade protest in the capital on 8 May 2006. Organizers named the march 'In defense of sovereignty, natural resources, and national dignity' and received support from *Acción Ecológica*, the CONAIE, a national umbrella federation of unions (*Frente Patriótico*), the oil workers union, and *Pachakutik*.²⁰ Although the Alfredo Palacios government played down the size of the protest, on 15 May they terminated the contract with Occidental Petroleum.²¹

If May of 2006 was a climax for resource nationalism, the conjuncture marked by the election of self-identifying '21st century socialist' Correa and the instalment of a popularly elected Constituent Assembly to rewrite the

constitution transformed the political terrain. In this critical juncture, the key components of what had become a militant opposition to oil extraction among indigenous communities in the southern Amazon gained salience. Indigenous and environmental activists, and allied intellectuals, would recombine these elements under the banner of a critique of the extractive model, a term popularized by environmentalist critics of the Latin American new left, and deploy it against the Correa administration and his promotion of new extractive projects.

The critical juncture

Correa, elected in the context of mass discontent with neoliberalism, came to power in a discursive field unified by anti-neoliberal critique. Correa claimed that his administration constituted a definitive rupture with neoliberalism, and that he would reassert national control and coordination over the economy, particularly over resource extraction. In response, anti-neoliberal social movements gradually re-articulated their position as an opposition to extraction *simpliciter* and away from a nationalist rhetoric of resources for the people.

Extractivismo discourse became salient at the intersection of two processes: first, the longer term realignment of social movement strategy in the context of a new left president and, second, the latter's aggressive promotion of the large-scale mining sector.²²

The 2007–2008 Constituent Assembly was a key moment in the longer term realignment. The debates surrounding the Assembly's adoption of the Mining Mandate dramatize the emergence of a critique of resource extraction that exceeded the categories of anti-neoliberalism. The Mandate took aim at the 'hemorrhage' of mineral concessions that were a product of the sector's deregulation under the neoliberal regime of resource governance. Although the Mandate remained inscribed within the language of national sovereignty, its language also raised the possibility of a political programme centring on the opposition to resource extraction *even if nationally owned*.

If the 2008 Mining Mandate was the product of a tenuous coalition supporting the reassertion of national sovereignty over the economy, then the 2009 Mining Law represented the limit of that political alignment and the exhaustion of anti-neoliberalism as a critical discourse and guide to social movement strategy. In the time that elapsed between the Mandate and the Law, the administration's commitment to developing the mining sector was made clear. From the perspective of its critics, this commitment came at the cost of the rights of indigenous peoples, affected communities, and nature alike. If this was what post-neoliberalism looked like, then new discourses, tactics, and alliances were necessary. The discursive-practical realignment gained momentum. What follows focuses the 2007–2008 Constituent

Assembly's Mining Mandate and the protests that erupted over the 2009 Mining Law – two turning points in the lifespan of *extractivismo* discourse.

'El mandato minero' and subsoil sovereignty

The 2007–2008 Constituent Assembly occurred at the intersection of two transformative projects: a nascent anti-extractivism and a popular nationalism. The final text retains vestiges of both. It empowers communities affected by extraction and grants rights to nature. It also asserts the state's exclusive control over subsoil resources and biodiversity itself. When the Assembly was convened, resource extraction did not yet divide the left. But as the Assembly unfolded, a debate grew over the model of development among leftist delegates from both Assembly President (AP) and *Pachakutik*. Delegates interwove *extractivismo* and anti-neoliberal discourse, but also laid the groundwork for these two resource radicalisms to eventually confront one another as mutually exclusive positions.

On 18 April 2008, delegates discussed and voted by overwhelming majority in favour of Constituent Mandate Number Six, known as the 'Mining Mandate'.²³ The Mandate revoked without compensation all mineral concessions in which no investment had been realized, that were located in protected natural areas, that had been granted to state functionaries in mining-related Ministries, or that totalled over three concessions per individual owner.²⁴ It declared a moratorium on new concessions, suspended mining activity until the new constitution 'entered into force', and established a state-owned mining company.²⁵

The Mandate represented a political position that would all but disappear a few years later. This position – critical of but not opposed to mining, in favour of more regulation and a slower expansion – would subsequently be voiced by some bureaucrats in interviews, but would soon dissolve into two poles: complete opposition to extraction, and a state-corporate alliance to aggressively promote it.

In the Assembly, those critical of resource extraction primarily posed the problem as one of ownership and regulation, and the solution as the recuperation or expansion of state authority. Although their speech was peppered with the terms of *extractivismo* discourse – multiple delegates spoke of the 'extractivist model' and its wide-ranging consequences – the discussion remained inscribed within the problematic of neoliberalism, understood as the abdication of state authority to coordinate and regulate economic activity.²⁶ The pushback from right-wing delegates only reinforced the focus on neoliberalism. They warned of how the Mandate would undermine the legal certainty (*seguridad jurídica*) required for investment and the legal sanctity of the contract itself, which is fundamental to both the 'model of economic development' and a 'State of Law'.²⁷ This group of right-wing

delegates played the role of a useful foil for the articulation of the authority of the state over transnational private capital. (They also inadvertently provided arguments that would later be recycled in state pro-mining discourse).

Acción Ecológica's critical response to the Mandate testified to the salience of anti-neoliberal discourse. Their press release stated that although they understood that the act was an attempt at the 'recuperation of national sovereignty over natural resources', the 'spirit of the mandate adopts a position favorable to the push for mining in this country'.²⁸ They asserted, 'instead of burying neoliberalism, its long night is prolonged'.²⁹ To conclude, they proclaimed: 'Ecuador will not be a mining country'. But despite their opposition to mining, and their active participation in anti-mining resistance, *Acción Ecológica* articulated their criticism of the Mining Mandate in the terms of anti-neoliberalism rather than *extractivismo* discourse. Similarly, when the CONAIE wrote a letter of opposition to the government a month later, they did not use the term extractivism, and wrote instead of their resistance to the 'the neoliberal model' implemented by the Correa administration (CONAIE 2008).

But the Assembly also provided an institutional setting for the dissemination of *extractivismo* discourse. The possibility of an 'anti-mining' or more broadly, 'anti-extraction' position appeared on the horizon, visible but just out of reach. During his intervention in support of the Mandate, AP Acosta stated:

I would propose something, comrades, if I could and if I had the votes, I would propose that in Ecuador, we eradicate open pit metallic mining, large scale open pit metallic mining. But maybe I don't have the votes and I am a realist, why don't we propose a popular consultation, so that the people define their future without fear, sincerely (*sin tapujos*), everything for the fatherland, nothing for us.³⁰

Although, for Acosta, the eradication of mining was not yet 'realistic', in the longer speech in which that statement occurred, he put forth an analysis that contained all of the elements of *extractivismo* discourse. He argued that the economic (concentration of wealth, speculation), environmental (deforestation, soil erosion, water contamination), and social (displacement of indigenous communities) effects of mining and oil are symptomatic of the 'extractivist model of development'. He hinted at the possibility of a post-extractive future: 'we cannot permanently live from the rent of nature'. Martha Roldos, delegate from the Maoist political party *Movimiento Popular Democrático*, also raised the possibility of a national vote on extractivism: 'I hope that, in some moment, we have the opportunity that in a referendum, the country decides which is the model of development in which it wants to live, the country decides whether it wants extractivism or not'.³¹

The next week, the Committee on Natural Resources and Biodiversity (presided over by Amazonian Kichwa activist and AP delegate Monica Chuji)

presented a 'diagnosis' that alleged that the 'primary export model, fundamentally extractivist, in the past 130 years has generated in Ecuador a territorial order (*un ordenamiento territorial*) articulated around the over-exploitation of natural resources demanded in the metropolises'.³² Invoking familiar dependency theory concepts, this historical narrative swept across colonialism, the establishment of the Republic, the incorporation into the world market, and the internal colonization of the northern Amazon, and culminated in oil exploitation. It identified the political logic of the extractive model, which undermined the regulatory capacity of the state, resulting in environmental degradation, and reduced politicians to spokespersons for the extractive industry.³³ Talk of *extractivismo* circulated via the roundtable meeting 'Hydrocarbons, Mining and Sustainable Development' featuring Uruguayan researcher Eduardo Gudynas, a key architect of the concept, and public fora such as 'Mining and the Extractive Model'.³⁴

From the mining mandate to the mining law

On 14 November 2008, Correa submitted a draft of a new mining law to the interim Congress. A few days later, pockets of protest against the proposed law erupted around the country, in Quito and in areas either potentially affected by large-scale mining or with a history of indigenous mobilization around water. On 7 January, CONAIE and ECUARUNARI (the highland indigenous federation) leadership announced a 'grand national mobilization in defense of water, the land, food sovereignty and for life, the 20th of January of 2009'. The language of anti-neoliberalism suffused the announcement: 'We express our support for the communities and peoples (*pueblos*) that struggle against the privatizing and neoliberal project of the Mining Law that threatens the life of the peoples and national sovereignty and favors the transnationals'. But as the protests unfolded, activists increasingly articulated a radical anti-extractive stance.

In his weekly radio address, Correa threatened to veto the law and present it as a national referendum if representatives 'succumb[ed]' to modifying the law under the 'pressures' of opposition groups.³⁵ On 12 January, a majority of delegates voted in favour of the law, and it was sent to Correa the next day.³⁶ On 20 January, the law was poised to be approved when protests swept the country.³⁷ Participants presented long list of grievances, but it was the law's perceived infringement on indigenous rights right to prior consultation and territory, recognized in the recently ratified constitution, that connected the issue of mining to the historic struggles of the indigenous movement. The law altered the content of those rights to promote large-scale mining.

ECUARUNARI's press release on the day of the march situated the protest in their long struggle for 'the defense of human rights, of collective rights and of *Pacha Mama*'.³⁸ They demanded '[a] true process of change', which would

transform the 'Neoliberal State' and 'construct a Plurinational State'. They wove together anti-neoliberalism with a critique of extraction:

The overcoming of the grave effects produced by the neoliberal model cannot be achieved with policies of a developmentalist and extractivist model that promotes the extraction of economic resources at whatever cost and reproduces, in practice, a social-economic structure of inequality, injustice, discrimination, and the exploitation of human beings and nature.

In their third grievance, they argued that the law 'promotes a model based on the sacking of natural resources (extractivist) and favors transnationals'. These demands evidence the shift to a wholesale rejection of resource extraction as the basis of Ecuador's political economy.

Although the final version of the bill was signed into law on 26 January, national (the CONAIE and *Acción Ecológica*), regional (ECUARUNARI), and local (UNAGUA, a water users committee in the southern highlands) organizations considered the march a success.³⁹ First, the law served as focal point of an emergent coalition of previously locally fragmented anti-mining groups in the southern sierra. Second, these groups gained an important ally in their anti-mining struggle: the CONAIE. The law was seen as such a direct violation of collective rights that the CONAIE challenged its constitutionality, bringing a case to the Constitutional Court in March 2009.⁴⁰ Third, the demonstrations against the law tested the recently elected President of CONAIE. Marlon Santi represented a significant shift for the federation's leadership.⁴¹ He was the first President in eight years to have been elected from the CONFENAIE, the Amazonian Kichwa federation.⁴² Santi is a member of the Sarayaku indigenous group that had been engaged in a five-year long conflict with Argentinian owned oil company CGC.⁴³ The combination of Santi's background in oil-related mobilization and a national administration bent on expanding oil and mineral exploitation pushed the indigenous movement to focus on opposing resource extraction.⁴⁴

The consensus represented by the 2008 Mining Mandate was no longer viable. For environmental, water, and indigenous activists, the new law revealed that the state-coordinated expansion of mining was to be prioritized over indigenous rights or environmental protection. As prominent environmentalist and indigenous rights lawyer Mario Melo explained to me, the uniqueness of the dispute over resource extraction in Ecuador is in large part a product of the administration's attempt to construct a *new* extractive sector. As he put it, 'large scale mining would be *continuity* of this model; *rupture* would be an alternative model of development. It appears as two distinct paths since large-scale mining is not yet at the extraction phase'.⁴⁵ Large-scale mining, a sector barely off the ground in a historically oil-dependent country, had become an urgent site of statecraft and resistance.

Extractivismo as a grand narrative of resistance

In the wake of the Constituent Assembly and anti-Mining Law protests, *extractivismo* discourse circulated through the conduits of an activist communicational infrastructure. In meetings, printed texts, public events, and informal conversations, indigenous, environmentalist, anti-mining, and anti-oil activists crafted strikingly similar narratives. When Amanda Yepes of radical environmental group *Acción Ecológica* took the stage in a June 2012 debate over mining in the northern city of Ibarra, she delved into a sweeping history of extractivism, dating it to 1534, the year of the Spanish conquest of Quito and the moment of its 'insertion into the world market', then sped ahead through the colonial period and independence, noting the continuity of the export-oriented accumulation model that was only reinforced when the first barrel of oil was extracted in Ecuador in 1972. The nascent large-scale mining sector was just one more link in a never-ending chain.

Extractivismo discourse often results in what Latour refers to as an 'acceleration' of analysis (2005, p. 22). Mimicking the ever-expanding frontier of oil and mineral exploitation that it seeks to describe, *extractivismo* links phenomena across vast expanses of time and space. These phenomena, whether the export-oriented production of cacao, or the not particularly successful oil-funded developmentalism of the 1970s, or the still underconstruction large-scale mining sector, are only so many manifestations of the same essence of extractivism, which is, as Alberto Acosta put it at a November 2011 event in Cuenca, itself the 'essence' of 'development', understood as the '500-year history' of Western modernity. Its duration in time is matched by the proliferation of damage across space. For Edgar Isch, mentioned above as a participant in the 2006 'Oil and Sovereignty' meeting, extractivism produces effects at all scales: the distortion of land use, disordered urban growth, pollution, loss of national sovereignty, etc.⁴⁶

Even within this sweeping account, for anti-extractive activists and intellectuals the Correa administration was the *most* 'extractivist' regime in Ecuador's history. The first three declarations of the resolution adopted at the CONAIE's Assembly on 18 June 2013 read: 'Maintain our political autonomy and independence from the Government of President Rafael Correa', 'Maintain the unwavering (*inclaudicable*) struggle against the extractivist model', and 'Declare Ecuador 'Free of Large Scale Mining' especially in sources of water and watersheds'.

Indigenous, environmental, and local anti-mining and anti-oil groups – CONAIE, CONFENIAE, *Acción Ecológica*, *Fundación Pachamama*, UNAGUA, *la Asamblea de los Pueblos del Sur*, among others – thenceforth acted to obstruct every phase of what was now seen as an interconnected 'extractive model'. *Extractivismo* discourse suggested that the effects of extraction travelled to distant locales, whether by air or water – the transportation of contaminants

facilitated by the very infrastructure extraction required (highways, pipelines, tailing basins) – or through the complex of political–economic relationships between points of hydrocarbon or mineral extraction and points of consumption. In the view of anti-extractive activists, these pathways were carved out by the constant egress of crude oil or semi-refined copper ore, and the constant ingress of dollars to affected communities, whether to build schools or pay off local officials. Through the signifying practices of their protest actions, these activists constructed resource extraction as both *a singular point of origin* of a range of social, economic, and environmental pathologies and as a process comprising *multiple sites of intervention* on the part of state and corporate actors, and, therefore, of multiple opportunities for resistance.

The two-week long March for Water, Life and the Dignity of Peoples, which departed from the southeastern Amazon on 8 March 2012, and arrived in Quito on 22 March, politically repurposed the circuits of the extractive model. I accompanied marchers, a few hundred at first and swelling to 25,000 in Quito, as we traversed those 700 km on foot and in unwieldy caravans, with people and placards instead of ore or crude and dollars. We began in the town of Pangui, within what bureaucrats and corporate actors call the ‘zone of influence’ of the now under construction Mirador Mine, the first large-scale mine with an exploitation contract – which was suspiciously signed just days before the march commenced. We zigzagged through the southern Andes, home to more planned mine projects in highland wetlands (*parámos*) that supply water to rural farmers and urban consumers. We were subsequently joined by brigades from the northern Amazon, travelling in the same direction as the crude that flowed through notoriously faulty pipelines and finally arrived in Quito, where the state coffers, voters, and armed forces formed the complex of incentives, democratic legitimacy, and sanctions that activists claimed kept the model in motion.

In the words and imagery disseminated throughout the mobilization process, marchers proposed an alternative model: a post-extractive vision in which the polity was not a machine that ran on fossil fuels but a plural collectivity comprising cultures and ecosystems alike. They declared, ‘We are water. We will flood Quito’. In the most widely circulating poster, variously sized drops of water were arranged such that they formed one big drop, superimposed on a map of Ecuador crisscrossed by blue lines representing its waterways (Figure 1).

The composition invoked an aquatic Leviathan: like the sovereign whose authority both contained and was constituted by his subjects, the image refigured Ecuador as a republic of water in which elements of nature were not only subject of rights (as per the 2008 Constitution) but active members of the polity. As the pamphlet on the march published by the collective *Minería Muerte* stated,



Figure 1. Poster, 'Gotas de Agua'.

We want to march for Water, Life and the Dignity of Peoples, march toward splendid life, to a new civilization, to the true *Sumak Kawsay*, where we recognize ourselves as the sisters and brothers of the tree, of the bird and the bacteria, brothers and sisters of the drops of rain, indigenous to the planet Earth, daughters and sons of the only Mother, sisters and brothers with equal rights.⁴⁷

The problematic of *extractivismo* shifted the focus away from the classic concerns of both Marxism and egalitarian liberalism: the mode of production,

the property regime, the pattern of distribution, the regulation of the economy, or the means to socio-economic development. In its purest form, the perspective of *extractivismo* discourse regarded these concepts and their political targets as not only insufficient but as reproducing the developmentalist pathology that was the essence of Western civilization. *Extractivismo* radically de-centred human beings: crude and ore were protagonists; wetlands and mountains were moral agents. It was a truly *post*-neoliberal project: the activists and intellectuals who crafted this discursive-political strategy sought to not only to transform the regime they had labelled neoliberalism but also to transcend the repertoire of anti-neoliberal resistance.

Conclusion

The political power of *extractivismo* discourse is evident in the response it elicited from state actors. This response was bipolar: some bureaucrats reiterated elements of this critical discourse; others regarded anti-extractive activists as enemies of the state. But both approaches are fundamentally oriented towards *extractivismo*, and the combined effect contributed to the ongoing circulation of its terms.

Several bureaucrats I interviewed adopted a modified critique of the extractive model. This position is captured by the 520-page official development plan and socio-economic treatise, *Plan nacional de buen vivir: 2009–2013*. As the plan states,

To date, Ecuador has had 20 constitutions. Except for the developmentalist period, which did not prosper for multiple reasons, the development strategy ... has consisted in generating wealth through the export of primary agricultural or non-renewable (oil) goods. It has been an extractivist primary export strategy. (SENPLADES 2009, p. 31)

The report elaborates the negative consequences, but, since 'leaving this model in an immediate manner is unviable', oil, and, in the near future, mining, remain key components of a 'sustainable endogenous strategy' to satisfy basic needs.⁴⁸ This logic renders large-scale mining *necessary* for a post-extractive transition. Large-scale mining, a sector still in the early stages of construction, was to be the beginning of an end: 'a post-oil vision', as one bureaucrat told me, or, as another official phrased it, 'the last moment of extraction'.⁴⁹

In contrast, state officials tasked with promoting oil or mining investment – President Correa foremost among them – crafted new defenses of extraction. These state actors took up the mantle of anti-neoliberal critique, redeploying resource nationalism to argue that opposition to resource extraction is tantamount to treason. Correa and other state officials characterized anti-extractive activists as the tools of imperial forces. In a December 2013 speech, Correa

cited Bolivian Vice President Alvaro García Linera's analysis of *extractivismo* discourse.⁵⁰ Both García Linera and Correa characterize the concept of extractivism as an invention of foreign NGOs, who – as representatives of wealthy nations – have a vested interest in undermining the economic development of poor, resource-dependent nations. These NGOs (as Correa put it, 'the little *gringos* with their full stomachs') enlist indigenous organizations to resist resource extraction and to declare themselves in opposition to the government.⁵¹ This discourse was accompanied by what activists call the criminalization of protest: since its inauguration in 2007, the Correa administration has pursued legal action against approximately 200 individuals for their participation in protests against resource extraction.⁵² About a third of these were arrested during the demonstrations against the 2009 Mining Law and 2010 Water Law. The charges for what are almost exclusively acts of nonviolent protest are telling: sabotage; terrorism.

The redeployment of the anti-imperialist strand of Latin American critical thought highlights the degree to which this is a fight *within* the left, a struggle over defining what a post-neoliberal political economy might look like. In an interview with the journal *New Left Review* in the fall of 2012, Correa reflected on this internecine conflict:

It is madness to say no to natural resources, which is what part of the left is proposing—no to oil, no to mining, no to gas, no to hydroelectric power, no to roads. This is an absurd novelty, but it's as if it has become a fundamental part of left discourse. It is all the more dangerous for coming from people who supposedly speak the same language. With so many restrictions, the left will not be able to offer any viable political projects ... We cannot lose sight of the fact that the main objective of a country such as Ecuador is to eliminate poverty. And for that we need our natural resources. There are people here who seem ready to create more poverty but leave those resources in the ground, or who even see poverty as something folkloric.

Correa opposes this ostensible tendency among anti-extractive activists to see poverty as 'folkloric', that is, an eco-primitive and romantic image of indigenous communities, to his modernizing project of eliminating poverty through state spending. He highlights the 'novelty' of anti-extractive discourse as the same time that he dismisses it as 'madness' and 'dangerous' precisely because it is articulated as leftism, situating his dispute with social movements in a long history (and salient present) of internecine leftist conflict. Despite Correa's appeal to polarizing simplifications, his analysis points to the political challenges facing a movement opposed to extraction in all forms.

Radical resource nationalism, which the Correa administration has recycled and redeployed (albeit in diluted form: no nationalizations; lots of courting of foreign oil and mining companies), posited an expansive political subject ('we the people') against the widely despised figure of the foreign capitalist. It

concretized resistance to neoliberalism and solidified a popular sector coalition, tying together groups with distinct histories of struggle: indigenous organizations; labour unions; urban movements. It called for concrete changes in the structure of ownership and regulation and framed these as necessary to address the unsatisfied basic needs of the population. Its narrative structure was progressive and teleological: a bright future of reclaimed sovereignty lies ahead of us. In contrast, *extractivismo* discourse presents a different set of demands, identities, and temporal structure, and even redraws the cartography of popular struggle. Many indigenous and environmental activists declare their opposition to extraction in all forms, but rarely define the limits of this category (does agriculture count? what about small scale mining?). Post-extraction is also hard to pin down and the vision can slide into a montage of imagined precolonial pasts and hazy extraction-free futures (local, organic agriculture and ecotourism are frequently alluded to).

However, despite and because of its radical reframing of the leftist problematic, *extractivismo* has served to guide social movements to concrete victories, and upended accepted notions of the prerequisites for collective action. Several specific campaigns have forged urban–rural coalitions and in the process rescaled who counts as ‘directly affected’ by extractive projects. Inhabitants of Cuenca, the third largest city in Ecuador, have joined *campesino* activists (often organized in community water councils) in the rural highlands right outside the municipal lines to resist mining projects that would affect their shared water supply, which irrigates dairy and vegetable farms and slakes urban residents. Bureaucrats confessed that their multifaceted anti-mining mobilization has contributed to stalling development of the planned Quimsacocha gold mine, one of the government’s five ‘strategic’ projects. In 2013, a decentralized network of activists across the country mounted an impressive campaign to prevent oil extraction in the Yasuní National Park, a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve and home to numerous indigenous communities (some living in voluntary isolation). The administration had previously adopted a civil society proposal to *not* extract oil in the park, in exchange for \$3.6 billion in donations from the international community to fund sustainable development (framed as the ‘ecological debt’ owed by the Global North to the Global South). When the government failed to attract enough donations by the deadline, Correa decided to proceed with oil extraction, sparking the formation of the activist network *YASunidos*.⁵³ An analysis of the lengthy mobilization is beyond the scope of this article, but it is worth mentioning that the campaign drew huge protests in major cities far from the sites of extraction.⁵⁴ Despite not achieving their goals, the resistance to oil extraction in the Yasuní reached a scale in numerical size, territorial expanse, and diversity of political actors comparable to the large protests against Occidental Petroleum and free trade in 2005 and 2006.

Ultimately, it may be neither the actions of anti-extractive activists nor the circulation of *extractivismo* discourse that undoes the extractive model. Both this model and resistance to it have been firmly situated in a particular political-economic context, marked by the coincidence of a worldwide commodity boom (2000–2010) and the resurgence of the Latin American left. It was in this regional context, of the intensified economic dependency on primary commodities and the channelling of resource revenues to finance social spending, that *extractivismo* discourse crystallized. But with the end of the commodity boom slashing oil earnings and stalling extractive projects across the globe, and recent right-wing electoral victories in South America, the extractive model may be imploding on its own accord. In the short term, the commodity bust may paradoxically incentivize an expansion of the extractive frontier as governments attempt to maintain vital revenue flows, which may in turn further radicalize anti-extractive protest.⁵⁵ In the longer term, however, a change in the regime of resource governance would transform the terrain of policy-making and protest, spurring indigenous and environmentalist activists to redraft their critique, revise their strategies, and assemble a new resource radicalism.

Notes

1. The concept of *buen vivir*, a central concept in the 2008 Constitution and the government's development plan (discussed below), recurs frequently in both the critical discourse of *extractivismo* and the justification of development policy on the part of state actors. A full discussion of this concept is beyond the scope of this article; for further reading, see Escobar (2010), Svampa (2015), Caria and Dominguez (2016).
2. NB: Ecuador still relies on banana exports.
3. OPIP, founded in 1978, comprises Kichwa, Achuar, and Shuar indigenous groups from the oil-producing Amazonian province of Pastaza (Sawyer 2004, pp. 27–46; 81–105; Yashar 2005, pp. 110–114).
4. CONAIE as a whole has been dominated by the highlands federation, ECUARUNARI.
5. The Borja administration partially met OPIP's demands: it recognized 55 percent of the land they claimed, but this land was not divided up according to traditional use, and the state retained its claim over oil (Sawyer 2004, pp. 50–52; Yashar 2005, pp. 126–128).
6. The administration lacked the congressional support for financial sector liberalization and major privatizations (Silva 2009, pp. 161–163; Hey and Klak 1999, p. 80).
7. This platform reappeared in the CONAIE's (1997) Constitutional Proposal, which stipulated that 'nonrenewable resources' would be exclusively owned and managed by the state (Art. 129–130).
8. *Hoy* 10 January 2005, 'Poder y crudo dividen a Confeniae'.
9. *Hoy* 10 January 2005, 'El petróleo 'rompe' a la Confeniae,' emphasis added.
10. *Hoy* 10 January 2005, 'El petróleo 'rompe' a la Confeniae.'
11. *El Comercio* 21 April 2005, 'Los shuar se declaran en emergencia antipetrolera'

12. El comité de paro, 16 August 2005, 'Boletín de prensa: Contra las empresas petroleras paro bi-provincial Sucumbíos y Orellana' at <http://ecuador.indymedia.org/es/2005/08/10810.shtml>.
13. The strike resulted in \$570 million in economic losses, \$300 million of which would have been state revenues. President Palacios declared a state of siege on 17 August; confrontations with the military resulted in one death and at least 11 injuries. '570 millones de pérdidas por paro Amazónico' http://ecuadorinmediato.com/index.php?module=Noticias&func=news_user_view&id=19156&umt=570_millones_perdidas_por_paro_amazonico; 'Ecuador: An Oil Strike's Present and Future Consequences, 23 August 2005, at <https://www.stratfor.com/analysis/ecuador-oil-strikes-present-and-future-consequences>.
14. 'ICSID's Largest Award in History: An Overview of Occidental Petroleum Corporation v the Republic of Ecuador' <http://kluwerarbitrationblog.com/2012/12/19/icsids-largest-award-in-history-an-overview-of-occidental-petroleum-corporation-v-the-republic-of-ecuador/>.
15. As discussed below, the Occidental contract was terminated in May 2006.
16. *El Comercio* 13 October 2005, 'Un 12 de Octubre contra las petroleras y el TLC,' 'Movilizaciones en america latina en el 12 de octubre' at <http://www.ecuador.indymedia.org/es/2005/10/11470.shtml> and <http://cuasran.blogspot.com/2007/10/12-de-octubre-2005-un-repudio-atraves.html> 10 March 2007 '12 DE OCTUBRE 2005: UN REPUDIO ATRAVESÓ AMÉRICA'
17. 'Fuera Oxy y No al TLC Ecuador: Marchas por la Constituyente y Nacionalización de Petróleo' 10 October 2005 at <http://movimientos.org/node/5496?key=5496>.
18. 'Fuera Oxy y No al TLC Ecuador: Marchas por la Constituyente y Nacionalización de Petróleo' 10 October 2005 at <http://movimientos.org/node/5496?key=5496>.
19. Frente Patriótico por la Soberanía Petrolera at <http://soberaniapetrolera.blogspot.com/>
20. *El Universo* 'Movilización amazónica en Quito contra Oxy y el TLC' 05/08/2006; *El Universo* 'Pachakutik se une a las marchas contra la Oxy' 9 May 2006.
21. Occidental pursued legal action against Ecuador via the International Center for Settlement of Investment Disputes. In 2012, the ICSID ruled that Ecuador pay Occidental \$1.77 billion in damages; Ecuador negotiated the amount down to \$1 billion. See <http://www.reuters.com/article/ecuador-occidental-idUSL2N14X0U420160113>.
22. And new oil projects in the untapped reserves of the southern Amazon.
23. The Mandate was a legislative act; the Constituent Assembly had 'full powers'.
24. Art. 1–5.
25. Art. 6; 8; 11.
26. Asamblea Constituyente, Acta, 37 18 April 2008, p. 13; 40.
27. pp. 23–25; See also the intervention of Diana Acosta, pp. 29–34.
28. Acción Ecológica, 2 April 2008, 'Sobre el mandato minero' at <http://alainet.org/active/23237&lang=pt>.
29. Ironically redeploing Correa's pronouncement that he would transcend 'the long night of neoliberalism' (Correa 2007, p. 3).
30. Acta 37, p. 50. Assembly President Alberto Acosta (AP) had a history of critically analyzing resource extraction. He co-edited the volume *Ecuador Post-Petrolero* (2000) with Esperanza Martínez (a founder of Acción Ecológica), critiquing oil-dependency and envisioning of a 'post-oil' future. A month before the Assembly concluded, he resigned from the administration, and became a key ally of anti-extractive activists.

31. Acta 37, p. 56.
32. Asamblea Constituyente, Acta 40, 29 April 2008, p. 11.
33. Asamblea Constituyente, Acta 40, 29 April 2008, p. 12; 16.
34. Informe de Actividades, 25 March 2008, Memo No. 14-MCH-ANC-2008; Caprio to Chuji (Correspondance) 20 March 2008. For an example of Gudynas' work, see Gudynas (2010).
35. Enlace Ciudadano 103, 10 January 2009.
36. 'Congresillo aprobó la nueva Ley Minera' 13 January 2009 at <http://www.hoy.com.ec/noticias-ecuador/congresillo-aprobo-la-nueva-ley-minera-328402.html>.
37. 'Protesta contra ley minera deja 6 policías heridos en Ecuador,' 20 January 2009 at <http://eleconomista.com.mx/internacional/2009/01/20/protesta-contra-ley-minera-deja-6-policias-heridos-ecuador>; 'Ecuador: Gran movilización nacional contra la ley minera. Represión y al menos 11 detenidos,' 20 January 2009 at <http://www.lahaine.org/index.php?p=189>; 'Movilización Antiminera, Ecuador, 20 de Enero 2009,' 01/20/09 at <http://www.abayalacolectivo.com/web/compartir/noticia/movilizacion-antiminera--20-de-enero-2009>; and Moore, Jennifer. 'Ecuador: Mining Protests Marginalized, But Growing,' 21 January 2009 at <http://upsidedownworld.org/main/content/view/1673/1/>
38. ECUARUNARI, 'Movilización por defensa de la Vida y la Pachamama' Boletín de Prensa, 20 January 2009 at <http://www.llacta.org/organiz/coms/2009/com0011.htm>
39. For example, CONAIE, 'El Consejo de Gobierno de CONAIE evaluó como positiva la Jornada de Movilizaciones en el país' Boletín de Prensa 21 January 2009 at <http://www.llacta.org/organiz/coms/2009/com0017.htm>.
40. UNAGUA and Acción Ecológica were both parties to the case, further cementing the anti-extractive coalition.
41. Thea Riofrancos. 'Ecuador: Indigenous Confederation Inaugurates New President and Announces National Mobilization' 6 February 2008 at <http://upsidedownworld.org/main/ecuador-archives-49/1120-ecuador-indigenous-confederation-inaugurates-new-president-and-announces-national-mobilization>.
42. *Hoy*, 'Dirección bajo 4 Amazonicos' 14 November 2004.
43. The oil concession was originally granted in 1996. The Sarayaku first brought their case before the Court in 2003, alleging the failure of the Ecuadorian state to consult them prior to oil company CGC's exploration of their territory. In July of 2012, the Inter-American Court of Human Rights ruled in favor of the Sarayaku.
44. Also key was Water Law in May of 2010, in which the CONAIE claimed victory when the legislature was forced to shelve the bill as a direct result of their mobilization. 'Indígenas de Ecuador proclaman "victoria" ante no aprobación de Ley de Recursos Hídricos' 13 May 2010 at <http://www.eltiempo.com/archivo/documento/CMS-7708489>.
45. Interview 28 November 2011; emphasis added.
46. Stated at the Second Social Forum on Mining in Cuenca, 1 March 2012.
47. *Minería Muerte* 2012, p. 3. Pamphlet received via personal communication, 3 February 2012.
48. *Minería Muerte* 2012, pp. 95–97.
49. Interviews on 1 December 2011 and 4 April 2012, respectively.
50. Most likely referring to García Linera (2012).
51. Correa, Enlace 294, 20 October 2012.

52. See <http://www.elcomercio.com/actualidad/codigo-penal-tipifica-nuevos-delitos.html> and the 2012 Amnesty International report on 24 social movement leaders accused of crimes <http://www.refworld.org/docid/50055db82.html>.
53. <http://sitio.yasunidos.org/en/>.
54. YASunidos collected 756,291 signatures to present a national referendum on whether to extract oil in the park. The National Electoral Commission controversially rejected the petition (<http://www.theguardian.com/environment/2014/apr/30/yasuni-campaigners-oil-drilling-petition-results-referendum>).
55. On the effect of falling oil prices on extraction, see <http://www.theguardian.com/environment/2015/jan/06/commodities-latin-america-amazon-deforestation>.

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