

OIL CONFLICT IN ECUADOR

A Photographic Essay

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This article has three purposes. First, the photographs and text narrate the diverse and persistent mobilization efforts against the oil sector operating in the Amazon region of Ecuador. Second, the study explores limitations of resistance networks composed of Northern environmental and Ecuadorian domestic groups. These networks tend to target Northern oil multinationals while overlooking the increasing interest and influence of Asian oil firms in the Amazon. Third, the article is aimed at showing how photography can complement interviewing in field research and how it can be of methodological interest to environmental social scientists in the complex way it defines the role of the researcher.

Keywords: *pollution; environmental conflict; oil industry; labor environmentalism; indigenous communities; environmental justice groups; environmental NGOs*

An analysis of oil conflict in Ecuador today should begin in 1972, when Ecuador's first oil pipeline Sistema del Oleoducto Transnacional-Ecuatoriano, or SOTE, was built. SOTE originated on the edge of the Amazon, the site of production, crossed the Andes Mountains, and terminated on the Pacific Coast. Its construction was a nonevent, occurring outside of public attention, without public debate. Indeed, it occurred at a time when oil discovery was celebrated worldwide by economic and political elites, who may have thought it would catapult their underdeveloped nations into the first world.

The beneficiaries of oil production argued that oil discovery created a nation materially improved than it was before oil discovery. Roads and bridges, schools, and health care centers were constructed with petro-dollars. Some Ecuadorians from the urban centers found well-paid employment within the oil sector, from executive positions to skilled technical work. Yet others suggested that dependence on a single, extractable commodity has a history of spurring crises of poverty and political turmoil and fostering state neglect of economic linkages and agricultural production because of external debt and military expenditure (Karl, 1997, 1999).

Whether 30 years of oil production hurt or benefited Ecuador and its 13 million people, 12% to 45%¹ of whom are Indigenous, was still very much debated in 2001

when construction began on the country's second trans-Ecuadorian pipeline, the Oleoducto de Crudos Pesados (OCP), or Heavy Crude Pipeline. With the construction of OCP, challenges to the extraction of the country's natural resource were no longer confined to Indigenous communities and organizations confronting single oil entities in the Amazon (see Brysk, 2000; Gerlach, 2003; Kane, 1995; Kimerling, 1991; Sawyer, 2004; Tidwell, 1996). Oil became a national issue. Indigenous and non-Indigenous struggles continued in the Amazon, where oil is produced and where contamination is most acutely experienced. However, with the construction of OCP, grassroots groups formed in affected communities, and professional environmental and social justice organizations mobilized along the pipeline's right of way to challenge a pattern of social and economic inequalities and environmental health burden associated with oil. I suggest that their mobilization effort was patterned off of years of Indigenous struggles with the state over land rights and with oil firms over contamination.

STRONG AND WEAK COLLABORATIONS

The diversity of initiatives, captured in these photographs, reminds us of the hurdles to collaborative campaigns between environmental organizations, labor unions, and Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities and between Southern activists and Northern advocacy organizations. Though environmental and Indigenous issues are two of the leading issues for transnational campaigns today (see Castells, 1997; Keck & Sikkink, 1998; Khagram, 2004), the strength of alliances between them appears uncertain. Ali (2000) and Sawyer (2004) suggest ties between Indigenous and environmental groups may be tenuous at times, whereas Gedicks (2001, 2004) has documented sustained and successful Native and environmental coalitions since the early 1990s. In Canada, Native leaders also experienced a loss of resource control and loss of community respect as ecological managers when they entered into an agreement with a hydroelectric project (Whiteman, 2004), arguably limiting future collaborations between Native and environmental groups.

Tensions between professional conservation organizations and grassroots environmental justice groups are also well documented (Bullard, 1993; Gottlieb, 1993; Hofrichter, 1993; Humphrey & Buttel, 1982). In contrast to single-item conservation initiatives, an environmental justice perspective demands environmental, social, and economic equality; sustainable development; and community participation in decision making. Indeed, environmental injustice implies environmental, social, and/or economic burden experienced by some groups when imposed by others (Roberts & Toffolon-Weiss, 2001), because of race, class, gender, and geopolitical position.

Labor unions and environmental organizations are two other blocks that shift between being collaborative and antagonistic (Obach, 1999, 2004), even though an environmental justice lens encapsulates the core issues of the working class and environmentalists (see Faber, 1998). In general, oil communities often support industry (see Freudenburg & Gramling, 1994), while demanding environmental safeguards, healthy living and working conditions, technical training, and just wages. However, oil employment is often too technical for the skills of local people in poor, rural places, who are often kept undereducated and undertrained (Allen, 2003).

For instance, in Louisiana, communities most adjacent to petrochemical processes live a life of poverty, unemployment, poor health, and inferior skills relative to the employment demands of the industry (Allen, 2003). In one instance,

a chemical factory's expansion created 700 to 800 temporary construction jobs and 20 permanent jobs for the highly trained (Allen, 2003). Global disputes exhibit similarities. In Ecuador, working-class communities mobilize for technical and permanent jobs, better wages, and environmental precaution rather than the relocation of industry.

Though labor and environmental concerns coincided temporarily in the United States, corporate slogans and economic hardships in the 1970s and 1980s fueled disputes between them (Faber & O'Connor, 1993; Rowell, 1996). By the 1990s, environmental justice and labor groups were again attempting to collaborate for a just and sustainable economy (Obach, 1999, 2004). As the two continue to coalesce and dissociate with regularity, such vacillation exposes labor, land, and communities to continual exploitation.

Strains between conservation organizations and community-based groups may be further exacerbated when campaigns transition from the local and/or national to the global. For domestic groups, risks associated with transnational engagement include dependence, stratification, and cooptation (Stewart, 2004), misrepresentation (Mayo, 2005), and neglect of technical capacity building (Rodrigues, 2004). In addition, more Northern-only nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and NGOs with North-South linkages focus on the environment rather than development and empowerment, whereas the opposite is true for Southern-only organizations (Smith, 2005). In practice, I suggest that the engagement of Northern voices may simplify the environmental justice demands arising in affected communities that incorporate economic opportunity with environmental health considerations.

In the case of oil conflict in Ecuador, the diversity of community groups and NGOs that mobilized and the distinctions between them risked magnifying differences, straining common bonds, and undermining sustained collaboration. Nevertheless, and importantly, the oil sector was on the defensive with the number of mobilization efforts to resist it, negotiate with it, or obtain community-directed benefit from it. I suggest that once contention becomes so widespread as to enable multiple agendas and voices aimed at multiple targets and as to breed new pockets of challenges given the disparities experienced in oil-producing nations, those mobilized may begin to receive concessions from both the state and/or oil sector. Indeed, in a critical assessment of environmental sociology, Buttel (2003) argues that environmental mobilizations, including those linked increasingly with antiglobalization movements, remain vital to environmental reform and to pressuring states for greater environmental regulations.

In this case, an end to oil production is not necessarily advocated among the majority of diverse community-based groups and environmental NGOs. Most mobilize for greater involvement in directing and monitoring the oil industry and for greater transparency in state-oil decisions. Likewise, when Northern firms depart Ecuador, due in part to Northern campaigns against their practices or shareholder discontent with negative publicity, they may be replaced by state-owned Asian, or South American oil firms which may be governed by less external oversight and community input.

PHOTOGRAPHIC METHODOLOGY

These photographs were taken during four time periods between 2001 and 2004, during my research on how environmental NGOs and grassroots environmental justice groups mobilized in response to the construction of the OCP pipeline. Fieldwork

began in 2001 before construction, continued in 2002 at the peak of construction and in 2003 post-construction, and ended in 2004. In total, I was in Ecuador for 13 months over 4 years. I conducted 93 interviews with 106 people, including the directors or spokespersons of professional NGOs and grassroots groups, government officials, oil representatives, and environmental consultants. Among the 106 people interviewed, 29 were interviewed on two or three occasions, and in a few instances, I interviewed two people during the same interview encounter. I also observed mobilizations, internal meetings, and press conferences as well as analyzed environmental impact assessments, position papers, and documentaries. Though my research focused on organized challenges to the OCP pipeline, I attended other conflicts targeted at specific oil companies in the Amazon. These additional controversies were not particular to the pipeline but were indicative of the extensiveness of oil contention in Ecuador following 30 years of oil extraction.

These photographs taken at demonstrations and sites of contamination and on "toxic tours" organized by the radical eco-feminist organization *Acción Ecológica* served three purposes. One, photographs do not replace attendance, nor do they capture fully an event. Nevertheless, photographs may serve as a methodological tool to bolster recall and to check reliability, and/or to augment research notes. Second, I developed my film in Ecuador and gave copies to the leaders of the grassroots organizations and to an international environmental NGO. To Brown (2003), research of this nature is "tinged with a pro-community ethos" (p. 1794). In this regard, the sharing of photographs most likely facilitated access to future events and interviews with organizational leaders as it may have indicated, unintentionally, agreement. Nevertheless, I found that taking photographs during an event operated as an actual and perceptual barrier between me, the research-observer, and the participants. Unlike Gedicks's (2004) experience of incorporating himself into an environmental conflict as a social scientist, an advocate, and a filmmaker, I found that the temporary role of photographer functioned as a wall between me and the participants. In contradiction to the second purpose of photography (enabling access and inclusion), the use of a camera brought me into an event, thereby enabling access, while maintaining and/or enforcing some distance between me and the participants.

OIL CONFLICTS IN ECUADOR: TOXIC IMPACTS, INDIGENOUS CAMPAIGNS, A LAWSUIT, AND A PIPELINE

In this section of the article, I present information on concurrent oil conflicts in Ecuador. The photographs transition from depictions of environmental impacts (Figures 1 to 3), to Indigenous campaigns (Figures 4 to 9), to a lawsuit between oil-affected communities and Texaco (Figures 10 to 12), and finally to the construction of the OCP pipeline (Figures 13 to 18).

After more than 30 years of oil production, Ecuador was experiencing sporadic, yet persistent, flare-ups between a state-oil alliance and Indigenous organizations, social and environmental justice NGOs, and oil-affected communities, which were supported by local officials in the oil-important towns of Lago Agrio, Coca, and Esmeraldas. At the core of these conflicts were an oil-dependent state and multinationals exporting the wealth and natural resources of local people and leaving behind contaminated environments and impoverished communities.

When the construction of OCP began, there were other ongoing disputes between affected people and the state and/or oil sector. Described here are the decade-long struggles between the Sarayacu community and oil multinationals,

the Texaco trail that began in 1993, the enduring Achuar and Shuar disputes with oil, and the construction of the OCP pipeline.

The Sarayacu Community

The Indigenous community of Sarayacu, a lowland Kichwa² community, has been battling the state, oil multinationals, and other Kichwa Indigenous communities, including the neighboring Canelos community, since the late 1980s. In 1988, Los Angeles-based Atlantic Richfield Company (ARCO) first acquired rights to explore for oil within the community's territory and its extensive subsistence and hunting grounds. Once seismic testing began, this community put up strong resistance, established international alliances in the United States and Europe, and succeeded in blocking oil extraction from several multinationals. In the 1990s, protracted conflicts blocked oil exploration and extraction by the Argentine Compañía General de Combustibles (CGC) in Block 10 and CGC and Houston-based Burlington Resources in Block 23. Both oil blocks are considered Sarayacu territory. Sarayacu's Indigenous leaders have spoken in Washington, D.C., New York, multiple locations in Europe, and Argentina. The international breadth of Sarayacu's connections appeared to have raised this community to a well-traveled, highly publicized, and nearly untouchable Indigenous nation within the state of Ecuador (see <http://www.sarayacu.com>).

Yet in December 2003, the government threatened to militarize the area to force the search and flow of oil. A month later, the Sarayacu community declared its own state of emergency.³ In response, the United Nations, the Inter-American Human Rights Commission (IAHRC), and numerous national and international Indigenous and environmental organizations declared their solidarity with this community of approximately 1,500. IAHRC warned the state to use precaution and to respect the rights⁴ and land of the Sarayacu community.

Texaco Lawsuit

A second battle against the oil industry was being waged in U.S. and Ecuadorian courts. In October 2003, a court case between 13,000 affected people of the Amazon and Texaco (now Chevron Corporation) wound a 10-year-long journey in appeals and six motions to dismiss, from New York to the oil town of Lago Agrio. In the Amazon, the case was tried in a simple, muggy courtroom of wooden benches and folding chairs. The sparsely furnished room belied this landmark case, though the packed presence of Indigenous men and women, New York lawyers, international media, and human rights activist Bianca Jagger testified to the trial's historic importance. This case marked the first time that a case filed by non-American plaintiffs against a U.S. corporation had been returned to the place of impact for a local court decision, on the condition that the U.S. courts would enforce the verdict reached through the Ecuadorian legal system. The settlers, farmers, and Indigenous people of the Amazon were supported by Frente de Defensa de la Amazonia, an environmental justice organization based in the oil hub of Lago Agrio, and Amazon Watch, an American NGO that monitors and confronts U.S.-based oil and mining concerns in the Amazon and supports affected communities.

Residents of the Amazon charged Texaco with the systematic destruction of their land between 1971 and 1992, leading to multiple environmental and health damages, a price tag the plaintiffs' lawyers said totaled US\$1 billion.⁵ The plaintiffs' lawyers presented Texaco's profits as "unjust enrichment" by using substandard drilling

practices and dumping oil and toxic waste, a by-product of oil extraction. The civil actions suit alleged that Texaco engaged in careless negligence and a wanton disregard for Latin American and Indigenous communities by refusing to adhere to accepted practices for the clean-up and disposal of oil waste water. Lawyers for the plaintiffs charged that Texaco was dumping 4.3 million gallons of wastewater per day in unlined open pits, rivers, and estuaries of the Amazon, which leached into the ground water and water sources for drinking and bathing. They were demanding the clean-up of approximately 350 waste pits, the installation of re-injection technology in the wells, economic compensation, and medical monitoring and assistance for those people adversely affected by oil-related activities. Currently, the former Texaco fields are operated by PetroEcuador. Oil spews on or just below the surface in these fields: oil ponds, thick with the viscous fluid, are scattered throughout the edge of the Amazon, easily accessible by road or on foot.

Achuar/Shuar Conflicts in Blocks 23 and 24

A third oil conflict existed between Achuar and Shuar Indigenous communities in the southern Amazon region, whose territories corresponded to Oil Blocks 23 and 24. Burlington Resources⁶ took exploration rights of Block 24 from ARCO in 1999. Block 23 is within the Kichwa Sarayacu territory as well, and its exploration rights were owned in shares by Burlington, CGC, Perenco, and Chevron Corporation. Since 1998, when ARCO was granted mineral rights to explore in Block 24, these Indigenous communities had successfully resisted oil extraction within their territories. In large part, their rejection of oil resided in their awareness of the environmental, health, and social impacts on northern Indigenous communities, following oil extraction in the 1970s and 1980s. In 1999, the Indigenous leaders succeeded in obtaining a provincial judge's court order prohibiting oil companies from conversing or negotiating with individual community members, thereby requiring all negotiations to be with authorized community representatives.

Ties with advocates in the United States, including Amazon Watch, Pachamama Alliance, and Earthrights International, also facilitated the attendance of Indigenous leaders at Burlington's annual shareholders meetings. In a letter to the CEO of Burlington, dated May 14, 2003, the presidents of three Shuar and Achuar organizations presented their position: "We do not wish to see the contamination, deforestation and cultural destruction that the northern part of the Ecuadorian Amazon has suffered. We believe that our country can develop without destroying our environment and culture" (Callera, Najamde, & Tsere, 2003). The organizations were Federación Independiente del Pueblo Shuar del Ecuador, Federación Interprovincial de Nacionalidad Achuar, and Federación Interprovincial de Centros Shuar. A year later, ethical investment firms, which invest in socially and environmentally responsible companies and advocate for social justice at shareholders meetings, filed a resolution requesting local consent be obtained and suggesting Burlington's activities posed a financial risk to the company. In addition, the resolution, filed by Boston Common Asset Management and Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility, called for the company to adhere to international law,⁷ which recognizes Indigenous rights worldwide.

The OCP Pipeline

Against this backdrop, the construction of the OCP pipeline instigated the mobilization of professional environmental NGOs and international NGOs,

including Acción Ecologica, Aves y Conservación (formerly CECIA), Fundación Maquipucuna, Fundación Natura, and Birdlife International, as well as the formation of grassroots groups. Grassroots groups that formed following the announcement of OCP included Acción por la Vida (Action for Life), based in the tourism community of Mindo, and Pro-Ruta de Menor Impacto (For the Route of Least Impact), a loose configuration of landowners and conservation NGOs with interests in Andean forests. Along with other established organizations, they mobilized for the rerouting of the pipeline south of their community and protected reserves deemed ecologically sensitive. In the oil-producing hub of Lago Agrio, Comité de Paro Biprovincial (Biprovincial Strike Committee) and Red Amazonica por la Vida (Amazonian Network for Life) formed for greater community projects and landowner compensation.

At this time, Ecuadorian society was being pulled in two directions. One was a continued economic commitment to the anticipated benefit of oil production, endorsed by the International Monetary Fund given the nation's external debt of approximately US\$18.9 billion in 2002. The alternative was economic diversification, economic and environmental sustainability, and a political commitment to higher educational, environmental, and health standards.

Along OCP's right of way, affected communities, grassroots groups, and NGOs demanded a participatory role⁸ in directing the oil industry. They wanted the oil process to be determined by local authorities and local organizations, as well as a role in monitoring and assessing environmental and social impact. In these towns, community-determined projects meant improved roads, sanitation systems, and hospital facilities. Local organizations valued healthy bodies and environments alongside the eradication of poverty, whereas those closest to the input and output oil terminals also sought training for skilled jobs.

In downplaying⁹ the unprecedented national opposition to the pipeline's construction, then-President Gustavo Noboa said, "four birdwatchers and a couple of mayors" would not derail the OCP project. He added, "I'm not going to let anyone screw with the country. I'll give them war." During the course of OCP's construction, 73 people were detained at three different locations along the route (Acción Ecológica, 2003).

In two oil-producing provinces in the Amazon, an 11-day strike organized by the Bi-Provincial Strike Committee, whose demands were supported by local mayors, led to a state of emergency, a nighttime curfew, and the militarization of the region to force the flow of oil. Following the confrontation, reports¹⁰ differed on the number killed, with the highest estimate at four. Eventually a truce of sorts was called between the communities and the state with an agreement from the state for 125 miles of paved road, additional electrical supply, and \$5 million in credit for local farmers.

In another incident in the Andes, at a site of oil transportation rather than production, 19 activists, including some members of Acción por la Vida, were arrested after maintaining a treetop campsite for more than 50 days to object to OCP's route through the protected forest of Mindo-Nambillo. Of the 19 activists arrested, 14 were nonnational demonstrators from France, Ireland, Sweden, Germany, Colombia, Italy, and the United States. At nearly three nonnationals to every one local arrested, the detainment appeared to represent a greater environmental commitment by international visitors than local residents to protect Ecuador's forests from oil. This imbalance, when Northern advocates support Southern demonstrations, invites challenges to the depth and breadth of local position.

Because of or despite these confrontations, OCP provided computers and printers for local governments and police departments, improved sewage, waste

management and potable water systems, expanded and improved roads, sports uniforms, funding for civic events, and school improvements (OCP, 2005a, 2005b). The tourism community of Mindo, whose residents staged the tree-sits, received workshops on how to improve their nature-based tourism industry. Men received temporary construction work and guard positions. One small neighborhood received 150 chickens, and another received nine reinforced concrete posts. I note the two latter items to call attention to the simplicity of requests once presented with the opportunity to make demands of the oil sector.

Despite these projects, communities were unable to ensure transparency, to demand a contingency plan, or to influence the route or degree of impact associated with an oil pipeline. According to the social and environmental justice organization Frente de Defensa de la Amazonia (2001), "local participation has been reduced to only local manual labor, without civil society's active participation in the monitoring and control of the construction and operation of OCP, and the benefits that it will generate."

I present these varied conflicts to establish how pockets of Ecuadorian society had a decade-long history of making claims against the impacts of the oil industry. Yet despite these constant struggles, demands and mobilization efforts diverged. Community-based organizations closest to the oil terminals sought employment and compensation, and the tourism destination of Mindo with no previous oil experience before the arrival of OCP sought a relocation of the pipeline. Indigenous organizations, which at times rejected oil and at other times negotiated with it, chose not to mobilize in response to the construction of the OCP pipeline. Indigenous organizations and communities in Ecuador formed only weak and sporadic ties with non-Indigenous, domestic, and international organizations and environmental groups. At their initiative, Indigenous communities and organizations used environmental groups for resources, contacts, or to enlarge a roster of complaints. However, from interviews and observations, the bonds appeared to be weak and easily dissolvable at the Indigenous organization's direction. Nevertheless, earlier Indigenous actions among the Kichwa, Achuar, and Shuar communities paved the way for non-Indigenous communities and environmental NGOs to challenge state-oil deliberations without civil society's participation in determining compensation, deliberating on siting decisions, conducting social and environmental impact assessments, and monitoring construction practices.

DISCUSSION

Though this photo essay is specific to the Ecuadorian context, oil conflicts in Ecuador represent a microcosm of the thousands of small, local uprisings against global injustices on local and underrepresented people. At the core of these confrontations is a state commitment to exporting the natural resources of local people and leaving behind contaminated environments and impoverished communities, while impeding communal participation in monitoring social and environmental impact and/or communal benefit from an extractive industry.

In Ecuador, the competing and divergent efforts to direct the oil sector, particularly the Northern oil firms, reveal an unparalleled domestic mobilization effort. Undoubtedly, confrontations are likely to continue as the completion of the OCP pipeline pushes exploration and extraction across the Amazon into untapped Indigenous territories and rainforest reserves. Outside of the oil hubs, organized

communities also learned from the OCP controversy how to stop oil transport to negotiate for community projects. For instance, in early 2006, demonstrators, demanding paved roads, an airport, and other updates to the local infrastructure, forced the stoppage of both the SOTE and OCP pipelines (Bass, 2006).

Arguably, the volume of campaigns witnessed at the turn of the 21st century was inspired partially by the earlier movements of the Indigenous people. However, the diversity of campaigns is countered by the nimbleness of the oil sector. Private oil companies are prone to changing hands. Oil operations are bought and sold, and firms change names, merge, abandon projects, modify percent ownership, form consortiums, and acquire new operations. Such frequent transactions reveal the limited, short-term impact of targeting multinationals, which possess a transitory presence in the places of extraction.

Unfortunately, many campaigns to protect affected people and the environment remain either dependent on challenging a Northern oil firm or being supported by Northern advocates. Such reliance foreshadows hardship for domestic NGOs when confronting non-Northern oil entities, particularly oil interests from Asia. To be sure, in 2002, China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC) had oil interests in more than 40 countries, including Ecuador (Shelley, 2005). Additionally, in 2005, EnCana, the major Canadian partner in the OCP pipeline project, sold its assets in Ecuador to a Chinese consortium led by CNPC. Specific reasons for EnCana's withdrawal were unclear; however, pressure from Canadian advocacy groups (see Drost, 2003, 2005), community protests, socially conscious shareholders, and unstable governments may be a few. In addition, in 2006, the Ecuadorian government seized California-based Occidental Petroleum's oil operations, also an OCP partner, citing irregular operational practices (Douglass, 2006).

State-owned Chinese firms may weather better the international protests over environmental and human rights violations (Ebel, 2005), particularly if aligned with other state-owned oil companies. Conversely, there are indicators that when Chinese oil companies are in partnerships with North American or European oil firms, the Western firm may moderate China's environmental and social negligence (Economy, 2004).

Northern advocates will most likely have a limited role in influencing Asian and South American oil operations in the Amazon, particularly state-owned oil companies that operate independent of international financing and independent of Northern partners. Future research on Asian and South American oil operations in the Amazon is needed to understand the capacity of national and international organizations to challenge non-Northern oil firms. The presence of Asian and South American oil companies also enables an investigation into the sustainability and empowerment of Southern organizations, given the perhaps diminished role of Northern advocates. Moreover, this shift enables an investigation into how Asian oil firms will respond to grassroots campaigns, which have been mobilized for more than a decade in some cases.

Finally, the use of photographs may serve recall and may perform two additional yet contradictory roles. On one hand, the action of taking photographs may enhance access to participants during and after an event by inadvertently indicating support on the part of the researcher. On the other hand, operating a camera may define the researcher as an observer, distancing the researcher from those actively engaged in the demonstrations. Both processes contribute to our understanding of the role and presence of the researcher in fieldwork settings.

PHOTOGRAPHS

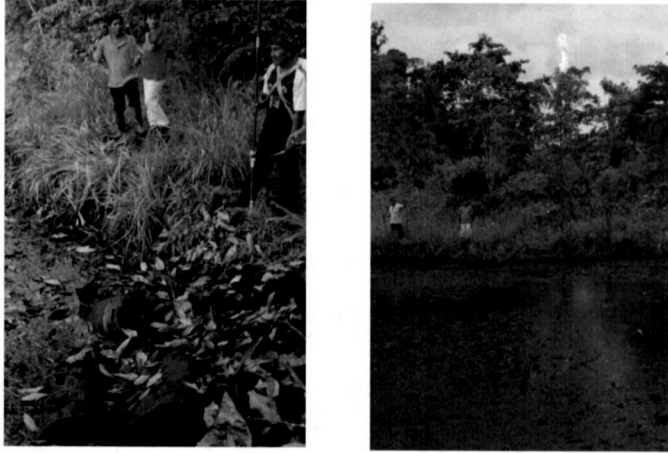


FIGURE 1a, 1b: Oil ponds, gas flares, the dumping of wastewater by-products, and aging equipment are seen near Indigenous communities in the Ecuadorian Amazon. Along SOTE, Ecuador's first trans-Ecuadorian pipeline, the ecological organization *Acción Ecológica* (2001) documented 47 breaks and oil spills between 1972 and 2001, caused primarily by earthquakes and landslides. The impacts of the oil industry have also been well documented in the documentaries *Between Midnight and the Rooster's Crow* (Drost, 2005), *Risky Business: EnCana and the OCP in Ecuador* (Drost, 2003), *Amazon Oil Pipeline—Pollution, Corruption and Poverty* (Barragan & Ramos, 2002), and *Trinkets and Beads* (Walken, 1996).



FIGURE 2: A secondary flow line that will connect the oil fields in the Amazon to storage tanks and an export pipeline passes just meters from a residence outside of Tena. Residents of the Amazon embody the “paradox of plenty” (Karl, 1997, 1999), in which oil-rich nations waste socially their wealth. Despite three decades of oil extraction, the majority of Ecuadorian communities remain indigent with minimal economic opportunities and limited infusion of oil wealth back into surrounding communities.



FIGURE 3: Domestic activists and international advocates document the skin rashes on children residing near oil production sites for the documentary *Between Midnight and the Rooster's Crow* (Drost, 2005). Exposure may occur at each stage of production, including the exploration, extraction, refining, and transportation processes, due to spills, leaks, dumping, and gas by-product burn off. Health research in Ecuador has shown that exposure to petroleum-based carcinogens, through inadvertent inhalation, ingestion, and absorption, have led exposed communities to experience greater risk of cancer (Hurtig & San Sebastian, 2002, 2004; San Sebastian, Armstrong, Cordoba, & Stephens, 2001).



FIGURE 4: In Puyo, Indigenous communities of the Amazon gather to protest the oil companies (petroleras). One sign states, "We will not allow living spaces to be transformed into an oil field."



FIGURE 5: Representatives from the Huaorani, Cofan, and Kichwa communities meet on the western edge of the Amazon in 2003 to discuss strategies to confronting oil companies in their communities and to take a “toxic tour” of a neighboring oil-saturated community.



FIGURE 6: A Cofan youth “occupies” oil equipment in the Amazon. The Cofan communities have been engaged in a lawsuit against Texaco, and in April 2006, a Cofan representative confronted Chevron at its annual shareholders meeting, regarding the environmental damage caused by Texaco in the 1970s and 1980s. For more on the Cofan, see Tidwell (1996).



FIGURE 7: On a “toxic tour” organized by Acción Ecológica to bring together non-Indigenous youth from the capital Quito and Cofan youth from the Amazon, an urban youth (left) and a Cofan youth (right) plaster abandoned oil equipment with anti-TeXaco stickers.



FIGURE 8: Urban ecologists and anarchists support the Indigenous community of Sarayacu, a lowland Kichwa community of the Amazon, in a demonstration in front of the Argentine Embassy in Quito in 2003. While Sarayacu leaders met with embassy officials to resist oil exploration in their territory by Compañía CGC of Argentina, urban youth held banners of support: “No to the Destruction of Our Amazon” and “Anarchy Is the Highest Expression of Order.” The Sarayacu community has been challenging the state, oil multinationals, and oil-supportive Kichwa communities since the late 1980s (see Sawyer, 2004; <http://www.sarayacu.com>).



FIGURE 9: Indigenous leaders of the Amazon demonstrate against the oil industry and for greater local determination in Puyo in 2003. The Indigenous of Ecuador are not driven by self-sufficiency or separatism but are driven to develop relations with the state on their own terms, including demands for access to modern technologies and the desire to control and administer resources in their communities (Bebbington, 1996). Despite this demonstration, Ecuador's largest Indigenous organizations, including Confederación de Nacionalidad Indígenas del Ecuador (CONAIE) and Confederación de Nacionalidades de la Amazonía Ecuatoriana, which are considered some of the most organized and mobile in South America, remained silent on the construction of OCP. Many argued that the route by-passed Indigenous territory, so the Indigenous organizations chose not to challenge the project.



FIGURE 10: On New Year's Eve, Ecuadorians burn effigies of those who have harmed them (such as bosses or foul neighbors) to put their grievances behind them. In 2003, an effigy of the ongoing lawsuit against Texaco was marked by the graphic detail of dying wildlife. A court case between 13,000 affected people of the Amazon and Texaco wound a 10-year-long journey in appeals and motions to dismiss from New York courts to the oil town of Lago Agrio. This case marked the first time that a case filed by non-American plaintiffs against a U.S. corporation had been returned to the place of impact for a local court decision, on the condition that the U.S. courts would enforce the verdict. In this photograph, "ALCA" written across a car, fueled by Texaco oil, and driven by Uncle Sam, who is eating a McDonald's hamburger, refers to the Área de Libre Comercio de las Américas, or Free Trade Area of the Americas, an initiative first discussed in 1994 to end trade barriers.



FIGURE 11: In a second New Year's Eve satirical display of the year's injustices, Ecuadorians construct life-size caricatures of oil workers wearing Texaco hardhats and oil-affected Indigenous people. The banner reads, "Without oil we were born, with oil we die. We live and we fight in dignity." In the Texaco trial, lawyers for the plaintiffs charged that Texaco dumped 4.3 million gallons of wastewater per day in open unlined pits, rivers, and estuaries, which leached into the ground water and water sources for drinking and bathing. They were demanding the clean-up of approximately 350 waste pits, the installation of re-injection technology in the wells, economic compensation, and medical monitoring and medical assistance for those people adversely affected by oil-relation activities. As of December 2006, no verdict had been announced.



FIGURE 12: In the Amazon, six Indigenous and social rights organizations supported a community demonstration to "Free the Amazon from ChevronToxico." In 2001, Texaco, which was on trial since 1993, merged with Chevron to become ChevronTexaco. Perhaps because of the poor publicity of the trial and the grassroots coinage of "ChevronToxico," the oil firm changed its name to Chevron Corporation in May 2005. See activist Web sites for greater detail: <http://www.chevrontoxico.com>, <http://www.texacotoxico.com>, and <http://www.amazonwatch.org>.

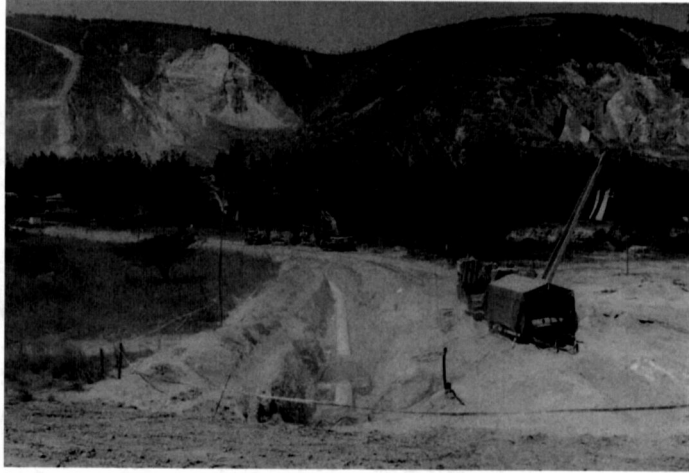


FIGURE 13: In 2001, a multinational oil consortium began construction on a second trans-Ecuadorian pipeline. The OCP pipeline travels 500 kilometers (312 miles) from the Amazon, over the Andes Mountains, to the Pacific Coast. Here in 2002, the underground pipeline is laid in the arid Andean zone north of the capital Quito. In the left corner, the buried pipeline cuts a trail down the slope.

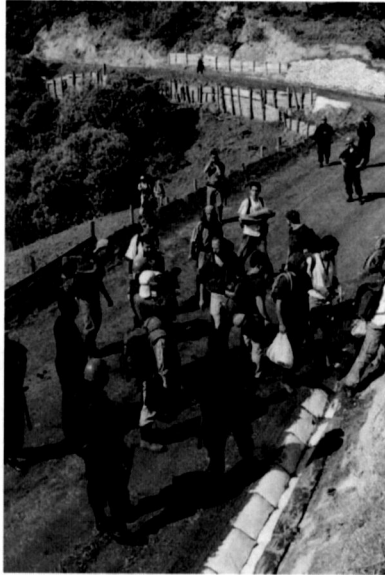


FIGURE 14: The construction of OCP between 2001 and 2003 transported oil contention beyond the Amazon and Indigenous communities to communities along the pipeline's right of way. In the Andes, the pipeline passed near ecological reserves and the tourism community of Mindo, spurring a rancorous reaction from local ecologists and small business owners, who formed *Acción por la Vida* and *Pro-Ruta de Menor Impacto* in response. In this photo, activists attempt to hike along a public trail that is bisected by the private OCP access road, a side road used to transport equipment. When the activists crossed the private road to reach land recently purchased by *Acción por la Vida* or inspect the construction process, they were confronted by OCP guards, seen here in hardhats. The public-private ambiguity was also revealed in the national priority status and national protection of the private pipeline, which was owned by seven multinationals at the time.



FIGURE 15: During the same hike in 2002, activists were blocked by armed police officers on a highly contested ridgeline. As the angle demonstrates, the pipeline was buried on a narrow crest that was leveled to lay the pipes on more solid matter. Though primarily rejecting the pipeline, local ecologists argued to bury the pipeline on one side of the ridge rather than at the crest to prevent a break from polluting water sources on both sides.



FIGURE 16: The right of way of the underground OCP pipeline varies in width from less than 7 meters in ecologically sensitive zones, such as the Andes Mountain slope in the photo, to 30 meters (Entrix, 2001). OCP passes near six active volcanoes and through seven national parks and protected areas, including a World Bank Global Environment Facility project, managed by Fundación Maquipucuan, and affects potentially an estimated 450,000 people living along its route (Entrix, 2001).

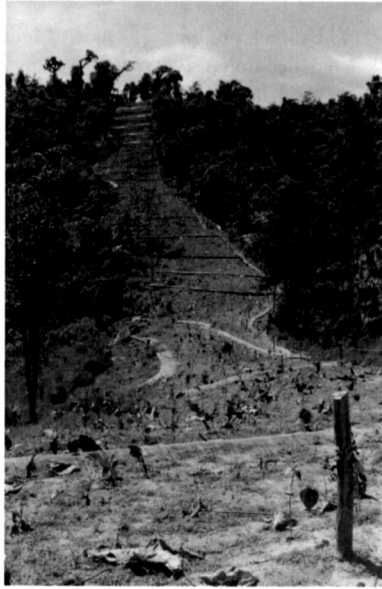


FIGURE 17: Once the OCP pipeline was buried, revegetation efforts with native and nonnative plant species were conducted by Fundación Jatun Sacha. The right of way was not reforested so as not to stress the underground pipeline.

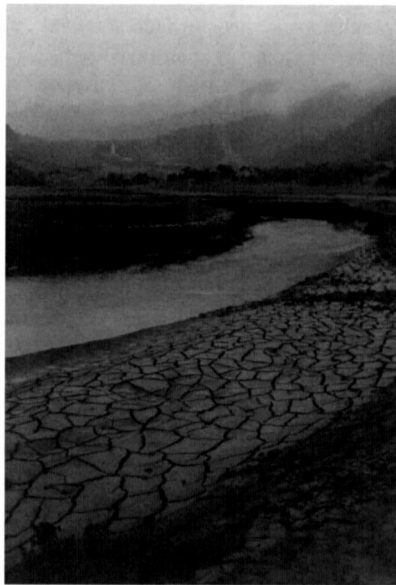


FIGURE 18: Near Papallacta town and river, the country's first pipeline SOTE broke in April 2003, spilling approximately 8,000 barrels of oil into Sucus-San Juan River, a feeder river into one of the capital's water sources ("Ecuador Crude Pipe Repaired," 2003). It was unclear whether the construction of OCP contributed to the SOTE break, as heavy machinery in the area strained the older pipeline. Despite state-owned PetroEcuador's clean-up efforts, oil remained on the riverbank's surface 6 months after the spill, when this photo was taken.

NOTES

1. Estimates of the population of Indigenous people ranged from 12% to 45%. CONAIE, the Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador and the leading Indigenous organization, estimated the Indigenous population to be 45% (www.conaie.nativeweb.org). Pallares (2002, p. 6) suggested that the lowest percentage, depending on the calculation, is 12%, based on self-reporting of native languages in the census taken in 1990.

2. The Kichwa people reside in both highland and lowland regions of Ecuador. They are the largest group of the Indigenous people in Ecuador. Kichwa is also, and frequently, spelled *Quichua* or *Quechua*. For a more detailed examination of the Sarayacu community, see Sawyer (2004).

3. Information on the government's threats to militarize the Sarayacu territory, the community's declaration of a state of emergency, and the ongoing conflicts between these two stakeholders was taken from the daily Quito-based newspaper *El Comercio*: "Oposición a Militares en Zona de Sarayaku" (2003), "En Canelos No Detuvieron la Marcha Indígena" (2003), "En Sarayaku Estan Listos para Levantarse" (2003), "El Discurso de Romero Preocupa en Sarayaku" (2004).

4. The constitution of 1988 was followed by an official recognition in 1992 of Indigenous territories in the Amazon, giving Indigenous communities much greater negotiating power and national legitimacy. Nevertheless, Indigenous land titles could be revoked legally if communities impeded or blocked oil or mining work, though Indigenous communities in the Amazon had the legal right to demand compliance with environmental and community protection laws (Kimerling, 1995, p. 358).

5. Media packets prepared by AMC Public Relations team for the plaintiffs' legal team were obtained in Lago Agrio, Ecuador, in October 2003, at the start of the trial. See the works of Rogge (2001), Kalas (2000), and Kimerling (1995) in law journals as well.

6. Much of the information I presented on the Achuar/Shuar conflict with ARCO and Burlington Resources comes from two advocacy organizations, California-based Amazon Watch (www.amazonwatch.org) and Pachamama Alliance (www.pachamama.org), with offices in Quito and San Francisco.

7. A common point of reference for Indigenous rights precedent is the International Labor Organization Convention No.169. In 1989, the International Labor Organization adopted Convention 169 concerning Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in Independent Countries. One section of the convention states that the International Labor Organization recognizes "the aspirations of these people to exercise control over their own institutions, ways of life and economic development and to maintain and develop their identities, languages and religions" (see www.ilo.org; Gorman, 2002).

8. Ecuador's constitution requires that the oil sector seek public consultation in decisions that may affect a local community's environment (Moreira, 2001). Nonetheless, in interviews I conducted, activists in grassroots groups and NGO representatives described community consultations with OCP as platforms for the oil consortium to inform a community of its plans without community input.

9. Quotes are taken from a report in *The Economist* ("Oil and Cloud-Forests Don't Mix," 2001), though his comments were well publicized in national media as well.

10. In addition to advocacy reports distributed in the United States through Amazon Watch, I refer to *Reuters* ("One Dead in Ecuador Protests in Amazon Oil Area," 2002) news service coverage of the demonstrations (see also Taxin, 2002a, 2002b).

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