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Indigenous Communities Versus Oil Companies

Identifying Trends in Tactics and Success of Indigenous-Led Anti-Petroleum Movements in the Ecuadorian Amazon

Ella V. H. Carlson



Waorani plaintiffs after winning their lawsuit in 2019. Source: <https://www.google.com/url?q=https://www.amazonfrontlines.org/chronicles/waorani-victory/&sa=D&ust=1588263013770000&usg=AFQjCNFhrOAzRebAXC9b2TFrZ2pEkW6GXg>

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Abstract

In roughly the last 50 years, the Ecuadorian Amazon has become the epicenter of petroleum production in Ecuador. As oil companies attempt to exploit more and more of the rainforest, they have encroached on indigenous lands, leading to violations of indigenous rights through environmental destruction. As their territories have been invaded, indigenous groups throughout the Amazon have formed movements large and small in resistance to petroleum activities. Scholars have studied select campaigns in the past, but the literature lacks a comparative review of the characteristics of those movements. This paper compiles histories of seven campaigns against petroleum in the Ecuadorian Amazon and compares them, focusing on analyzing the tactics groups used and the level of success they found. Results are inconclusive but uncover anecdotal similarities between Ecuadorian movements and those in other countries and open possibilities for future, more definitive research in this field.

Keywords: indigenous social movements, Ecuador Amazon, petroleum, movement tactics

Resumen

Durante los últimos 50 años, la Amazonía ecuatoriana se ha convertido en el epicentro de la producción de petróleo en el país. A medida que las empresas petroleras continúan explotando más y más la selva, han invadido territorios indígenas, dando lugar a violaciones de derechos tras destrucción del medio ambiente. A medida que sus territorios han sido invadidos, grupos indígenas de la selva han formado movimientos grandes y pequeños en resistencia a las actividades petroleras. Algunos académicos han realizado estudios sobre estos movimientos, pero la literatura carece de un resumen comparativo de las características de esos movimientos. Este ensayo recopila las historias de siete campañas contra el petróleo en la Amazonía ecuatoriana y las compara, enfocando en analizar las tácticas que usaron los grupos y el nivel de éxito que tuvieron. Los resultados no son concluyentes pero ellos descubren similitudes anecdóticas entre los movimientos ecuatorianos y los de otros países y abren posibilidades para estudios futuros y más definitivos en este área.

Palabras claves: movimientos sociales indígenas, Amazonía ecuatoriana, petróleo, tácticas de movimientos

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Introduction

A Brief History of Petroleum in Ecuador

Exploitation of petroleum in Ecuador began as early as 1920, from small deposits near the coast (Wilkins, 1974). At this time, Ecuador was already anticipating oil being a significant player in its economy (Rochlin, 2011). However, the discovery of vast amounts of oil in the Ecuadorian Amazon was not announced until 1967, and 1972 was the year that oil began flowing in earnest, a change that would create Ecuador's world status as an oil-producing country as well as shape its economy, environment, and social landscape for decades to come (Martz, 1987). From 1964-1992, Texaco (later bought by Chevron) was active in the Northern Amazon in Ecuador and committed what would come to be known by activists and the plaintiffs suing the company for their damage (known as "los afectados") as the "Amazon Chernobyl" (Summary of Part One, 2011). There is extensive evidence that Texaco deliberately engaged in extraction techniques that had been obsolete for years due to their environmentally destructive effects in order to marginally increase their profits (Amazon Watch, 2012). Chevron's own lawyer admitted the company had dumped at least 16 billion gallons of toxic wastewater into water sources that indigenous peoples depend on for their daily lives (Summary of Overwhelming Evidence, 2012). The court that first tried the case in Ecuador also found that Texaco left more than 900 unlined, uncovered pits of oil sludge, which leaked into surrounding soil and water, resulting in numerous disastrous effects to the health and livelihoods of residents of the area (Summary of Overwhelming Evidence, 2012). Their initial transgressions become barely the tip of the iceberg when looking at the following years of corruption and fraud the company engaged in as they fought tooth and nail against being held accountable.

But Texaco-Chevron's actions in the North of the Amazon in Ecuador were only the beginning. In the decades following the discovery of oil in the Amazon, Ecuador's economy had become heavily dependent on petroleum production. The government had become ensnared in a loan with China that required them to repay their debt in petroleum, compelling Ecuador to open up block after block of the Amazon rainforest to oil companies from around the world (Casey & Krauss, 2018). After hearing from their neighbors in the North of the destruction caused by Texaco-Chevron, indigenous communities in the southern Amazon (as well as non-indigenous communities) have been able to begin their opposition to oil companies' destructive activities before they enter their territory rather than fighting for remediation after the damage has been done. Communities have invoked a wide range of legal protections as well as engaged in nonviolent direct action and other political strategies in their resistance, often fitting in with the influential indigenous rights movement in Ecuador as a whole. Conflicts between indigenous communities and oil companies continue to this day as the government continues to open indigenous territory to petroleum production.

The Indigenous Movement in Ecuador

Environmental issues are integrated parts of the indigenous movement as a whole and are intimately connected to its fight for land rights, self-determination, and more. Defending natural resources and land is one of the central aspects of the mission of the Confederación de Nacionalidades indígenas del Ecuador (CONAIE), the national indigenous political organization formed in 1980 (Quienes Somos, 2015), as well as of the Confederación de Nacionalidades indígenas de la Amazonía Ecuatoriana (CONFENIAE), the regional indigenous political organization for the Amazon (Quienes Somos). Connecting environmental protection with other political demands has been a conscious and effective strategic choice of indigenous organizations (Altmann, 2019). This ideological strategy, combined with necessary qualities such as strong leadership from CONAIE, national identity, protest, and directed political agendas (Wilkes, 2006) have likely contributed to its success on the national scene. The indigenous movement has had ripple effects in the political and social structure and norms of Ecuador in the last three decades. Indigenous issues were inserted into the national political agenda in 1990, when CONAIE organized a massive protest in Quito (Collredo-Mansfeld, 2009, 80). The broader political indigenous movement's demands for self-determination of indigenous people have since then directed the political and social discourse of Ecuador as a whole toward the concept of a plurinational state (Altmann, 2015). Protests in various regions, such as the uprising in Puyo in 1992, kept the pressure on the government to put indigenous issues front and center (Sawyer, 1997). Organized indigenous people have contributed to the ousting of presidents three times when they opposed their leadership (Associated Press, 1997; Rohter, 2000; Forero, 2005). Most recently, in 2019, the indigenous movement shut down Quito in protest of the president's decision to end fuel subsidies and were successful in getting the government to accept their alternative deal (Collins, 2019). Understanding more about the indigenous anti-petroleum movement, which this paper focuses on, will enrich studies of the political movement for indigenous rights in Ecuador.

Research Question

Many individual movements led by indigenous people against petroleum in the Ecuadorian Amazon have been analyzed by scholars. The case of *Aguinda v. Texaco* alone makes up perhaps the majority of literature on these movements because of its high profile and long history. It has been analyzed from the perspective of international law (Kimerling, 2006; Payne, 2012), environmental law (Kimerling, 1991; Dhooge, 2010; Patel, 2012), sociology (Sanandrés & Otálora Montenegro, 2015), socioecology and political science (Kassar, 2012; Ramos, 2000), and anthropology (Sawyer, 2002). In an article focusing on constitutional law, Isabela Figueroa examines resistance of Shuar and Sarayaku communities, who used new legal structures in Ecuador to protect their rights against petroleum activities, revealing the calculated pushback from oil companies and the weakness of the Ecuador legal system (Figueroa, 2006). The anthropologist Michael Cepek spent years chronicling the resistance of the Cofan people to petroleum in their territory, seeking to understand their perspective on oil (Cepek & Guerra, 2018), and authors Flora Lu and Nestor Silva studied the Waorani people and how they negotiate territorial borders in the context of threats from the oil industry (Lu & Silva, 2015). How the Yasunidos campaign used media, democracy, and protest to bring their issue onto the national stage was the subject of author Diana Coryat (Coryat et al., 2017), and authors Vallejo and

Duhalde conduct a thorough review of the movement of the Sapara community (Vallejo & Duhalde, 2017). However, when it comes to a more comprehensive review of the indigenous-led anti-petroleum movement in the Ecuadorian Amazon overall, there is a gap in the literature. In an article on indigenous movements in the United States and Canada, author Rima Wilkes points out that studies of indigenous political movements tend to focus on individual uprisings (Wilkes, 2006), and this is certainly true for the literature on Ecuador. This study begins to fill that gap by studying several movements together and analyzing the trends between them. The primary question this paper asks is: How successful have indigenous-led anti-petroleum movements in the Ecuadorian Amazon been overall? What are the most common tactics used by indigenous communities to oppose petroleum activities in their territories? And is there a correlation between the type of tactics used and the success of the movement?

Objectives and Hypotheses

Studying the relationship between tactics and success is useful from the perspective of movement strategy. Research comparing the many small campaigns within a larger social movement can reveal trends that can provide insight into what is and is not working for activists. The hope is that these results may be useful to current and future movements endeavoring to determine the most effective strategy to win their campaigns. Because of the importance of the effort against petroleum to the indigenous movement in Ecuador as a whole, it is hoped that this information could be useful in a broader sense as well in terms of indigenous social movements in Ecuador.

The preliminary research summarized in the background section of this proposal, as well as prior knowledge, led to a few hypotheses. First, it may be expected that indigenous communities use various tactics to protect their land and rights in the face of petroleum exploitation, ranging from direct action and physical protest to litigation in both Ecuadorian and international courts and negotiating directly with government officials. It seems likely that there would be few successes and many continuing efforts due to the strength and capitalist values of the Ecuadorian government and oil companies. It may also be expected to see variation in the structure of these movements: for some indigenous communities to work alone and others to form partnerships with NGOs. Finally, it may be expected for movements that use a combination of working with the government and taking matters into their own hands through actions such as blockades to have the highest levels of success.

Methods

This study looked at indigenous-led movements against petroleum activities in the Ecuadorian Amazon from the first movement (the earliest with sufficient information available began in 1987) to the present day. Methods for this research project were solely internet-based. Therefore, the only materials needed were a laptop and access to online resources and databases, which was gained through Smith College Libraries. Consulting Professor Xavier Silva and advisor Alexandra Almeida, who have experience with anti-petroleum movements, was a starting point for finding information in this area. Another first step was to use the Smith College Libraries database to search for peer-reviewed articles and the database Access World News to search for news articles using broad terms such as “indigenous,” “petroleum or oil,” and “movement or resistance.” Once a thorough literature review of the topic was conducted and search results for news articles began to become very repetitive, seven movements that had

sufficient information to conduct this analysis were selected. Searches were then narrowed to each specific movement to uncover more detailed information. Organization websites and blogs, press releases, news articles, resources such as the Global Nonviolent Action Database and Environmental Justice Atlas, information from the organization Acción Ecológica provided by Alexandra Almeida, peer-reviewed articles, and court documents were used to gather as comprehensive as possible understanding of the chronology of each selected movement. In order to organize this information, a brief history was written of each movement and they were consolidated onto a timeline. An additional timeline of the case of *Aguinda v. Texaco* individually was created to aid in understanding its trajectory because that is the most lengthy and complex movement.

In order to be able to analyze this information, each movement was assigned codes for tactics and success which consisted of words or short phrases, a common way to define data in qualitative research. An inductive coding method was used: appropriate codes were identified based on the information read about the movements regarding what tactics they used in their campaigns and how they achieved or did not achieve their various goals. There were nine tactic codes and four success codes. Since success codes were rather ambiguous, levels of success were also assigned to each movement as a number from 0 (least successful) to 5 (most successful).

To analyze this data, first a table showing the codes for tactics as well as success for each movement was created. A table of the movements that were studied and their respective codes was also created. Then, a bar graph showing the number of movements that used each tactic was created to visualize how common each tactic was, as well as a pie chart showing the percentage of movements in the sample that used each tactic. Next, a pie chart was created depicting the percentage of successful movements only that used each tactic. This would have been repeated for movements that were unsuccessful, but it was not useful as there was only one. A bar graph was also created of the success rate of each tactic, calculated by percentage of movements that used that tactic that were successful. To examine any correlation between the number of different types of tactics used during the campaign and the success of a given campaign, a scatter plot was created with success rate on the y axis and number of tactics used on the x axis with a trendline and R^2 value.

Tactics were also organized on a spectrum of more “internal,” meaning more institutional, to more “external,” meaning non-institutional. Institutional tactics utilize institutional structures and includes actions like meeting with government officials and delivering petitions, and non-institutional tactics involve taking action outside institutional avenues and include actions like physical blockades of access roads oil companies need to operate (Wilkes, 2004). This provided a way to organize the categories of tactics further into what type of strategy they fall into. The most internal tactic was assigned the number 1 and numbers increased as tactics became more external, up to number 9.

To assign each campaign a value of how internal or external its strategy was, it was assigned the number of the most external of all tactics they used. To examine any correlation between how external a tactic was and how successful it was, a scatter plot was created with the success rate of the tactic on the y axis (the percentage of movements that used that tactic that were successful) and the number on the spectrum from most internal (1) to most external (9) on the x axis.

Additionally, to assign each campaign a value of how varied its strategy was -- whether it used both strategies that were very internal and strategies that were very external or just used

tactics that were very close to each other on the spectrum -- the number on the spectrum of the most internal tactic the campaign used was subtracted from the number of the most external tactic it used. To examine any correlation between how varied a campaign's strategy was and how successful it was, a scatter plot was created with the success level on the y axis and the number indicating how varied the tactics were used on the x axis, with a trendline and R² value.

Ethics

This study did not involve interacting with human subjects or the natural environment. Therefore, there are no potential problems relating to human or environmental ethics.

Results

Codes

Tactics that were generally similar were grouped into categories, of which there are nine: "Lawsuit," "Letter," "Petition," "Protest," "Physical Hindrance," "NGOs," "Meeting With Officials," "Referendum," and "Other Legal Action" (Table 1). The code "NGOs" was inspired by Environmental Justice Atlas (EJAtlas). The primary codes for success were "Victory" and "Loss" (Table 1). For a movement to earn a code of "Victory," it only had to be successful in at least one way; therefore, "successful" movements did not necessarily have all of their demands met. Since "Victory" did not necessarily mean complete success, "Repeat Offense" and "Efforts Ongoing" help clarify the status of the movement. For example, if a movement has the codes "Victory, Repeat Offense, Efforts Ongoing," it is clear that the campaign is still active because although they won, the government or oil company broke the law or agreement, so they have to fight against their actions again (such as in the case of the Sarayaku, Table 2). If a movement has the codes "Victory, Efforts Ongoing," it indicates that the movement was not completely successful (such as in the case of Aguinda v. Texaco, Table 2), unlike a movement that only has the code "Victory."

Codes	
Tactics	Success
<p>Petition Online or on paper; local, regional, national, or international</p>	<p>Victory At least part of the campaign's demands were met</p>
<p>Referendum Gathering signatures for a question to be put to vote nationally</p>	<p>Loss None of the campaign's demands were met</p>
<p>Lawsuit Including lawsuits in any location or level of jurisdiction, under any country or other international governing body, concerning any aspect of the resistance campaign. Includes requesting hearings with Inter-American Commission on Human Rights regardless of whether it moved to the Inter-American Court of Human Rights</p>	<p>Efforts Ongoing Campaign is still active</p>

<p>Physical Hindrance Including activities such as blocking access to site of petroleum activities with bodies or materials or by destroying infrastructure; seizing company/government equipment necessary for petroleum activities; and preparing for combat</p>	<p>Repeated Offense Only paired with Victory; though the campaign succeeded, the government and/or oil companies later repeated the offensive act</p>
<p>NGOs Involvement of national and/or international non-governmental organizations with the resistance campaign</p>	
<p>Letter Document sent to government and/or oil companies from community and/or collaborating NGOs; includes formal proposals/demands and resolutions</p>	
<p>Protest Public demonstrations such as rallies and marches</p>	
<p>Meeting With Officials In-person meetings with government officials and/or oil company officials/representatives regarding the conflict; includes public hearings</p>	
<p>Other Legal Action Legal action other than lawsuit, such as a legal petition</p>	

Table 1. Codes for tactics and success (bolded) with explanation of meaning (unbolded).

When tactics were organized on a spectrum of more “internal” to more “external” tactics, “Meeting With Officials” was the most internal strategy, while “Physical Hindrance” was the most external (Figure 1).



Figure 1. Spectrum organizing tactics from most internal to most external, each with a value from 1 (most internal) to 9 (most external).

Code Analysis

All movements used at least three tactics, and the most used by one movement was six by the Sápara: “Letter,” “Lawsuit,” “Physical Hindrance,” “Protest,” “NGOs,” and “Meeting With Officials” (Table 2). “NGOs” was the most common tactic, used by all seven movements (Figure 2). “Protest” comes second, used by five movements, and “Lawsuit” and “Physical Hindrance” tie for third most common, with each used by four movements (Figure 2). “Letter” is used by three movements, “Petition” and “Meeting With Officials” by two, and “Referendum” and “Legal Action” are the least common, used by only one movement (Figure 2). All but one movement was awarded the code “Victory,” though only two movements avoided both qualifiers “Efforts Ongoing” and “Repeated Offense” (Table 2). The only numeric success level that was shared by more than one movement was 5, the highest value, which was awarded to the Waorani and the Cofan movements (Table 2). Levels 0, 1, 2, 3, and 4 were each assigned to one movement (Table 2).

Movement	Tactics	Success
Aguinda v. Texaco	Lawsuit, Protest, NGOs	3; Victory, Efforts Ongoing
Yasunidos	Referendum, Protest, NGOs	0; Loss, Efforts Ongoing
Sarayaku	Lawsuit, Protest, Other Legal Action, Physical Hindrance, NGOs	4; Victory, Repeated Offense, Efforts Ongoing
Waorani	Lawsuit, Protest, Petition, Letter, NGOs	5; Victory
Sápara	Lawsuit, Physical Hindrance, Letter, Protest, Meeting With Officials, NGOs	2; Victory, Efforts Ongoing
Sani Isla	Petition, Physical Hindrance, NGOs	1; Victory
Cofan	Physical Hindrance, Letter, Meeting With Officials, NGOs	5; Victory, Repeated Offense, Efforts Ongoing

Table 2. Names of movements and respective codes for tactics and success. Numeric success levels are indicated before codes under the “Success” column.

NGOs were used by 7 movements (100% of the movements), protests by 5 (71%), lawsuits and physical hindrance activities by 4 (57%), letters by 3 (43%), petitions and meetings with officials by 2 (29%), and referendums and other legal by 1 each (14%) (Figures 4 & 5).

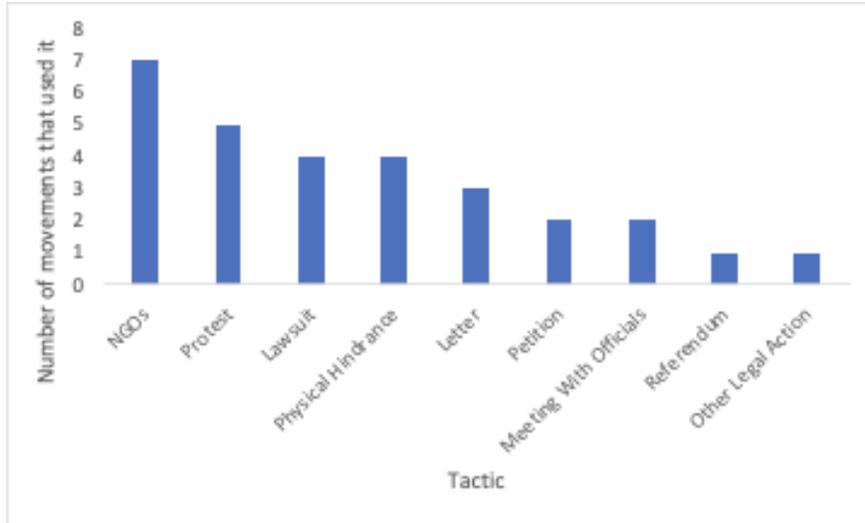


Figure 2. Bar graph showing how many movements used each tactic.

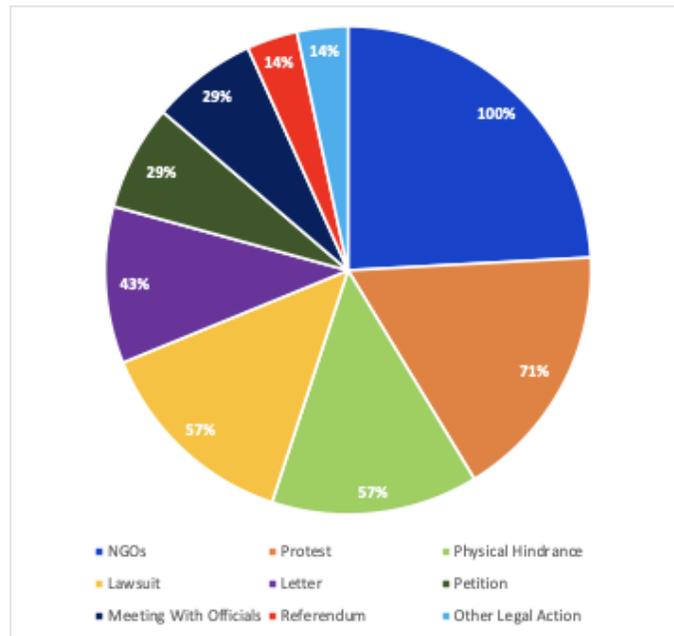


Figure 3. Pie chart showing the percentage of movements in the sample that used each tactic.

When only looking at the tactics successful movements used, NGOs remained the only tactic used by 100% of movements, but Lawsuit was used by 67% rather than 55% of movements (Figure 3). Of movements that filed a lawsuit, 100% were successful; the same is true for movements that used letters, petitions, meetings with officials, physical hindrance, and other legal action; of those that partnered with NGOs, 86% were successful; of those that used protest 75% were successful; and out of those that used a referendum, 0% were successful (Figure 5).

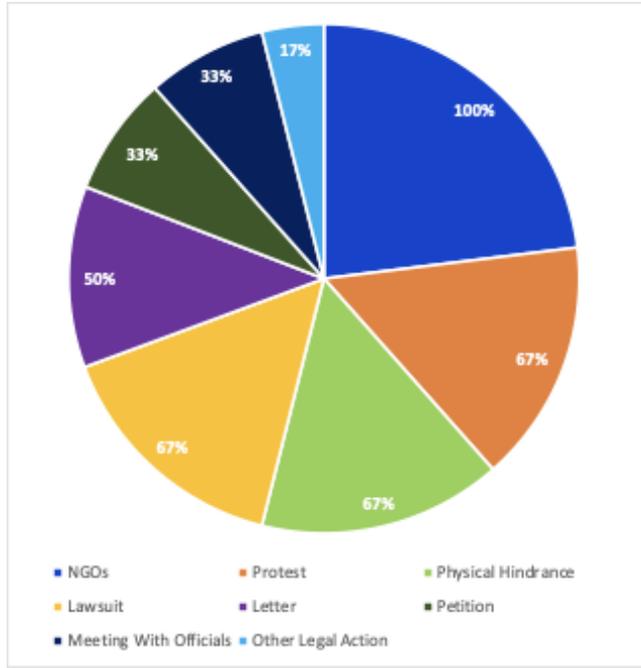


Figure 4. Pie chart showing what percentage of movements with “Victory” code used each tactic. Excludes referendum, which was only used by Yasunidos, which has the code “Loss.”

The tactics with the highest success rates were lawsuits, letters, petitions, meetings with officials, and other legal action, all which had success rates of 100% (Figure 5). NGOs had a success rate of 86%, protests 80%, physical hindrance 75%, and referendums 0% (Figure 5).

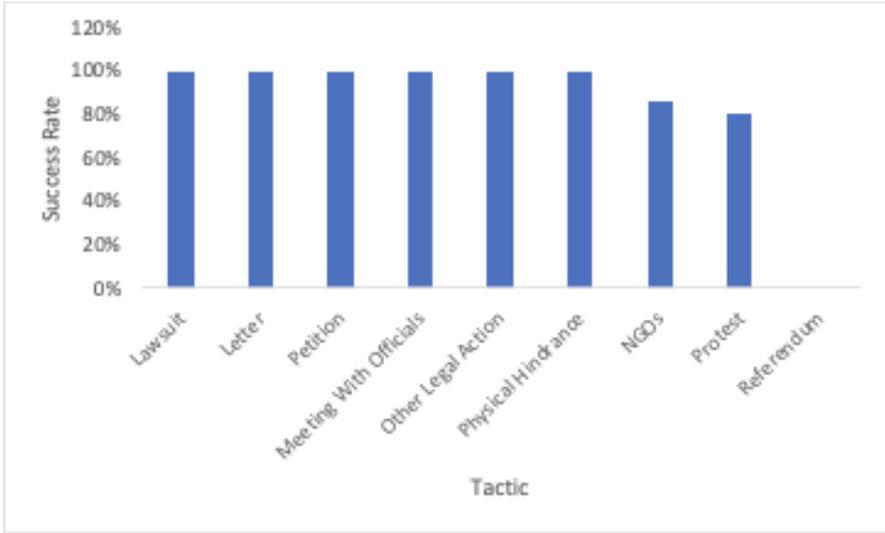


Figure 5. Bar graph showing success rate of each tactic. Success rate was calculated by percentage of movements that used that tactic that were successful.

In the scatterplot created to identify any correlation between the number of different types of tactics used during the campaign and the success of a given campaign, the trendline was positive and the R^2 value was 0.6 (Figure 6).

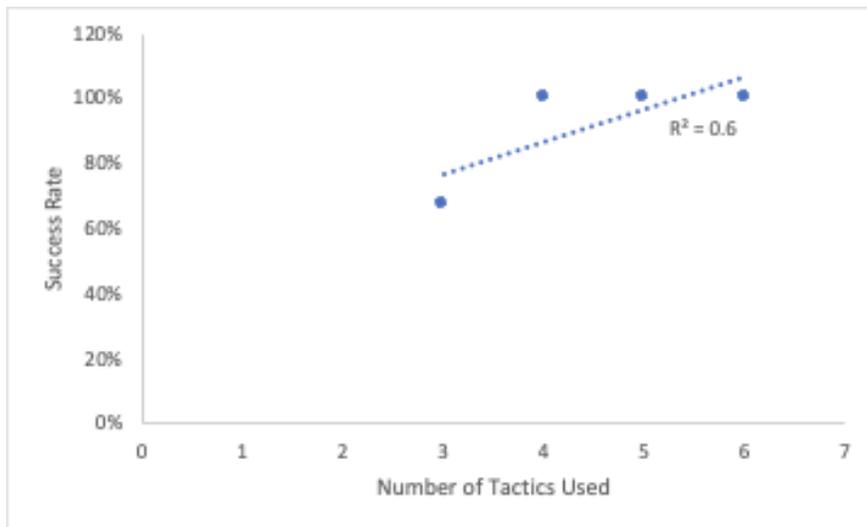


Figure 6. Scatterplot showing statistical correlation between number of tactics used and success rate. Success rate of each number of tactics is the percentage of movements that used that number of tactics that were successful.

The scatter plot showing the correlation between how external a tactic was (1 being most internal and 9 being most external) and success rate of those tactics has a slight negative trendline with an R^2 value of 0.0041 (Figure 7). The scatter plot showing the correlation between how varied the tactics a movement used were and success level of the movement has a positive trendline with an R^2 value of 0.122 (Figure 8).

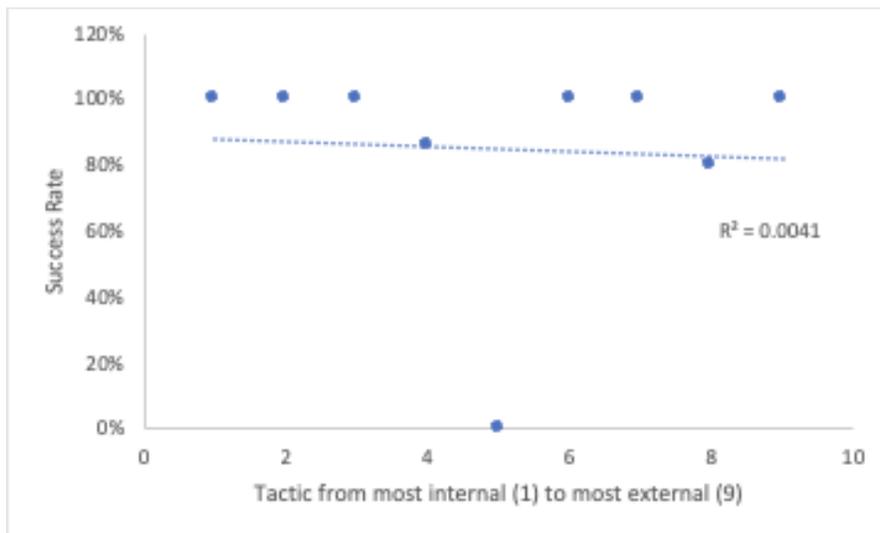


Figure 7. Scatter plot showing correlation between how external a tactic was (measured on the spectrum in figure 1) and the success rate of that tactic. Success rate is the percentage of movements that used that tactic that were successful.

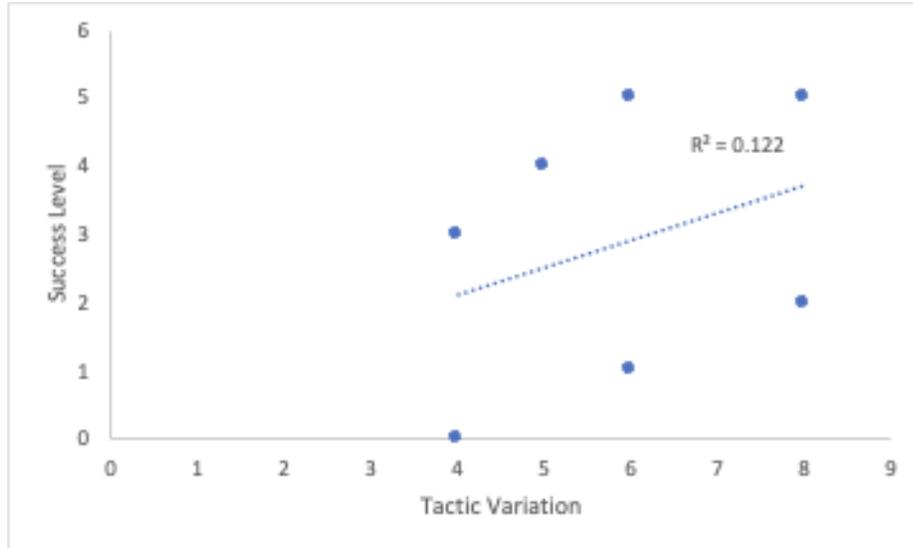


Figure 8. Scatter plot showing correlation between how varied the tactics a movement used were and the success level of the movement. Tactic variation was calculated for each movement by subtracting the number on the spectrum seen in figure 1 of the most internal tactic used from the number of the most external tactic used.

Discussion

Variation in Tactic Type and Number

There was a great diversity in tactics; there were nine categories, and even within these was variation in the type of tactic used. Though they were grouped into categories of similar tactics, there were virtually no specific tactics that completely shared characteristics between movements, as all had slight variations to fit their circumstances.

Physical Hindrance

For example, “Physical Hindrance” is a category that encompasses a wide range of tactics. In 1987, the Cofan people occupied the site of oil extraction Texaco was attempting in their territory without permission (Cepek & Guerra, 2018, p. 176). After this was successful, to prevent Texaco or any other oil company from returning to that place in the future, they constructed a village and planted gardens in the path of the access road (Almeida, 2003). Then in 2000, in response to the company Lumbaqui Oil entering Cofan territory, the community confiscated their equipment and halted their activities (Almeida, 2003). When they succeeded in getting the company to remove the equipment with promises of negotiating a new contract, the community destroyed the bridge leading into the area to prevent the company from returning (Almeida, 2003). Then, in late 2002, as Compañía General de Combustibles attempted to begin seismic exploration, bringing armed forces with them to beat back any opposition, the Sarayaku community set up “Camps for Peace and Life” in their path, physically protecting their land from extraction, for seven months (Sarayaku). All of these tactics, from occupation to constructing villages in the way of roads to seizing company equipment to destroying infrastructure, fell under the category of “Physical Hindrance” because they were all ways of directly inhibiting company activities through physical obstacles.

Lawsuit

Even the category “Lawsuit” holds variation in the type of litigation used, the protections invoked, and the geographic jurisdiction. For example, in 1993, *Aguinda v. Texaco* was filed in the United States first but moved to Ecuador in 2002, and after the decision in favor of the plaintiffs in Ecuador they explored avenues in other countries such as Argentina and Canada to collect from Chevron (*Texaco/Chevron Lawsuits*, 2019). In 2002, the Sarayaku lodged a petition with the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights and succeeded in holding the government of Ecuador responsible for their violations of indigenous rights (*The Case Of The Kichwa*, 2012). In 2019, the Waorani filed a lawsuit against the Ecuadorian Ministry of Energy and Non-Renewable Natural Resources, the Secretary of Hydrocarbons, and the Ministry of Environment invoking protections of indigenous rights from both Ecuadorian and international law (*Amazon Frontlines*, 2019a). All of these fell under the category of “Lawsuit” but take different forms. Though it may seem as though filing a lawsuit is a fairly predetermined path to follow, the specific avenues the plaintiffs explored were not necessarily the only ones available to them in their particular situation. For example, the Waorani may also have been able to appeal to the Inter-American Court of Human Rights, but it would likely have resulted in a much longer timeline: their case was wrapped up in a matter of months, even including the appeals process the Ecuadorian Ministry of Energy and Non-renewable Resources initiated (*Amazon Frontlines*, 2019c), while the Sarayaku case took a decade to move through the international system, during which time the community dealt with repeated violations of their rights by the Ecuadorian government and CGC (Lawrence, 2010; *Case Of The Kichwa*, 2012).

Correlations Between Tactics and Success

The variation within each movement of the type of tactics it used is particularly interesting. The scatter plot examining the correlation between how varied a movement’s tactics were and how successful it is has a positive trendline (Figure 8). This seems to show that the more varied the tactics, the higher rate of success. In other social movements, a varied approach has been shown to be most effective. For example, Fabio Rojas finds that students advocating for change at universities have greater success when their tactic styles allow the administration to act on behalf of protestors (Rojas, 2006). Applying these dynamics to indigenous movements advocating for change against the government that is allowing oil companies to enter their territory, it seems likely that combining external tactics with internal ones would be most effective because protests and actions such as blockades are done with the intention to put public pressure on the government to say yes to the demands set out through an institutional pathway such as a formal petition, letter, or lawsuit, giving the government an easy path to act on their behalf. For example, Yasunidos participated in demonstrations at the same time as they collected signatures to be able to put their referendum to vote (Medallasa), which likely increased public knowledge about the issue from their point of view, likely increasing the number of signatures they would be able to gather as well as the number of people who would vote in their favor if the referendum was put to a vote. Using a combination of internal and external tactics is a common strategy not only among the movements studied but also in other countries. For example, in one of the most high-profile indigenous environmental movements in United States history, the largely successful campaign against the Dakota Access Pipeline, Standing Rock Sioux activists used a combination of internal and external tactics ranging from meetings with officials to occupations of the site (*DAPL Resistance*, 2016). Additionally, physically blocking an oil company from entering often merely slows the company’s activities down, which may be

effective in protecting the territory in the meantime while urging the government to back their position. For example, the Sarayaku community occupied the area in which the oil company Compañía General de Combustibles was attempting to work (Sarayaku), which prevented the company from entering their territory while they filed a petition with Pujó Provincial Ombudsman, who then authorized a Declaration of Protection that ordered CGC to cease their activities (Lawrence, 2010). However, the R^2 value of the trendline is very small, indicating that the correlation found is most likely due to chance and therefore prohibiting such conclusions to be drawn from this data.

Looking at individual tactic success rates rather than combinations, there is a slight negative correlation between how external the tactic is and the tactic's success rate (Figure 7). This indicates that more internal tactics have higher success rates. However, given the results on the combination of tactics being effective, this finding seems to hold less weight. Additionally, the R^2 value is very small and therefore insignificant, indicating that this correlation is due to chance. The only two tactics that had both a high success rate and a large number of movements that used them were lawsuits and physical hindrance activities (Table 2; Figure 5). Therefore, these are the two tactics whose high success rate was most significant, and two tactics are not enough to examine a correlation between how internal or external a tactic is and its success.

A slightly more interesting result is the positive trendline in the scatter plot examining the correlation between the number of tactics and the movement's success (Figure 6). This indicates that the more tactics movements used, the more successful they were. The R^2 value, which was greater than 0.5 indicates that this correlation is statistically significant. More tactics used could indicate that a campaign is larger and stronger, giving it a higher chance of success. Again comparing to the Standing Rock campaign, activists there engaged in numerous tactics -- a lawsuit, a petition, marches, meetings with officials, blockades, and occupations (DAPL Resistance, 2016). However, it would be foolish to accept these results as significant due to the small sample size. For example, there was only one movement that used four tactics and one movement that used six, and they happened to be successful (Table 2), leading to the values of 100% success rate for movements that used those numbers of tactics (Figure 6). Yasunidos was the only unsuccessful movement, and it happened to use only three tactics (Table 2); it cannot be said with certainty that the small number of tactics it used contributed to its failure.

Most Common Tactics

NGOs

The universal use of NGOs to aid in resistance efforts is most notable when identifying which tactics were most common. The fact that NGO partnerships were ubiquitous contradicts the hypothesis that there would be variation in whether movements worked alone or with others. The fact that all movements had some sort of partnership with an official organization indicates that NGOs are useful resources to indigenous communities, which is unsurprising given the fact that they provide resources such as publicity and strategy assistance at no cost. In several of the movements examined, NGOs amplified the community's struggle by taking it onto the international stage. For example, Avaaz launched the Sani Isla petition online (Watts, 2013b), Amazon Watch provided the Waorani with a platform to share their campaign (Our Land is Not for Sale), and CONAIE and CONFENIAE backed countless movements, amplifying their efforts and connecting them to the broader indigenous movement in Ecuador (See Appendix A). In a visit our program had with the community Loma del Tigre, one of the Kichwa communities

involved in UDAPT, residents mentioned that they were working on starting the website, which was difficult for them to do on their own because of lack of WiFi access in the village. NGOs can provide valuable resources to indigenous groups that do not have access to forms of communication most common in media such as the internet.

Protest and Physical Hindrance

The second most popular tactic after NGO collaboration was “Protest,” followed by “Physical Hindrance” (Figure 3). In fact, every movement used either one or the other (Table 2). This is unsurprising given the results that showed that combining internal tactics with external ones was an effective strategy. However, it is also important to note that physically protecting their territory was sometimes the last resort for indigenous groups who the government refused to support rather than just a strategic move to support an internal tactic. This happened to the Sani Isla people, who prepared to fight any oil company officials who entered their territory (Watts, 2013a) and is mirrored in indigenous resistance around the world. For example, an indigenous movement that has used occupation as its central tactic to protect their ancestral land is the months-long occupation of Mauna Kea in Hawaii (Broder Van Dyke, 2019).

Lawsuit

“Lawsuit” tied “Physical Hindrance” for next most common after protests (Figure 3). The popularity of lawsuits is unsurprising given the protections for indigenous peoples that are ingrained into Ecuadorian law as well as international law that Ecuador is bound by. Lawsuits are perhaps also an appealing route because if they are won, the government is obliged to enforce the decision, protecting that community’s rights for the foreseeable future. This sense of security in the protection of a court ruling was clear in the Waorani’s declaration of victory after their 2019 lawsuit (Amazon Frontlines, 2019c). It is also easy to find examples of other indigenous communities using lawsuits to fight oil companies in other countries. Just last month, the latest development in the indigenous-led fight against the Keystone XL Pipeline occurred when the Rosebud Sioux Tribe filed for a restraining order against President Trump to halt construction of the pipeline (Rosebud Sioux Tribe v. Donald J. Trump, 2020). Also notable is that all the movements in this sample that used lawsuits were at least partially successful. This was also true for four other codes, but lawsuits were used by more movements than those, making it slightly more significant. This indicates that Ecuadorian courts may be likely to recognize and punish the actions of the government when it does not abide by its own laws. However, this conclusion cannot be definitively drawn due to the small sample size, and more importantly, “partially” remains the key word: even after the Sarayaku won their case in 2012, for example, the Ecuadorian government seemed to ignore the verdict and entered their territory with an oil company three years later (Amazon WAtch, 2015a).

Success

Difficulties in Defining Success

It is important to note, when looking at the success rate of tactics or level of success of movements, that success proved difficult to measure and labels were not perfect. All except one movement found success in at least one way (Table 2), but very few had a definitive and complete victory. It was often even difficult to decide whether to code a movement as a victory or a loss. For example, Yasunidos gathered sufficient signatures for a referendum, but due to government fraud they were not accepted (Medallas). It was tempting to call that a victory because they gathered enough signatures and may have succeeded in the absence of fraud, but it

was more accurately a loss because in the end they were not able to get the referendum put to a vote. This presents an issue when attempting to correlate success with tactics. The loss was not necessarily because it was an ineffective tactic but rather because of the government's success in committing fraud. Because their main tactic was a referendum, however, labeling it as a loss may make it appear as if the public voted no, when in reality it remains untested what the opinion of the majority of Ecuadorians is. Another example of this challenge can be found in *Aguinda v. Texaco*. The plaintiffs won their case in Ecuador, but Chevron never paid and now one of the plaintiffs' lawyers is on house arrest (North, 2020). It is marked as a victory here because Ecuador's courts ruled in favor of the plaintiffs, but in reality Chevron still has not been held accountable.

High Success Levels Overall

Despite these challenges, it is very notable that all but one of the movements in this sample were at least partially successful. This may seem to indicate that the indigenous anti-petroleum movement overall in the Ecuadorian Amazon is a successful one, going against the hypothesis that levels of success would be low. However, the sample size is not large enough to say this with certainty. The high levels of success in this particular sample size may be largely related to the criteria used to select them: available information. Only movements that have information about them online were able to be analyzed, and for information to be available on the internet means that the movement gained some sort of international attention. Publicity may be a deciding factor in a movement's outcome because of the pressure put on the government and oil companies by outsiders' attention to the issue. The lack of variation in whether movements were coded with "Victory" or "Loss" makes it unwise to give weight to any relationship that has been discovered between tactics and success. The tactics used may have impacted the movements' success, but it is not possible to know for sure given the very small sample size.

Backlash

Though many movements were labeled as victorious, an important aspect to highlight is that this success was almost always conditional, due to the fact that many movements did not get all of their demands met or that petroleum activities once again threatened their livelihoods after they had once succeeded in shutting them out. Corruption and disregard for the law and the rights of indigenous peoples on the part of both the government and the oil companies were rampantly common, leading to communities having to maintain vigilance against violations of their rights.

Government Response

The government response to these movements was seldom in favor of indigenous communities. Though Ecuador has been a pioneer in some respects, granting rights to nature (Kauffman & Martin, 2018), ratifying human rights treaties (American Convention), and including indigenous rights in the constitution (Constitución, 2008), when it comes to oil corporations versus indigenous rights, it almost always chooses corporations. The countless examples of the government's actions in response to community opposition to oil activities range from ignoring the community's wishes to using violence. As early as 1987, when the Cofan first opposed Texaco's activities in their territory, the company warned the community that they had the military behind them and could use force to continue their activities despite community opposition (Cepek & Guerra, 2018, pp. 178-179). In more recent years, the government did

nothing to stop Petroecuador from attempting to manufacture consent from the community (Almeida, 2003), despite the fact that it had accepted the Cofan's proposal against Petroecuador's activities (Cepek & Guerra, 2018, p. 184). In 2002, when Compañía General de Combustibles was found illegally operating on Sarayaku territory after the community was granted a Declaration of Protection, the government took the company's side and used military force against the community (Lawrence, 2010). Then three years after the 2012 decision in favor of the Sarayaku, the government ignored the ruling and re-entered their territory (Amazon Watch, 2015a). When Yasunidos attempted to get their referendum in 2014, the government clearly went to lengths to prevent the signatures from being verified, first by confusing citizens into signing the wrong form and then by breaking the chain of custody of the final submitted signatures (Medallas). Most recently, the government attempted to throw a wrench in the Waorani lawsuit against them by initially holding the hearing in a place inaccessible to the community and assigning a judge that discriminated against them (Amazon Frontlines, 2019b). Then after the court decision in favor of the Waorani, the Ministry of Energy and Non-renewable Natural Resources promptly appealed it (Ministerio de Energía, 2019).

This trend is not only present in this particular set of movements but in indigenous environmental movements in Ecuador overall. An extreme but representative example can be found in 2016, when Ecuadorian police attacked CONFENIAE headquarters. At 5:00 in the morning, while residents were sleeping, the police undertook a violent siege of the headquarters in an attempt to force the election of a government-allied man to the organization's leadership (Cerdeña, 2016). Other indigenous activists have faced inhumane treatment and harsh sentences from the criminal justice system in Ecuador for daring to voice their opposition to corporate extractivism (Amazon Watch, 2016). These trends were confirmed by the Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples during her visit to Ecuador in 2018: her report found that though the constitution established a good framework for ensuring indigenous rights, the government's actions regarding petroleum extraction among other activities did not align with its promise to ensure the rights of indigenous peoples to their land (United Nations, 2019). Hostility on the part of the government is also echoed in the experience of indigenous organizers of social movements for similar indigenous rights in North America: for example, the American Indian Movement was forced to disassemble because of a concerted, clandestine effort in opposition to it by the FBI (Wilkes, 2006).

Oil Company Response

In addition to the government itself fighting against indigenous movements, the despicable actions corporations took in order to weaken local resistance to their activities were present in essentially every movement studied in this paper. They were present in the case of *Aguinda v. Texaco*, when Texaco succeeded in creating rifts between the indigenous-based organization UDAPT and the original organization Frente (A. Almeida, personal communication, April 20, 2020); in the case of the Cofan community, in years following Lumbaqui Oil's attempt to infiltrate their territory (Almeida, 2003); in the Sarayaku community, when Compañía General de Combustibles pretended to withdraw but continued working on their land secretly (Lawrence, 2010) and then again when the company attempted to divide the community and gain consent from some individuals (Lawrence, 2010); and when Petroamazonas signed a contract with the chief of the Sani Isla community without wider community consent (Watts, 2013a) and when resistance was clearly still strong went knocking on doors to divide the community (Robinson, 2014). Unfortunately, in the case of the Sani Isla community, this

strategy worked (A. Almeida, personal communication, April 29, 2020). This despicable practice is common across oil companies working in the Ecuadorian Amazon. So-called “community liaisons” have become infamous within indigenous communities as employees of petroleum companies whose mission is to manufacture consent and silence resistance to their activities through either deceit or the manufacturing of intra-community conflicts to divide indigenous political organizations (Figueroa, 2006). The development of “community relations” practices by oil companies as a defensive strategy in response to resistance is not limited to Ecuador. A 2018 article on a pro-pipeline website covering North America quoted an “indigenous relations liaison” at the pipeline company TransCanada saying the company could have avoided indigenous resistance by “partnering” with indigenous groups in the affected area before construction began (Kramer, 2018).

Conclusion

Summary of Findings

This study indicates that the most popular tactic used by indigenous movements against petroleum in the Ecuadorian Amazon is partnerships with NGOs, followed by protests second and lawsuits and then physical hindrance tactics tied for third. Findings also indicate that these movements have a very high level of success overall. There were no statistically significant correlations found between how internal or external a tactic was and its success rate or between how varied the tactics a movement used were and that movement’s success level, but there was a slightly significant positive correlation found between the number of tactics used and the success rate of using that number of tactics. None of these findings can be assumed to apply to indigenous anti-petroleum movements in this region overall, however, due to the prohibitively small sample size.

Among other general trends in the movements studied, all movements chosen gained relatively wide publicity, whether through the news or the websites of partner organizations, a characteristic which likely was related to the tactics they used and impacted their success. Additionally, there were similarities in the types of responses the movements prompted from the oil companies they opposed as well as from the Ecuadorian government. Oil companies generally engaged in covert, strategic plans to tamp down resistance or continue their operations despite opposition, and the Ecuadorian government consistently took the side of corporations, likely because of their economic dependence on petroleum production due in large part to their debt to China, and often used force to suppress community opposition. It is also clear that these trends are consistent with realities of indigenous resistance to oil and gas activities in North America.

Importance of Findings

These findings are a step in the direction of more fully understanding the indigenous anti-petroleum movement in Ecuador. Comparing and analyzing the trends between several indigenous-led anti-petroleum movements in the Ecuadorian Amazon in one paper is something that has not previously been done, and it proves a useful resource as a starting place for those wishing to investigate this topic in the future. Such study holds important insights for current and future activists. The findings may indicate to future movements which tactics may be most effective; if it is possible to make the analyses more statistically significant with a larger sample size, this may be a valuable resource to future activists. It also yields information useful to those

studying the indigenous rights movement as a whole in Ecuador. Indigenous communities defending their territory from oil companies do not always gain as much attention as political protests in the nation's capital because the contested issue is intimately connected to the land and takes place in the rainforest. But they share ideology as well as supporting organizations such as CONAIE, and it is therefore useful to study the many smaller branches of indigenous rights efforts in Ecuador in order to study the whole. Finally, though this study is limited to indigenous anti-petroleum movements in the Ecuadorian Amazon, these findings may also contain useful insights for studies on the strategies of many other types of movements, social or political, related to the environment or not, indigenous-led or not, in Ecuador or in other countries.

Limitations

The small sample size of this study is its most jarring limitation, resulting in the statistically insignificant results. This was largely due to limitations in the methods: primarily, the time constraints of this short-term project as well as the dearth of information available online about the histories of these movements. Since this study only used information available online, as well as some documents from the organization Acción Ecológica, shared by Alexandra Almeida, difficulties in finding complete information on the movements resulted in only seven movements being thoroughly examined. Additionally, of the movements that were studied, information may still have been incomplete. It is very possible that some of the movements also used other tactics that were not recorded online and therefore that the summary of what tactics each movement used is not complete.

Suggestions for Future Studies

Future studies would ideally incorporate more movements; a larger sample size would reap more significant results. To do this, it would likely be necessary to conduct interviews with people involved in the movements and the organizations that partnered with communities, in order to gather information that is not available publicly. In addition to repeating this type of study with a larger sample size, comparisons between indigenous anti-petroleum movements in Ecuador and indigenous movements against similar fossil fuel infrastructure and activities in North America would also be an interesting avenue to explore more thoroughly. It would be valuable to study similarities and differences in tactics and success levels to see how the political and social structures in the different countries impact which strategies are most effective for indigenous environmental movements. It is important to acknowledge the effects of political climate, social structure, and government structure on the outcome of movements as well as the tactics and strategy used. The strategy is crucial, but it is not the only deciding factor in a campaign's outcome.

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