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Imagined Borders: (Un)Bounded Spaces of Oil Extraction and Indigenous Sociality in “Post-Neoliberal” Ecuador

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Abstract: In this paper, we analyze state practices of border-making through an ethnographic focus on Ecuadorian Amazonia and the Waorani, an Indigenous society, who, before sustained contact with the outside world began in 1958, possessed stark spatial and social borders often reinforced through warfare. Following that contact and the creation of various iterations of a legally-demarcated Waorani territory, the spatial and social borders of Waorani culture, based on a common property regime, came into conflict with the borders produced by the state in cooperation with transnational capitalism in the form of the oil industry. We discuss how these shifting borders led to cascading effects on Waorani reciprocity, their relationship to natural resources, sense of security and designation of membership in the community. Finally, we discuss how the leftist Ecuadorian state under President Rafael Correa justifies and facilitates the country’s oil-focused spatial processes through a post-neoliberal discourse.

Keywords: common property; petroleum extraction; post-neoliberalism; borders; Waorani; Amazon; Ecuador

1. Borders Traversed

In his mid-to-late seventies (neither he nor his family can give an exact age), standing no more than 5'5" tall and with one eye blinded by a cataract, Ayewe [1] presents an imposing figure. His distended earlobes, once adorned with wide balsa wood earplugs, harken to the past. His stocky physique is solid muscle, honed over a lifetime of exertion. More often than not, when expecting visitors or when sitting outside of his house watching over the road, Ayewe wears an old, camouflage Ecuadorian army shirt and a matching cap. It may seem odd that a member of a fiercely independent Indigenous [2] society would choose the garments of an institution epitomizing state control. However, like many older Waorani men, Ayewe still considers himself a *guerrero*. He chooses to wear clothing that reflects his warrior status to society writ large.

As we sit outside of his house asking questions translated to *Wao tededo* by his daughter, Wiwa, Ayewe's army regalia contrasts with the rest of his appearance: he is shoeless and wearing baggy, faded and cheap nylon athletic shorts. The juxtaposition of state-issued army gear and Ayewe's bare feet, wide and calloused, accustomed to walking in the rainforest and on the gravel road in front of his home, suggests the breadth of his life, the vast distances—political, economic, sociocultural and ecological—that he has traveled. Conceptualizing Ayewe's early years around the mid-twentieth century is difficult, requires imagination. It was a life circumscribed and almost exclusively sustained by Ecuador's then expansive and relatively intact rainforest; ruled by kinship and resource tenure systems pre-dating the Ecuadorian state; dependent on his insular *nanicabo* (extended family group); a life threatened by antagonistic clans and/or wildlife and little else.

Why the difficulty in conceptualizing such a life? Because Ayewe now lives in Gareno, a Waorani community circumscribed by an oil field and bisected by an access road. Ayewe's vigil over that road is more than observation of passing vehicles. He maintains a control point: a metal pole with stones as a counterweight, lowered with a rope so all who pass do so only once Ayewe approves, usually following some form of tribute, such as food, cash or the purchase of the handicrafts that Ayewe sells. He paused during one of our interviews and walked to the road to accept a Styrofoam-packaged dinner from a truckload of oil workers. On a bench in front of his wooden house, roofed with leaves of corrugated zinc provided by Petroamazonas, the state oil company, Ayewe hoped to soon buy a sound system and a flat-screen television with his yearly \$1000 stipend from the company, *la compañía*. While Gareno now has electricity to power such purchases, it still lacks potable water and sewage infrastructure. Ayewe says he wants the television so that he can learn more about the world beyond Gareno's borders.

In this paper, we examine facets of Ayewe's life and that of his extended family through which we explore the construction, contestation and traversability of inter- and intra-national borders. The trajectory of Ayewe's life—youth in the Ecuadorian rainforest and later life in Gareno—suggests that these borders, as conceptual and physical circumscriptions of space, can be deployed to various ends by multiple actors. As is the case with nations, borders are imagined [3,4]. Obviously, they can be geographic or built—a river or a fence—but borders are always located, both socially and materially, in “broader social practice and discourse around all societies and [...] in relation to global space” ([5], p. 230). They are produced at the intersections of multi-scalar social practices, discourse and spaces. As is the case with nations, or with space in general, the imagination of borders, said otherwise, the

conceptualization and deployment, involves complex and often conflicting histories and power relationships. Ethnographic attention to state practices of producing and enforcing social and spatial borders at multiple scales in Ecuadorian Amazonia reveals how these practices undermine many of the same boundaries they seek to assert. This reveals the need to analytically attend to the contextual complexity of the conceptualization and maintenance of borders, as doing so clarifies what is generalizable about the bounding of space within the petro-state.

This paper explores the creation, enforcement and disregard of oil-related borders in relation to one Waorani community and considers the implications that these spatial practices and their outcomes have on theorizing the “post-neoliberal” petro-state. We begin by situating our analysis within existing discussions of both the petro-state and the state in general. This theoretical foundation is followed by a discussion of the contemporary political economy of oil in Ecuador. After providing a brief background on Waorani sociocultural reproduction in relation to the advent of industrialized oil exploitation in Amazonia, we begin an ethnographically-informed discussion of the practices by which borders are produced, enforced and ignored in relation to one Waorani community, Gareno. These inconsistent social and spatial practices and their effects suggest the extent of the intra-national heterogeneity and hierarchies that persist in “post-neoliberal” Ecuador.

2. Borderlands

Seminal work in cultural studies asserts the fluidity and dynamism of borders: “narrow strip along steep edges [...] a vague and undetermined place [...] an unnatural boundary [...] in constant state of transition” ([6], p. 3). Given the pervasive nature of global economies, politics and social movements, displaced people, and those who live in border spaces, as well, often claim imagined or remembered spaces as a means of adhering to the social and cultural networks and identities once attached to “firm territorialized anchors” ([7], p. 11). The fluidity of space and of the conceptual/physical borders that surround it suggest the possibility of analyzing borders not only as tools of state territoriality [8], but more broadly, as facets of spatiality. The term spatiality emphasizes “the production of space, its discursive and material practices, as well as its cultural understandings”, and the fact that these occur within systems of governance and power ([9], p. 3).

When government schemes for re-structuring space come into being, they employ multiple, often contradictory strategies for implementing and maintaining borders, strategies that almost inevitably restructure and propagate colonial hierarchies [9]. Such is the case with oil in Ecuadorian Amazonia [10]. Among the patterns of spatial governance characteristic of natural resource production is a degree of inconsistency. Natural resource frontiers, and established extraction zones, are “imagined as unplanned”, as zones of “unmapping” ([11], p. 28). That tendency towards territorial instability results in unequal distribution of the costs and benefits of natural resource extraction, an inequality that reflects national historicities and that manifests under left or right governance [12]. Those costs—including changing economies, settlement and subsistence patterns in communities near extraction sites—prevalent among such communities, have recently been referred to as the “microeconomics of the resource curse” ([13], p. 33).

This is of course a reference to the macroeconomic “natural resource curse”: the often reflexively-adopted notion that natural resource extraction causes intra-national political tensions,

ineffectual democracy and inefficient economies [14]. Recent analysis of countries particularly reliant to oil exploitation shows the economic instability engendered by such dependence [15], much as previous work demonstrates the political instability of oil-dependent states, whether under “authoritarian or democratic” governance ([16], p. 190). Petro-states are distinguished from other states “above all else” by “their addiction to oil rents”. This addiction precludes variation in “oil-based development choices” and promotes economic inefficiency, including an “exaggerated tendency to throw money at problems or, [...] defer hard choices”, an unwillingness to change structural practices. Overall, high oil revenues produce “institutional rigidity and high barriers to reform” ([17], p. 36). That this rigidity increases as oil prices increase is the essence of “the paradox of plenty” ([17], p. 48). International finance [18] and Ecuador’s President Rafael Correa [19] have questioned the determinism of the resource curse.

While the notion of a petro-state spatializes the concept of the resource curse, it does so at the national scale and suggests a spatial consistency in how it manifests, presuming that everyone is cursed in the same way across spatial, temporal and social boundaries. Yet, states are “composed of bundles of social practices, every bit as local in their materiality and social situatedness as any other” ([20], p. 992). For decades, social scientists have analyzed the means by which “reified and naturalized representations” of states and their residents are “constructed and maintained” ([7], p. 12), an analysis not yet applied to the petro-state. Kirsch’s [13] assertion (*vis-à-vis* mining in Papua New Guinea) that a microeconomics of the resource curse manifests in extraction-site communities suggests not only a localized social and material experience of the resource curse, but a spatialized experience, as well. It further suggests the need to consider the micropolitics of the resource curse as a site of analysis. Money is thrown at localized problems by sub-national institutions. Solutions are inconsistent, inefficient and variable at the local level. Structural problems go unquestioned. People continue making claims and grappling with difficult circumstances. The ethnographic data we analyze demonstrate that attention to intra-national boundary making reveals a spatialized experience of political and economic instability (and attempts at creating stability) within the petro-state.

Delineating borders, inherently part of producing territories, is an assertion of state influence. Borders, especially those between states, are supported and traversed by local, regional, state and transnational forces, by “the geosociologies of political power” [5]. These forces are far from uniform across the spaces encompassed by national borders. The ostensible logic of borders—circumscribing space; territorially-based access to political rights, such as citizenship; and the assumptions of “homology between nation-states, populations, and cultures” ([21], p. 56)—cannot be taken as given. Analysts assert the porosity of national borders to cultural/capital flows. That porosity requires re-conceptualization of spatiality, citizenship (and other subnational rights), culture and the state [13,21–23]. Despite that porosity, an analytically common spatial and scalar image of the state is one of territorial control and containment, where the state “sits above and contains [and demarcates the boundaries between] its localities, regions, and communities” ([20], p. 982). This image of territorial consolidation and control is readily applied by the contemporary, resource-nationalist Ecuadorian state, especially to spaces characterized by oil exploitation: Amazonia, Waorani territory and Gareno. This is despite the fact that: (1) swaths of Amazonia were historically ceded to the Waorani by broader Ecuadorian society, including the state; and (2) these territories, while discursively claimed by the current nationalist government, remain under governance regimes that do not reveal an all-encompassing state [24,25].

Oil workers and government employees in and around Yasuní National Park mentioned that the park ranger force was being downsized and that foreign companies increasingly manage territorial controls in the more remote portions of the park, a point reiterated by recent ethnographic research in Waorani communities in Yasuní National Park. That research also reveals that in Gareno, oil-funded development projects—infrastructure, scholarships, job placement programs—are being scaled-back following the 2014 to 2015 crash in oil prices.

3. Political Economy of Oil in Ecuador

In mid-1963, a Texaco-Gulf consortium discovered a large petroleum field in the Putamayo region of southern Colombia. They believed that this field extended south across the border into Ecuador. By 1964, oil prospectors had moved back into the jungles of eastern Ecuador where sporadic and unsuccessful oil exploration began in the 1930s. A costly exploration program paid off three years later, on 8 April 1967, with the discovery of a large field of high-quality petroleum at Lago Agrio, just 40 miles south of the Colombia field (the discovery was made by Texaco's fourth-tier subsidiary, TexPet or the Texaco Petroleum Company). The Texaco-Gulf consortium, which included the Corporación Estatal Petrolera Ecuatoriana, the precursor to the national oil company, Petroecuador, had a string of successes; by 1969, twelve of the thirteen wells the consortium drilled yielded commercial quantities of petroleum. Other companies rushed to obtain concessions. By early 1971, more than twenty foreign companies were exploring for oil in Ecuador ([26], pp. 103–04). In 1973, Ecuador joined OPEC (Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries) as its second-smallest producer [27].

The significant oil finds and influx of petro-dollars sparked grandiose visions of national modernization and development. Before large oil reserves were discovered in Ecuador, the country's most important exports were bananas and cacao. Its GDP was less than U.S. \$5 billion [28]. With the expansion of the oil industry in the late 1960s and early 1970s, the country's economic and political systems came to focus on oil. Ecuador transformed from a banana republic to a petro-state. Seemingly overnight, oil provided nearly half of government revenue [29]. Then-President José María Velasco Ibarra assumed dictatorial powers in 1970 and was overthrown in a *coup d'état* led by General Guillermo Rodríguez Lara on 15 February 1972. The generals spoke in nationalistic terms of Ecuador's unlimited future and set expectations that it would join the ranks of the developed, modern nations. For the military government, oil revenues provided a means to finance tax breaks, offer credit, subsidize energy and food, build social services, embark on major infrastructural improvement projects and, of course, support the Armed Forces [29].

When oil revenues themselves were insufficient to cover costs for such projects, the government leveraged future oil production as a means of securing credit from lenders, such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The military government made "*endeudamiento agresivo*" (aggressive indebtedness) an official component of economic policy ([30], p. 12). The foreign debt swelled twenty-fold during the 1970s, from \$209 million in 1970 to \$4167 million in 1980 ([29], p. 39). Between 1974 and 1982, the foreign debt rose from 18% of GDP to 60% of GDP ([31], p. 11). Debt sustained Ecuador through the 1970s and led to unprecedented growth rates; between 1970 and 1981, Ecuador's GDP grew by 147%. Manufacturing and agriculture languished as those sectors were minimal compared to oil revenues on which national budgets were dependent. Oil wealth failed to

reach the country's poorest sectors; from the oil boom in 1975–1992, poverty increased 15% [32]. An archetypal petro-state [17], Ecuador relied on oil and international lending agencies to sustain growth until 1982, when oil prices crashed.

Over the course of the 1980s, three separate democratically-elected governments implemented neoliberal policies ([31], p. 11). These included incentives for private producers, reduced export taxes, increased imports and the devaluation of the national currency, the *sucre*. The Ecuadorian government accepted an IMF loan and agreed to follow IMF policies, including flexible interest rates and no foreign exchange control. One World Bank loan for U.S. \$80 million funded the Emergency Petroleum Reconstruction Project after a 1987 earthquake that damaged the Trans-Ecuadorian Pipeline, essential to the transport of oil and, thus, to the nation's economy [33]. Overall, the new neoliberal policies increased unemployment and underemployment, forced skilled workers into unskilled jobs, reduced wages and increased food prices [34]. The number of people living in poverty jumped from under 50% in 1975 to over 65% in 1992 [32].

By the early 2000s, Ecuador's debt was the highest per capita in Latin America ([30], p. 12). Oil remained the most lucrative export in the country, propelling intensified oil operations in Amazonia. Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, Ecuador responded to dwindling oil prices by increasing production, which put the country in conflict with OPEC's attempts to stabilize prices by limiting output. After exceeding its production quota multiple times, Ecuador left the organization in 1992, thereby freeing itself to further boost production. Ecuador rejoined OPEC in 2007 and currently holds the third largest petroleum reserves in South America: 8.8 billion barrels [35].

Nearly 65% of Ecuador's Amazon region is zoned for oil exploration and extraction, an estimated 52,000 square kilometers. The majority of oil concession blocks overlap the ancestral or titled lands of the lowland Kichwa, Shuar, Achuar, Shiwiar, Cofán, Siona, Secoya, Zápara and Huaorani [36]. In the neoliberal years, oil firms operated in and dominated expanses of the Amazon basin with limited state oversight. They determined the terms of hydrocarbon acquisition and rents [37]. With the political "turn to the Left" in Latin America, governments elected on explicitly anti-neoliberal and anti-imperialist platforms are signaling the possibility of a new way of conducting the political economy of oil [38,39].

The Correa administration ushered in a period of resource nationalism. Since 2007, it has approved constitutional changes and legal amendments to increase the state's regulatory role in all aspects of the national oil industry, including greater control over taxes and revenue sharing. The 2008 Constitution stresses the government's control over extractive industries, defining the oil sector as a strategic asset and declaring the state's inalienable ownership. In this "post-neoliberal" model, the state, not the foreign firm, ostensibly extracts oil with attention toward using oil rents to support social services. President Rafael Correa often publicly states the centrality of a state-run oil industry to a post-neoliberal transition. He said:

We cannot lose sight of the fact that the main objective of a country such as Ecuador is to eliminate poverty. And for that we need our natural resources. There are people here who seem ready to create more poverty but leave those resources in the ground...That is criminal...The first oil extraction project completed by my government...includes several alternatives for clean development [19].

The Correa administration expelled Perenco, the Anglo-French oil company headquartered in London, for failure to meet its tax obligations. Perenco, unlike other international oil companies operating

in Ecuador, refused to change its revenue sharing policies and threatened to shut off its facilities in 2007 when the national government raised taxes [40]. Although Correa's government raised taxes on foreign oil companies, seized assets and pushed out some producers, other multi-national oil companies, such as Spain's Repsol, the China National Petroleum Corporation, Colombia's EcoPetrol, and others, remain interested in making new investments [41,42]. Additionally, while most of Ecuador's crude is currently extracted in the northern Ecuadorian Amazon, the Correa administration is looking to increase production in other parts of the country in search for new sources of petro-dollars [43].

4. From Common Property to Oil Concession

As a child, Ayewe saw his parents killed as they tried to flee a spearing raid conducted by a rival Waorani clan. He survived by hiding among the loosely woven palm leaves used to build the traditional Waorani longhouse. It is no surprise that until recently, the Waorani were commonly called *Aucas*, a Kichwa term meaning "savages". The term and characterization persist in reference to contemporary Waorani. Such unpredictable, deadly attacks constitute one of the most widely known features of Waorani culture [44] before the advent of sustained, peaceful contact by Protestant missionaries in 1958 [45]. Pacification by missionaries and resettlement of dispersed, semi-nomadic Waorani extended family groups into concentrated, sedentary villages facilitated petroleum extraction by multinational oil companies [46]. Sociality and culture in the forms of Shell and Texaco workers, as well as Christian missionaries from the Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL), went hand in hand with the demarcation of borders within which the Waorani were and continue to be expected to live. Ayewe's lifetime encompasses this oil-stained history; he was a young man in his twenties when a Texaco-Gulf consortium made its major discovery in Amazonia and propelled the creation of a petro-state.

Ancestral Waorani territory corresponds to the northern part of Ecuador's lowland rainforest (or *Oriente*), part of the western Amazon basin and one of the most biodiverse ecosystems on the planet [47–49]. Currently, they are distributed among five dozen communities in Waorani Territory (6786 km²) and Yasuni National Park (6797 km²). Gareno is at the western extreme of Waorani territory, about a two hour drive (in hired car) from Tena, the capital of Napo province; public buses do not service the community, so unless residents are able to hitch a ride with oil company transport, they take the bus to the end and walk over an hour to the community. Before the arrival of industrialized oil exploitation to Amazonia, the fundamental unit of Waorani society was the *nanicabo*, the residential unit of 30 to 50 related kin living in a long house. Typically, a *nanicabo* was composed of an older man (for whom it was named), his wives, one or two married daughters and their children, his unmarried children and one of his brothers and the latter's family. The preferred marriage pattern was matrilineal: married sons rarely lived with their parents ([50], p. 109). Some older Waorani claim that at one time, the various Waorani groups all lived peacefully together, but some incident caused them to split and disperse, creating three groups: one going "downriver", one "upriver" and one "overland". Split into various *nanicaboiri*, the once-unified group developed internal hostilities through a series of killings and vendettas. These geographic terms of "downriver", "upriver" and "overland" are used by the Huaorani even today and have been adopted by outsiders to designate the particular dispersed or sub-group populations ([51], p. 26). Ayewe's family belongs to the upriver clan.

The *nanicabo* also served as a communal user group managing natural resources in common. It was economically self-sufficient and autonomous. Waorani subsistence was, and to variable degrees, still is, based on manioc slash-and-mulch agriculture, with the starchy tuber consumed many times a day as a pre-masticated drink called *tepae*. Plantain, corn, peach palm (*Bactris gasipaes*), peanut and sweet potato are also important cultigens. Hunting (especially of peccaries, woolly monkeys and toucans using blowguns for arboreal game, spears for terrestrial animals or shotguns for both) and fishing (mostly with plant-derived poisons) provided protein [52]. Foraging for wild fruits, nuts and tubers also provided important nutrients. Except for large cooking pots, spears and blowguns, most belongings (hammocks, adornment, tools, drinking gourds, *etc.*) could be transported in a large basket or two. Their lifestyle was characteristically nomadic ([51], p. 36), dispersing land use over a wide area as a reaction to high levels of intra- and inter-tribal warfare. Members of other *nanicaboiri* were treated with suspicion or outright hostility. In response to prevalent warfare within ancestral Waorani territory, longhouses were moved every three or four months. Smaller gardens and lower intensity of trail use made it more difficult for raiding groups to locate housing sites, and if a raid did occur, the raided group could flee to a location where food was available. Families in a *nanicabo* re-settled, making themselves less susceptible to attacks, attacks like the one that took the lives of Ayewe's parents.

Sharing within the residential unit was intense, and exchange with the outside was minimal [50]. Before 1958, the Waorani relied on a common property regime as a means of producing and maintaining social and spatial boundaries. Defined as "private property for the group" ([53], pp. 427–28), common property regimes serve multiple purposes: they foster connection group-held space, create social boundaries and structure interpersonal relationships. These regimes are "of interest both to classes and to clans and families" ([54], p. 76), meaning they can transcend social boundaries. Pertaining not only to economic patterns of reciprocity and ownership, common property regimes are total social facts in the Maussian sense, mediating social structures and identity. The Waorani common property regime embodied a form of cultural script that expressed social boundaries and distinguished between communal and private properties [53].

After Ecuador's discovery of crude of marketable quality and quantity, the presence and potential antagonism of Indigenous residents necessitated their resettlement. The first government-sanctioned Waorani settlement, a "protectorate" under the auspices of the Summer Institute of Linguistics, was authorized the following year with the goal of settling the majority of the Waorani within its boundaries, a task almost completely accomplished by 1973 [55]. The missionary organization achieved this goal with financial and logistical support from oil companies. The creation of a bordered Waorani territory by a nexus of the state, oil companies and missionary groups was one of the first acts of governance over the once-belligerent Waorani enough to facilitate exploitation of newly-found petroleum reserves [47,55,56].

Sustained contact with the broader Ecuadorian society and the world resulted in profound changes in the Waorani common property regime, their settlement patterns and perceptions of territoriality. Salient among these changes is increased sedentism in nucleated villages where distantly-related and non-kin live in close proximity, taking advantage of infrastructure and services, such as education, transportation and healthcare: a stark contrast to the mobile, extended family *nanicabo*. Previously, Waorani territory was an amalgam of *nanicaboiri*, each with a corresponding area of forest in addition to interstitial buffer zones between hostile groups [57]. With increasing post-contact territorial

circumscription resulting from competing land uses (e.g., oil extraction, urbanization) and users (e.g., colonists), the Waorani increasingly articulate not only boundaries between their own communities, but the need for protection of Waorani territory as a whole [58].

Estimates of the present day Waorani population range from about 2000 to 3000 people [59,60]. Many of these villages lie along navigable rivers; some are found alongside roads, and others are more distant and accessible only by foot or landing strip. The total number of villages changes often as a result of abandonment and fission, reflecting the traditional Waorani semi-sedentary settlement pattern. Contact with broader Ecuadorian society increased reliance on exogenously-controlled resources—schools, medical centers, market-derived foods and income from intermittent low-level employment—and increased the Waorani population, down to about 500 people before 1958. Reliance on those resources has been mutually constitutive with widespread devaluation of what were once critically important common pool resources—land, waterways, game and foraged forest resources [61]. For the Waorani people before 1958, socio-cultural cohesion and reproduction depended almost entirely on a common property regime as a means of producing the social and spatial borders necessary for management of a self-secured and regulated territory, as well as distribution of vital resources.

Since before oil exploration began in the *Oriente* in the 1930s, the Waorani were known to ferociously protect their territory against any intrusion, whether by other groups, loggers or rubber tappers. It is no coincidence that the remaining intact forests in the *Oriente*, including much of Yasuní National Park, correspond largely to ancestral Waorani territory. During the 1940s and 1950s, the Waorani were a constant threat to oil company employees' enforcement of borders that contributed to the more than one decision to cease oil exploration activities in the *Oriente* [55]. This history of belligerent border enforcement still functions as a central marker of contemporary Waorani identity [46]. This is why Ayewe still calls himself a *guerrero*.

The loss of the ability to access, control and regulate vital resources—forests, rivers, gardens, game—along with an increase in dependence on exogenously-controlled resources entailed a dramatic shift in the production and maintenance of social and spatial borders. While Indigenous territorial autonomy is touted by the Ecuadorian state as an example of the country's plurinationalism, both the territorialization process and the rights it ostensibly guarantees are “plagued by contradictions and ambiguities” ([62], p. 122), particularly that the state holds rights to subsoil resources regardless of the surface tenure regime [63]. Whereas these borders were once created and enforced among Waorani clans, sometimes violently so, following the state-sponsored introduction of the oil industry, Western and Waorani social and spatial borders came into conflict.

In the Waorani case, the drawing of borders to facilitate oil exploitation reflected the “spatial imperatives” of economic development, imperatives enacted through “the spatiality of administrative strategies of disciplining [Waorani] populations”. The drawing of those borders elucidated the “sedimented effects and legacies of colonial power” ([64], p. 675) in Ecuadorian Amazonia. The borders of oil concessions continuously shift and expand, meaning the practices of disciplining through spatiality in relation to the Waorani and oil exploitation in Ecuador are dynamic. Additionally, because the re-emergence of colonial histories, expressed through the application of a new territoriality, does not simply eradicate historic Waorani territoriality, the two systems are applied simultaneously. The resulting competition between Indigenous spatialities and those espoused by modern states inevitably takes place amidst deeply-entrenched hierarchies of power [9,65].

Almost inevitably, those living with imposed social and spatial borders suffer under their discipline. Missionary-led relocation and oil development catalyzed the adoption of a settlement pattern characterized by more densely-populated and permanent nucleated villages with schools and landing strips, orienting themselves toward a search for outside goods and services [66]. Limited infrastructural development, colonization by once-urban settlers, deforestation and an influx of market-produced foods, alcohol and commodities, such as cell-phones, television and chainsaws [60,67–69], now permeate Waorani communities. Altered spatial boundaries altered patterns of resource acquisition and usage. For the Waorani case, re-drawn borders catalyzed this alteration and a subsequent shift away from a common property regime, a shift with a series of social and cultural effects. Contemporary Waorani struggle with these effects, which continuously impede the processes of sociocultural reproduction. The loss of the common property regime and the introduction of a new set of social and spatial borders imply deterritorialization, *sensu* Deleuze and Guattari [70]. Waorani people were detached from an existing social and spatial model and required to interact with a model employing distinct social, economic, political and environmental practices.

5. Things Fall Apart: Changing Commons, Claims and Cultures

Common property regimes define not only how a society interfaces with a resource, but also how individuals relate to each other and to society at large [71]. The commons are expressions of identity, where spaces and resources are closed off to non-members, where members share a mutual fate and shared future. Commons are a material representation of belonging to a group; since identity, and therefore culture, is imbricated with and inextricable from the commons, redefinition of one entails redefinition of the other. The maintenance of good social relationships, the minimization of conflict and the fostering of reciprocity were values reinforced in Waorani society through the property regime [72,73].

Disruptive supralocal forces, for example, the state conceptualization and maintenance of borders, are among the factors that can break down common property regimes. Others include market integration, demographic pressure, technological change and a breakdown of traditional value systems [74,75]; all of which occurred to various degrees following the creation of the Waorani “protectorate”, the forerunner to what is now legally-demarcated Waorani territory. These interdependent forces are all relevant to explaining the challenges faced by the Waorani as a whole [53,58], by the community of Gareno and by Ayewe and his family specifically.

Gareno is located in an oil concession, Block 21. Under Ecuadorian law, the state is the owner of all subsurface resources deeper than fifteen centimeters and has the right to lease access to these resources with a bare minimum of consent. Whether under the “protection” of a missionary organization or under independent governance by their current federation, Waorani people do not hold sovereign control over their bounded, legally-titled territories. Although more than 600,000 hectares of Waorani lands are protected under the communal legal title they were granted in 1990, they do not control subsoil resource and mineral rights, all of which are the property of the Ecuadorian state. They, and other Indigenous groups, only possess access and withdrawal rights to surface resources. According to the terms of their land title, they cannot receive royalties from oil exploration and extraction, cannot obstruct oil development on their land or carry out extraction themselves ([76], p. 10). More broadly, the rights of Indigenous people to participate in decision-making related to extractivism in general are

limited. In the 2002, 2006 and 2008 constitutions ([77]; [78], p. 14), Ecuador guarantees the rights of Indigenous people to prior informed consent regarding hydrocarbon exploitation. That the state has yet to grant Indigenous people the rights to veto extractive projects demonstrates the lack of sovereignty over legally-titled territory experienced by the Waorani and other groups. States seek to project “top-down” territorial control through various practices [20]. In Ecuadorian Amazonia, oil exploitation is one of these practices.

5.1. Resources in Flux in Gareno

While a Waorani longhouse built by some of its inhabitants was once a primary common spatial context for Waorani socialization, common spaces in Gareno are those created and/or funded by oil companies. Investment or management, let alone ownership, of these resources does not involve Gareno’s residents. The *cancha cubierta* (a covered basketball/soccer/volleyball court), the community president’s office and the community health center are provided and/or operated by state-owned Petroecuador or its subsidiary, Petroamazonas. These are spaces within Gareno that are exogenously designed, effectively foreign commons. Unlike the longhouse made of woven palm leaves, oil-funded spaces do not require or reflect a familiarity with the forest and do not need to be nurtured, because new ones continually appear. Examples of this lack of local social investment in newly-built common spaces in Gareno, an example of a lack of sovereignty over space and governance through spatial control, include: an outhouse built by Perenco, where community residents dismantled the wooden structure to be used for other construction or as fuel, leaving only two lonely toilets; the *cancha cubierta*, covered in mud from numerous rainstorms and subsequent flooding, the volleyball netting in a tangle, the walls covered in ever-increasing amounts of graffiti; the health center that, when open one day per week, is hardly attended by community residents.

Ayewe reports having worked for all of the private companies—U.S.-based Kerr McGee, Geneva-based Oryx and Anglo-French Perenco—that operated in Gareno. He worked for Perenco in the early 2000s for four months, while in his sixties, clearing roads and/or seismic trails with a machete. In a demonstration of the unreliable nature of the benefits of oil exploitation, he reports that after his four months of work, the engineers who hired him “robbed” him by refusing to pay his salary. Gareno’s history of interaction with the oil industry spans periods of control by transnational oil companies and, most recently, by state-owned Petroamazonas. The pattern is common in Ecuadorian Amazonia. When new fields are developed, the oil exploitation, community relations and community compensation are all managed by a transnational oil company. These services then shift to the state-owned company, a private-to-public shift happening in other Waorani communities within oil concessions and throughout Ecuadorian Amazonia as the state expands its control over natural resource exploitation. This demonstrates that in asserting control over its national territory through oil exploitation, the Ecuadorian state introduces transnational influences over the control of space. The demarcation and titling of the Waorani territory in Amazonia in the name of oil exploitation then becomes a means by which those boundaries are traversed via oil exploitation.

Numerous interviewees—current and former oil company affiliates, members of NGOs and academia and Waorani people themselves—asserted that the shift from transnational oil companies to Petroecuador or Petroamazonas is almost inevitably accompanied by diminished technological and

remediation standards and a decrease in the local “benefits” of oil. The state-owned oil company has little incentive to hinder production and/or profit through enforcing legislation requiring consultation, compensation and/or environmental remediation ([79], p. 5). In terms of company support, Ayewe told us that upon taking over the Gareno oil fields in mid-2012, Petroamazonas gave him \$1000 and corrugated zinc to use for roofing, simply because of his age. In a further demonstration of the plasticity and insecurity of benefits received by community residents, Ayewe and Wiwa said that Petroamazonas is no longer providing direct payments to residents, but instead authorizing funding for *obras*, roughly translated to “projects”, which seems to effectively provide anything requested within the \$1000 yearly budget.

For the Waorani, the new borders drawn by the state in order to facilitate oil exploitation catalyzed the devaluation and insecurity of endogenously-managed resources—forests, game, rivers—replacing these with manufactured resources provided by oil companies, foreign and local, and/or the state-owned company, Ecuador Estratégico Empresa Pública. Created in September 2011, Ecuador Estratégico (EE) is meant to provide “local development and infrastructure” in zones influenced by “strategic sector” projects ([80], p. 1), a euphemism for extractive industries. Resources provided by these institutions are both individual (food, building materials, chainsaws, sound systems, televisions, scholarships, yearly stipends, income from low-level employment, basic capital for cash-cropping or pisciculture) and communal (*canchas cubiertas*, medical centers and schools). Provision of these resources results from contestation and public protest by “strategic sector” zone communities, like Gareno. Because accessing EE resources requires political struggle, those resources are tenuous, contingent upon the begrudging largesse of the state, as well as domestic and/or transnational oil (mining or hydroelectric) companies. The management and traversing of both social and spatial borders can result from attempts to distribute the benefits of oil exploitation, not merely from the exploitation itself. In this sense, acts of governance through social programs can effectively undermine the sovereignty implied by the demarcation of borders. State projections of their ability to encompass and control territory are proven to be piecemeal, community specific and inconsistent [20].

Although he is willing to accept things like *obras* and intermittent work, Ayewe told us that he has no confidence in the *compañía*, a general term that refers to both public and private companies and subcontractors, effectively no confidence in state control over the industry. He asserted that although the company provides benefits, he and the residents of Gareno have no means of verifying how much oil the company produces. Knowing the possibility that oil may flow through the pipelines without the community residents being aware, Ayewe expressed vehement opposition to the construction of underground pipelines, saying he simply will not permit it while he is alive. His assertions highlight that the imposition of spatial discipline by the state does not simply result in erasure of non-state territorial claims. Subjects challenge spatialized discipline, regardless of its source [9,81]. Once oil extraction ceases in Gareno or the company ceases to report extraction to the residents, according to Ayewe and his daughter, the yearly \$1000 *obra* budget, the result of community demands for compensation, will stop and Gareno will be *botado*, “thrown away”. The lack of fixed criteria for what constitutes an *obra* and how each one is authorized, lack of ability to monitor exploitation practices and lack of employment security underscore the plasticity and instability of the resources provided via structures of governance within the boundaries of oil concessions and oil-field communities.

5.2. Territory: Who Is In and Who Is Out?

As reported in Lu and Wirth [58], all Waorani respondents surveyed were adamant that non-Waorani should be kept from using resources on Waorani land without permission. One said, “Some foreigners think that this here is the Yasuní National Park. This is not the Yasuní National Park. This is Waorani territory. This is our own territory, our own land. Our grandparents killed here. Our blood wet the soil. Therefore, we have the right to live here”. Another added, “No one can tell us what we can do in our territory, not even the government” ([58], p. 237). Increasingly, the Waorani are coming to the realization that notions of titled land and other resources are increasingly insecure. Gareno’s representative to the Waorani federation asserted a government functionary told him that the community may own the trees, the birds, the animals and the river, “but the oil is for everyone [in Ecuador]”. While the borders drawn by the state are used to demarcate access to certain resources, those borders can equally be used to call resource claims into question.

Ayewe arrived in Gareno in 1998, in response to a call from the founder of Gareno to populate Waorani lands and counter Kichwa colonization. One of Ayewe’s daughters said to him, “Come live here, to control the territory, because it is empty here. There is no one to defend here. Many [non-Waorani] people enter”. He told himself, “I have to live and die in my great-grandparents’ territory”. In doing so, he left a remote village accessible only by river, air or foot. Without his move to Gareno, Ayewe assured us the space would have been overtaken by Kichwa settlers, adding, “While I am alive, colonizers do not enter, no type of danger enters because a warrior lives here. Out of fear, they do not enter the community”.

The Kichwa are the most numerous of Ecuador’s Native Amazonians and demographically outnumber the Waorani about 50 to one. Kichwa territory borders Waorani territory, which has higher abundances of game, fish and valuable hardwoods. As the Kichwa are among the most state-aligned Indigenous nationalities in Ecuador, their organizations acquire resources from the government with greater facility than more marginalized Indigenous groups, a fact that indirectly facilitates the encroachment of Kichwa colonizers into Waorani territory ([46], p. 45). Similar to his vehement opposition to underground pipeline due to the possibility of surreptitious oil extraction, Ayewe was furious about the incursions of Kichwa into Gareno along the oil road. He asserted that he erected and continues to operate a roadblock in Gareno in order to prevent Kichwa from traveling further into Waorani territory to hunt, fish or extract timber. Wiwa asserted that the families of Kichwa spouses who now live in Waorani territory come into Waorani territory “daily, daily!” to fish without asking permission from the residents of Gareno, that others come from as far as Coca (the capital of the neighboring province, hours away by car) to harvest timber. Ayewe, who speaks little Spanish, reiterated for our understanding, “*Todos los días*”, every day [82].

Characterization of the Kichwa as a threat invading Waorani territory and insinuating themselves in Gareno seem paradoxical given that Ayewe’s daughter Wiwa and his granddaughter (Wiwa’s niece), a quiet fourteen-year-old girl named Ñobe, are both married to Kichwa men. Ñobe’s marriage resulted from an alliance between her father and a Kichwa friend of his, an alliance cemented while both men were drunk at the weekly *feria* (market). Ñobe claimed that she prefers living with her Kichwa in-laws, learning their culture. Onca, Wiwa’s second oldest son and Ñobe’s cousin, who is half-Kichwa, but identifies as Waorani and does not speak the Kichwa language, has a different view. Onca’s mixed

ethnicity is one of many examples of the extent to which the boundary between Waorani and Kichwa is shown to be porous in the lives of Gareno's residents. He asserted that Kichwa intermarriage contributes to the degradation of Wao culture in Gareno and goes on to mention that Kichwa people who live along the oil road just outside the boundary of Gareno proper (marked by a Petroamazonas checkpoint) often come into the community looking to extract resources sometimes acquired by sharing alcohol with Waorani men. The consistent pressure, perceived or actual, from Kichwa colonizers and family members of inter-ethnic marriages on "traditional" Waorani resources functions as a direct challenge to notions of a boundary between the groups, this despite distinct territories titled to each by the state.

5.3. *Sharing Manioc, Sharing Sugar*

Wiwa represents a source of cultural resilience and a bridge between generations. She is highly proficient in traditional skills: knowledge of species in the forest and rivers, the ability to sing traditional songs in *Wao tededo*, to make beautiful jewelry, hammocks, bags and other household items and the preparation of *tepae*, a premasticated beverage made from manioc. Wiwa is 49 years old, has given birth to seven children, yet moves effortlessly in the forest and can carry almost 100 pounds of game, firewood, plantains or manioc with a tumpline across her forehead, the load resting on her back. In addition to her domestic duties, Wiwa has worked for years as a community health promoter, attending workshops and courses as frequently as possible, and recently obtained paid work in a government-funded health clinic. As committed to her family's well-being as she is to that of the community of Gareno, Wiwa seems to exemplify a Waorani person who recognizes the explicit and implicit rights and duties regarding the people with whom she shares space, regarding the resources available to the group. She exemplifies a person who deftly negotiates the social and spatial borders conceived of and managed by the state and in historic Waorani society.

When discussing the reciprocity and responsibilities that manifest in contemporary Gareno, Wiwa was often critical of the other residents of the community, a critique implying the inability of others to conquer the challenges that she handles so adeptly. She spoke of how things were before people, men especially, began drinking excessively, a shift that goes hand in hand with market integration and the presence of oil companies [36]. Her words implied the connection between consumption of alcohol and a degradation of the explicit and implicit rights and duties that govern resource use and foster sociocultural reproduction, a degradation of social and spatial borders and claims.

One of these claims pertains to the sharing of food, especially hunted game, as a means of reaffirming kinship bonds, building relationships and expanding networks of allies [50]. More than a mechanism to build social capital, however, sharing reflects deeply embedded values: "Most Huaorani would agree that food is the main thing in life. To live a good life is to have plenty of food, food for consuming and sharing. The more food there is, the larger the group that can share it, the better life becomes" ([50], p. 155). As people negotiate new spatialities and related social practices, such claims to the centrality of sharing and reciprocity being central among the Waorani as a homogenous group become less applicable. Wiwa began by asserting that hardly anyone in Gareno hunts anymore, that people get money and spend their time drinking, but later clarifies, "When they do not drink, they go hunting, get home late. They have killed something, and share some. Before it was like that, was good.

But now, all of the meat they bring is to sell [...] they do not share with anyone, with family. They do not share first”.

Her criticism of such stinginess contrasts with her own standards for sharing market-derived items, a tendency that runs counter to prevailing practices in Gareno. People do not tend to share things that are expensive, whether a chainsaw or the over-priced food purchased at the *feria* on Fridays. This demonstrates relatively new and consistently enforced borders between households, borders that are new to the Waorani. When discussing sharing practices, Wiwa expressed that people should share the natural resources available to the community—crops, game, foraged goods—and generalizes that belief to market-derived goods: “For example, I buy a *quintal* [46 kilos] of rice, a *quintal* of sugar, I always go give a *taza* [cup or bowl] of sugar to each family. That is how to bring more joy to the whole family”. As Gareno, like almost all Waorani communities, consists of a few extended families, related through blood or marriage, her characterization of the community is literal (many people are her family), but also resonates figuratively, in that she seemed to view Gareno as an extended family group similar to the one in which she spent her childhood. Wiwa went on, “When people come and ask for soap, [I say] ‘Take the soap.’ And in the same fashion, when they get an animal or fish, they also come leave something”. Game populations provide food security for households, a subsidy from nature that reduces the necessity for wage labor and monetary income. Sharing game spreads this subsidy with others. Previous research suggests that game availability in Waorani communities close to oil roads may be in decline and that residents of these communities are more likely to spend more time in cities than residents of isolated communities, leading to a propensity to adopt restrictive notions of private property that can preclude sharing [58].

The adoption of these new social borders coincides with the continuous conceptualization and application of spatial borders in relation to oil exploitation. When asked to elaborate on why people in Gareno no longer share as much as before, Wiwa said, “When we lived in [another community, far from oil roads and camps] and there was a *fiesta*, women were happy, others cooking, others sharing, others playing, children playing. All of that was happy. But here [in Gareno] when there is a *fiesta*, barely two people are cooking, the rest, just sitting there. No one obligates them. The president does not say [...] to collaborate at all. That is why it has been given up”. In an assertion of the spirit of independence, self-provisioning and collaboration characteristic of historic Waorani culture, Wiwa asserted, “Even a woman who was [injured] but is now better, she should be [...] helping to chop or peel. Another could bring water. Another could cook. That is happiness [...] Giving a hand to another”. Although Wiwa herself does not directly attribute the distinct forms of managing resources/commodities—the diminished practice of sharing and resource-related collaboration—to the presence or absence of the *compañía*, a community’s proximity to oil extraction positively correlates to its degree of market integration and increased consumption of market-derived goods [36,67,83,84]. Waorani communities along oil roads *versus* those in more isolated locations have distinct regimes of resource management, different notions of intra-community social and spatial borders [58].

When asked about how the use of money has affected the Waorani, Ayewe reminisced about life before pervasive market integration: “We would go hunting, bring meat, butcher it, cook it with manioc, eat. We would make *tepae* [manioc chicha] and drink that [...] We would live from that. No need to do more [...] We would live tranquilly. Cleaning the *chacra* [swidden garden], planting more. Having *fiestas*, eating. We lived [...] but without alcohol”. The present-day use of money made simply

“living” much more difficult. The “modern” resources to which residents of Gareno have access are simply unrelated to Ayewe’s concept of “living” and often inhibit the practice of sharing. In Onca’s eyes, such resources and practices are simply antithetical to Waorani sociocultural reproduction. For him, to be Waorani means maintaining the language of *Wao tededo*, certain beliefs and also subsistence practices, like hunting, fishing and gardening. Onca thinks that there are some Waorani who will maintain their connections to *la cultura*, meaning “traditional” Waorani culture, in the future, and as a result, it will not entirely disappear. However, according to Onca, *la cultura* is being lost in Gareno.

The social and spatial borders that constitute what it means to be Waorani are not as easy to identify in Onca’s generation as they were in Ayewe’s, and when they can be identified, they are recognized as fluid. Increasing numbers of young Waorani men who obtain socioeconomic mobility through oil-related employment and the sale of forest resources leave rural communities like Gareno. They settle, sometimes permanently, in urban or peri-urban areas. Onca’s younger brother, studying to be an accountant, one day asserts that he will stay in Gareno, another day speaking wistfully of living in Tena, capital of Napo province. During a community meeting in Gareno, there was an absence of young men, young families in general. Of the nearly fifty people at the meeting, less than five were men between the ages of fifteen and forty. As migration patterns continue to change among the Waorani, in response to ecological degradation and the lack of economic and educational opportunity, the borders once-designed to contain the Waorani function to encourage their transcendence.

6. “Post-Neoliberal” Borders

The Ecuadorian state under President Rafael Correa justifies and facilitates the country’s oil-focused political economic, ecological and spatial processes through a discourse that, in Ecuador and other parts of Latin America, is called post-neoliberalism. Though some argue against using the term because it implies an unspecified distinction from neoliberalism [85], others offer that the term implies a “radical rupture” from the policies of international financial institutions ([86], p. 90) and the Washington Consensus [87]. The Correa administration’s project of infrastructural improvement and social investment, its institution of “post-neoliberalism”, is called “La Revolución Ciudadana”, the Citizens’ Revolution. The Revolución, funded by oil rents [19,87], is based on asserting that the rights of citizenship apply to all Ecuadorians [88], including Waorani people. Claims by the state to providing Waorani communities with education, healthcare and contributing to their territorial autonomy [89] are readily visible in Gareno, most obviously in a large billboard along the dirt road that reads: “Oil improves your community”.

Claims by the president to have transcended the “long and dark night of neoliberalism in Ecuador” [90] respond to widespread recognition of the role of neoliberalism in the operations of the oil industry [31] and the national government in general [88]. For the purposes of this paper, post-neoliberalism poses the question: How is the production of social and spatial borders distinct under post-neoliberalism? In order to approximate an answer, it is necessary to begin by briefly describing neoliberalism in general, then neoliberalism in Ecuador, before engaging in a space-related discussion of post-neoliberalism.

In all of the many uses of the term, neoliberalism is a political, economic and cultural project. Beyond this broad description, vast heterogeneity characterizes scholarly applications of the term.

Awareness of the difference between the ideal, “utopian” sensibility of neoliberal doctrine and its contingent, socially-determined applications as policy is critical to understanding geographic variability in what is called neoliberalism [91]. In its “strictest sense”, neoliberalism is a “macroeconomic doctrine” characterized by “valorization of private enterprise and suspicion of the state” and, more generally, a “free-market fetishism”. “Policies and practices associated with or claiming fealty to” the above-mentioned doctrine are also called neoliberalism. The term can also refer to mechanisms of government and production of subjectivity in the Foucauldian sense, as well as to a kind of “millennial capitalism” characterized by deregulation, insecurity and speculation. In its sloppiest usage, neoliberalism is a synonym for capitalism, or the world economy and its inequalities ([92], pp. 170–71).

In Ecuador, post-neoliberalism refers to a suite of discursive and practical reactions by the political center-left to the fractured applications of neoliberalism in the late 1990s and early 2000s. As such, the term “post-neoliberalism” has as many valences as neoliberalism itself. The emergence of neoliberalism in Ecuador discussed in previous sections included the dismantling of social programs and restricting the influence of the national government. However, in a demonstration of the influence of Westphalian borders on the exercise of neoliberalism, on producing similarity and difference in the application of idealized neoliberal doctrine, Ecuador’s Social Christian Party came to power through clientelist politics that sounded like social welfare [93]. Among the neoliberal restructuring practices advanced by the state in the late 1980s and early 1990s, mirroring neoliberal policy and practice elsewhere, was the opening of a state-run oil industry to increased foreign influence, opening Amazonian space to that influence [94]. These were the years of the presence of Kerr-McGee and Perenco in Gareno. Relatively common in the analysis of neoliberal politics, the state opened its borders to private, transnational investment, but did so in the name of stability, advancement and progress. A high-ranking employee of Texaco in Ecuador said doing so was “indispensable for national development” ([95], p. 107). Under neoliberalism, the state and the oil industry, both professed concern for the nation and both did so in a manner that involves the (re)production of social and spatial borders of the nation and within the nation.

The 1990s and early 21st century in Ecuador were characterized by a struggle between left movements—Indigenous people, environmentalists, workers—and the many people implementing practices of neoliberal governance in a piecemeal fashion across Ecuador. The Correa administration assumed power in 2006 on a leftist tide, on a platform including increasing state control over the oil industry and “protecting” national economies from globalization [93]. Ecuador’s “main objective” became the elimination of poverty, according to the president, a goal that can be achieved only with natural resources, such as oil ([19], p. 95). Under post-neoliberalism, the distribution of oil revenues has been re-organized to a degree, funding programs, such as the aforementioned Ecuador Estratégico, or a controversial Amazonian integrated conservation and development project (ICDP) called Socio-Bosque or Partner-Forest, which further limits territorial control by Indigenous communities [96,97]. Under the social and environmental programs of post-neoliberal Ecuador, oil exploitation, influenced, if not directly controlled by, multinational corporations, continues to expand with relatively minor changes.

The creation and maintenance of the intra-national borders that altered spatiality for Waorani people and the many other Indigenous residents of Amazonia—borders including Indigenous territories and oil concessions—also continue expanding under post-neoliberalism [25]. Analysts of other parts of the world have recognized that neoliberalism is not antithetical to social welfare programs [98,99]. The Ecuadorian case reaffirms this and further suggests that the same is true for environmental

conservation programs. “Post-neoliberalism” might be more accurately described as “advanced” liberal democracy [100] or even contemporary Ecuadorian neoliberalism.

7. Conclusions

Analyzing state practices of border-making through an ethnographic focus on Ecuadorian Amazonia reveals how the making of spatial borders functions to undermine social and spatial borders. The practice of making borders upholds the image of a spatialized state with top-down control over the entirety of its territory, an image undermined by the need of the state to cede vast swaths of its territory to groups who are, at least discursively, granted control over vast spaces. For the Waorani, spatiality before sustained peaceful contact in 1958 included stark spatial and social borders, often enforced through inter-clan warfare. Following that contact and the creation and deployment of various iterations of a legally-demarcated Waorani territory, the spatial and social borders of the Waorani, based on a common property regime, came into conflict with the borders produced by the state in concert with transnational capitalism in the form of the oil industry.

While the Waorani control a legally-demarcated territory, they have very limited influence over decision-making in regards to the oil industry, which relies on the image of a top-down, all-encompassing state. However, the social welfare programs operated by oil companies, programs the state continues to be unwilling or unable to operate, demonstrate that oil-based borders work to undermine the image of the top-down, all-encompassing state. The plasticity and instability of those social welfare programs suggest the unreliability of governance programs within oil-related boundaries. Territorial instability and inconsistent provision of goods and services by the state are among the salient characteristics of the micropolitics of the resource curse.

The borders of Indigenous territories (in Ecuadorian Amazonia, a spatial and social formation mutually constitutive with the oil industry) function as a means through which state territorial control is challenged by Indigenous peoples. As the relationship between the Waorani and Kichwa people shows, legal title to a territory cannot be equated to exclusion of all others from that territory, making those borders as discursive as they are material. Variety also exists within the borders of Indigenous territories, as is the case among the Waorani, who within their territory adopt different inter- and intra-community spatial and social practices. Flows of capital/culture permeate the borders of Indigenous territories as easily as Waorani people exceed these borders, which they recognize to be markers of spatialized social inequalities.

The contemporary, left-leaning Ecuadorian state draws a stark distinction between its practices and those of its right-wing, neoliberal-minded predecessors. However, beyond the macroeconomic, utopian doctrines central to each, implementation of those left and right doctrines through policy looks very similar. Like its antecedents, “post-neoliberal” Ecuador relies on its natural resources for economic development and poverty alleviation. While the practices by which revenues from natural resources are distributed are distinct—a neoliberal “trickle-down” approach *versus* a post-neoliberal direct payment approach—the manner in which states are spatialized, their inconsistencies, remain consistent.

In leftist states “the debate over the social, environmental, and territorial effects [of dependence on natural resources] becomes more opaque” ([12], p. 205). While these exercise more centralized power than their centrist or right-wing predecessors and promote policies intended to compensate for the

negative environmental and social effects of natural resource exploitation processes, these post-neoliberal or left-wing petro-states continue to generate diverse reactions, social opposition and territorial conflict [12]. For this reason, rather than adopting neoliberal or “post-neoliberal” as pre-figured categories of policy-making and spatial practices, it remains necessary to approach border-making at all scales as contingent, fraught, an exercise in micropolitics. What can be generalized beyond this contingency is that petro-states are inherently projects of social and spatial border-making and, as such, consistently fracture spaces and social practices. Those who experience the effect of petro-borders respond with diverse strategies that reveal how these borders are imagined and how they can be re-imagined.

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Author Contributions

All sections of this paper were drafted and/or edited by both authors.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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