

Negotiating Oil Contracts, Indigenous Communities, and Political Attitudes along Ecuador's Amazonian Extractive Frontier

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Abstract

To date, we have little evidence of what motivates environmental concern in developing countries. In contrast to the value-driven post-materialist argument that environmental issues are a concern only of the relatively affluent in advanced democracies, we offer an argument based on self-interest. First, we claim that vulnerability to environmental change greatly enhances concern over the environment. Second, we argue that a respondent's location on the "extractive frontier" (i.e. whether they live in an area where extraction is under consideration) will affect their environmental concern. Third, we propose that political attitudes affect individuals' environmental concerns because politics determine the extent to which citizens will benefit from extraction. Our analysis of an original survey of Ecuadorian citizens strongly supports our hypotheses. We further support our findings using qualitative evidence from in-depth interviews with government and community leaders in Ecuador, focusing especially on the attitudes of different groups in negotiating (or not) the extraction of oil from their communities along the extractive frontiers of Ecuador's Amazonian region.