

Community voices against neo-extractivist projects

An analysis of the discourses surrounding fracking in La Huasteca Potosina, Mexico

A Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Social Sciences of Lund University
in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of

Master of Science (MSc.) in Human Ecology: Culture, Power and Sustainability (30 ECTS)

CPS: International Master's Program in Human Ecology
Human Ecology Division
Department of Human Geography



LUNDS
UNIVERSITET

Author: Paulina Solis Patiño

Supervisor: Vasna Ramasar, Human Geography Department, Lund University

Term: Spring 2021

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|-------------|--|
| Department: | The Department of Human Geography and the Human Ecology Division |
| Address: | Sölvegatan 10, 223 62 Lund |
| Telephone: | 046-222 17 59 |

| | |
|-------------|---------------|
| Supervisor: | Vasna Ramasar |
|-------------|---------------|

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| Title and subtitle: | Community voices against neo-extractivist projects. An analysis of the discourses surrounding fracking in La Huasteca Potosina, Mexico |
| Author: | Paulina Solis Patiño |
| Examination: | Master's thesis (two year) |

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| | Spring Term 2021 |
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Abstract

In 2013, the previous Mexican federal government passed a constitutional reform of the energy sector that set the grounds for the use of fracking at a national scale. Less than two years later, a strategic policy document was published, mapping a whole set of areas whose deposits require the use of fracking to be exploited. Part of these endangered areas are located in the region of La Huasteca Potosina. This threat triggered a very large social mobilization in the region that brought together indigenous communities and civil society organizations, and which has so far succeeded at halting those projects. This qualitative case study analyses the conflict generated by the threat of said fracking projects in La Huasteca Potosina. It first seeks to shed light on the logics behind the use of fracking by the Federal government, then tries to understand the way the anti-fracking movement is discursively resisting these projects. Finally, it attempts to connect the experiences of struggle of the participants to larger social processes. The study does this through three different methods, including participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and a policy analysis. The findings reveal that the Federal government justifies its actions by imperatives of energy security and national prosperity. Its strategy allegedly proposes a long-term view for the country, but instead gives evidence of an alarming intensification of the fossil fuel energy model that is currently compromising the future. This directly clashes with the vision that the actors involved in the movement presented. Indeed, although fracking was a catalyst for the mobilization in La Huasteca Potosina, indigenous communities seem to be fighting more largely for the respect of their own vision of development.

Keywords: Neo-extractivism, fracking, ecological distribution conflicts, social resistance, discourses, indigenous territories, decoloniality

Acknowledgments

Above all, I would like to deeply thank all the participants to this study that are fighting this battle for and at the risk of their lives. This thesis could only be achieved because they gave me their time and trusted me with their stories. I greatly admire them for their wisdom and courage. I wish I could name their names and do more to give back.

I would also like to thank the academicians I met while I was doing fieldwork and that greatly helped me by connecting me with the movement and sharing their precious insights.

This thesis would have not been possible without the help of my lovely siblings Daniela, Lorena and Alejandro. I would like to thank them as well as my parents Jorge and Pilar, for giving me the opportunity to study this master in the first place.

I would of course want to thank my family in Mexico, Gabriela, Jorge, Cristina, Flora and Laura for helping me in every way they could while I was doing fieldwork.

I would also like to thank my partner Alice, for her love, constant emotional support and valuable advices.

I would like to thank Vasna, my supervisor and a person that I greatly admire, for her time, patience and guidance.

I would To Ann from academic support for her kindness, support and academic advices.

And finally, I am very grateful to all my friends, housemates, and fellow CPS in Lund for believing in me and advising me. Daisy, Casey, Nath, Paco, Mirela, Blandine, Lise, Ronja, Lena, Claudia, Jonas, George, Anoushka, Emmy, Alina, Teresa, and many others. Thank you for these two amazing years!

This work could only be achieved thanks to all of you.

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Acronyms

| | |
|----------|--|
| AMCF | <i>Alianza Mexicana Contra el Fracking</i> : Mexican Alliance Against Fracking |
| AMLO | Andrés Manuel López Obrador |
| CNH | <i>Comisión nacional de hidrocarburos</i> : National Commission of Hydrocarbons |
| CONAGUA | <i>Comisión nacional del agua</i> : National water commission |
| COCIHP | <i>Coordinadora de organizaciones campesinas e indígenas de La Huasteca Potosina</i> : Committee of Peasant and Indigenous Organizations of La Huasteca Potosina |
| COLSAN | <i>El Colegio de San Luis</i> : The College of San Luis Potosi |
| EJ | Environmental Justice |
| FAO | <i>Frente Amplio Opositor</i> : Wide Opposition Front |
| INDEPI | <i>Instituto de desarrollo humano y social de los pueblos y comunidades indígenas</i> : Institute for the Human and Social Development of Peoples and Indigenous Communities |
| PEMEX | <i>Petróleos Mexicanos</i> , Mexican Petroleum |
| SEMARNAT | <i>Secretaría de Medio Ambiente y Recursos Naturales</i> : Secretariat of Environment and Natural Resources |
| SLP | San Luis Potosí |
| SENER | <i>Secretaría de energía</i> : Energy secretary |
| UASLP | <i>Universidad Autónoma de San Luis Potosí</i> : Autonomous University of San Luis Potosí |

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Brief description of the case study

We are currently in a race against time. A growing body of research is alarmingly showing that we are heading towards a planetary threshold breaking point (Steffen et al., 2018). Crossing this threshold would lead to serious and irreversible disruptions to ecosystems, societies and economies, to the conditions that support our very existence (Steffen et al., 2018). Facing this unprecedented global climate crisis requires urgent structural reforms that decarbonize societies by phasing out of fossil fuels. Yet, Mexico appears to be headed in the opposite direction. In fact, in 2013, the previous Mexican federal government carried a significant constitutional reform of the energy sector that set the grounds for the use of hydraulic fracturing at a national scale. More commonly known as fracking, this experimental extraction technique is used to extract non-conventional hydrocarbons such as shale oil and gas, and is widely criticized for its devastating consequences on the environment and on human-health (Aidun and Giunta, 2019). Mexico is ranked the 6th country with most important reserves of shale gas in the world (Ramos Olivares, 2016). In 2015, a strategic policy document was published, identifying and mapping a whole set of areas with deposits that require the use of fracking to be exploited. The auction of these areas was planned between 2015 and 2019, to private and foreign companies through a competitive process. This wave of fracking projects extends over 34.830 km² of the national territory and represents a real threat to the Indigenous Peoples of the country, since some of these areas are situated in their territories (Ramos Olivares, 2016). Part of those endangered indigenous territories are located in a highly biodiverse region in the state of San Luis Potosi, called La Huasteca Potosina. This threat triggered a very large mobilization in the region that brought together indigenous communities and civil society organizations, and that has so far succeeded at halting those projects. For the purpose of this research, I will limit my scope to the conflict that has been generated by fracking in La Huasteca Potosina.

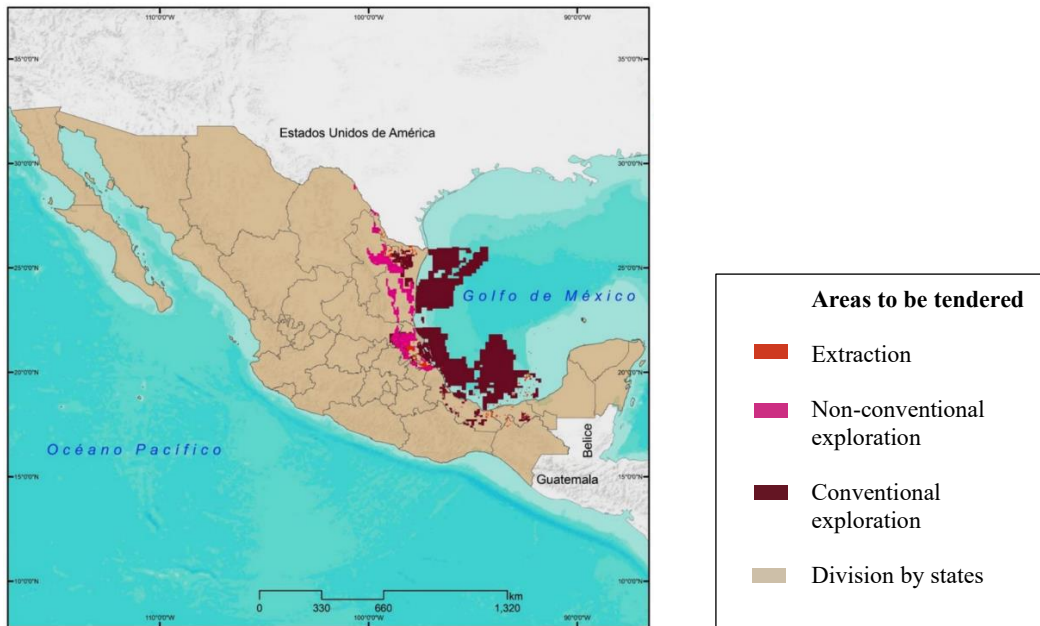


Figure 1. Areas to be tendered for the exploration and extraction of hydrocarbons in Mexico, 2015-2019 (Jacobo-Marín, 2018, 8)¹

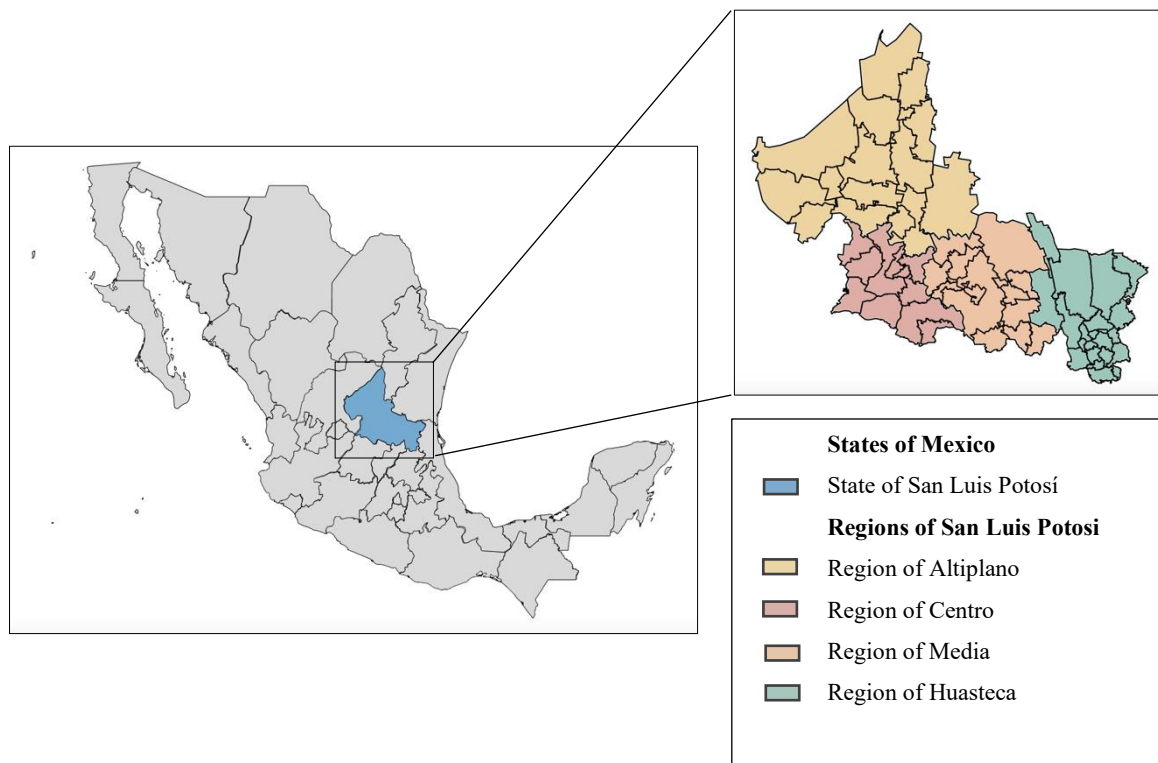


Figure 2. Location of the state of San Luis Potosí in Mexico (Created using mapchat.net) with map highlighting its regions (Taken from slp.gob.mx)

¹ The areas colored in pink contain non-conventional hydrocarbon deposits.

1.2 Aims, purpose and research questions

This research seeks to understand the conflict generated by the threat of fracking in La Huasteca Potosina. I believe discourses have a central role in legitimizing, imposing, oppressing, unifying, creating and destroying. Therefore, I consider it relevant firstly to deconstruct the arguments that are used by the Federal authorities to justify the use of fracking, and secondly to understand how the actors involved in the anti-fracking movement are discursively countering this hegemonic discourse.

The research questions that will guide this research are the following:

How can the (conflicting) discourses surrounding the fracking projects in La Huasteca Potosina be characterized and deconstructed?

- How is the use of fracking framed, justified and legitimized in the hegemonic national discourse?
- How can the anti-fracking movement's discourse be depicted? How is the mobilization against fracking experienced by the involved actors?

This study aims to be emancipatory and takes into consideration the anti-fracking movement's agenda. I will also attempt to connect the experiences of struggle of the actors to larger social processes that lead to oppression. In regards to the contribution to the Human Ecology field, I consider it important to enrich it with case studies that illustrate the current socio-environmental challenges populations in the Global South are facing.

1.3 Structure

In section 2, the conceptual framework of this study is presented. As the introduction only provided a brief description of the case study, section 3 further details the background of this research. Then, my methodology is explained in section 4. In section 5, the research instruments that I used are described, first the methods of collection and then the methods of analysis. My findings and discussions are regrouped in section 6. Finally, section 7 summarizes this study.

2. FRAMEWORK

In this section I present the conceptual framework in which this study is inserted. In 2.1, I introduce the complex concept of neo-extractivism and explain its links to development ideas. Then, in 2.2 I present the term of ecological distribution conflicts, and I bring forward the concepts of coloniality and decoloniality.

2.1 Extractivism and development(-alist illusion)

2.1.1 Extractivism and neo-extractivism

Neo-extractivism is an essential concept in this study. Acosta (2013, 71) describes it as a “contemporary version of extractivism”, in a similar way than Hargreaves (2019, 62) who refers to it as “a new wave of extractivism in Latin American countries [...] employed by these states to finance social reforms”, and Svampa (2019) who explains that the concept of extractivism acquired new dimensions from the beginning of the 21st century. To understand the meaning of neo-extractivism it is then necessary to first define extractivism.

Extractivism can be described as a form of appropriation of nature (Svampa, 2019) since it refers to a wide range of human activities that extract natural resources on an extremely large scale with the main purpose of exporting them (Svampa, 2019; Acosta 2013). Among these activities we can find the removal of minerals, oil, and gas, but this mode of extraction is also present in farming, fishing and forestry (Acosta, 2013). Extractivism is also a mode of accumulation (Acosta, 2013). Although made invisible, it is the material basis for capital accumulation (Svampa, 2019) which requires a constant provision of new resources. As Svampa (2019) argues, it is not just a stage of capitalism but it constitutes a structural characteristic of it as a world-economy. In this view, the world economy is divided between countries that export raw materials and countries that import them (Svampa, 2019). Extractivism cannot be dissociated from a colonial past, since it is during the conquest of the Americas 500 years ago that this mode of accumulation started to be massively implemented, and that the currently world-economy began to emerge (Acosta, 2013; Svampa, 2019). Extractive activities generate very limited benefits for the societies that carry them out, which

may seem paradoxical given the considerable scale of these activities and the amount of capital invested (Acosta, 2013).

There are clear continuities between extractivism and neo-extractivism. The underlying capitalist logic and the invisible relations of exploitation remain unaltered (Hargreaves, 2019). Hargreaves (2019, 63) maintains that neo-extractivism continues to follow the logics of “profit maximization, competitiveness, efficiency and externalization of impacts”, and Acosta (2013) demonstrates that it reproduces the dysfunctions that keep a vast majority of the countries’ populations in poverty. Above all, neo-extractivism re-actualizes an ideology that dates back to colonialist times, that Svampa (2019, 24) calls the “developmentalist illusion”. This ideology is manifested by the belief in an economic impulse brought about by extractive industries that would finally allow Latin American countries to rapidly ‘catch up’ and attain the long-promised level of development of Western countries (Svampa, 2019). This ideology assumes that extractivism is necessary to development (Hargreaves, 2019), and re-activates a pervasive myth of progress and development (Acosta, 2013, 73).

However, neo-extractivism also comes with new characteristics and is inserted in a new context. For Acosta (2013) and Hargreaves (2019) these changes are associated to the rise in power in Latin America of progressive governments. These authors situate the principal line of rupture in a more active and central role of the state. As Acosta (2013) argues, what is criticized is the control of transnational companies over extractive industries. Latin American progressive governments promoted a nationalist discourse, associating the extraction of resources to ideas of self-determination, and made substantial reforms to increase the intervention of the State in extractive industries. However, the case of Mexico is particular since at the time of the Energy reform it had a conservative government, and it is only until recently in 2018 that its first (supposedly) progressive government came in power. However, Svampa (2019, 29) affirms that Mexico is a paradigmatic example of the coupling between “neo-extractivism, developmentalist illusion and neoliberalism”. For this reason, I will use her work and larger definition of neo-extractivism as part of my research.

2.1.2 A development style and a socio-territorial model

Svampa (2019), characterizes neo-extractivism as a development style that is based on the over-exploitation of mostly non-renewable natural resources in a context of increased scarcity, as well as on the expansion of the exploitation to territories that were previously regarded as ‘unproductive’. The term not only refers to the activities that are traditionally conceived as extractive, since it can go from the geographical expansion of oil and gas extraction to the construction of hydroelectric power plants and other infrastructure projects (Svampa, 2019). This vision of development is instrumental, efficientist, productivist and aspires to the hegemonic ideology of progress (Svampa, 2019, 27-28). Latin American governments have attempted to justify neo-extractivism by arguing that it allows to generate state revenue that can then be redistributed or used to finance social programs (Svampa, 2019). According to this growth logic, “the pie must grow in order to fight poverty” (Hargreaves, 2013, 63) and neo-extractivist projects are an essential component allowing to enlarge that pie. This logic obscures the extremely unequal distribution of wealth among Latin American countries. In addition, environmental destruction is seen as the inescapable sacrifice that has to be made to attain development (Svampa, 2019; Acosta, 2013; Hargreaves, 2019). Tackling social issues such as poverty and exclusion is simplistically opposed to the protection of natural resources and territories (Svampa, 2019).

Neo-extractivism is also described by Svampa (2019) as a socio-territorial model, that can be analysed from different scales. The territorial dynamic of this model is characterized by an intensive occupation of territories, leading to a complete re-configuration of them (Svampa, 2019). Its consequences are the replacement of other local and regional activities and forms of production, as well the displacement of the populations located in those territories (Svampa, 2019). This is reinforced by the fact that this territorial model also tends towards the amplification of the extraction geography (Svampa, 2019). In short, under neo-extractivism, the extraction has been intensified and its frontiers expand rapidly.

2.1.3 The expansion of extreme energies

The pressure to extend the extraction geographically is especially manifested through the progression of “extreme energies” (Svampa, 2019). This term refers to the characteristics of ‘non-conventional hydrocarbons’, as well as to a context in which the exploration of fossil fuels implies increasing geological, environmental and social risks (Svampa, 2019). Part of these

extreme energies require the use of fracking, and among them we can find shale oil and gas (Svampa, 2019). Non-conventional hydrocarbons are technically more difficult to extract, imply higher economic costs and contamination risks but have a lower energy efficiency than the conventional ones (Svampa, 2019). Yet, in a context of increasing technological advances and decreasing conventional hydrocarbons reserves, they began to be considered as a viable alternative (Svampa, 2019). As Acosta (2013, 70) argues, “as the exhaustion of natural resources becomes evident [...], there is a growing pressure on the ‘under-developed’ countries to hand over their mineral or oil deposits”. Given the destructive and oppressive characteristics of neo-extractivism, Svampa (2019), claims that conflicts are an inherent part of it, even more than its consequence.

2.2 Ecological distribution conflicts and decoloniality

2.2.1 Ecological distribution conflicts

Environmental preservation and protection have often been depicted as secondary preoccupations or aspirations that could only be addressed once welfare was reached through economic growth. This view has been challenged by the EJ movement and the movement of the environmentalism of the poor (Martinez-Alier, 2002). Economic growth is far from guaranteeing to everyone the economic security and abundance it promises. In fact, some populations have to carry the negative socio-environmental consequences that this resource-intensive economic system generates. Martinez-Alier (2019, 182) refers to this situation as “cost-shifting successes” since economic gains are obtained at the expense of fragilized communities and territories. In addition, the distribution of environmental burdens is unequal and characterized by recurrent patterns (Perez, 2015). The EJ movement and the movement of the environmentalism of the poor denounced that already vulnerable or marginalized communities are disproportionately affected by negative socio-environmental consequences (Martinez-Alier, 2019; Nixon, 2011; Perez, 2015).

The EJ movement interprets these recurrent injustices in racial terms while the environmentalism of the poor connects them to socio-economic status (Martinez-Alier, 2019). In any case, “environmental risks are not randomly spread” (Martinez-Alier, 2002). For example, studies were carried in the United States in the 1980’s revealed that race was the most

predominant factor in explaining the location of landfills and other unsafe waste facilities (Perez, 2015). As for neo-extractivism, Hargreaves (2019) forecasts that poor women will most likely suffer the most from its long-term effects on climate change, and Svampa (2019) declares that the extraction of natural resources in Latin America is mostly expanding over indigenous territories. Marginalized populations are often subjected to a slow, insidious and long-lasting environmental violence (Nixon, 2011). This violence often lacks clear boundaries in time and space and is characterized by all kinds of displacements that do not necessarily require the physical relocation of populations (Nixon, 2011). As Nixon (2011, 19) affirms, communities are also affected by “displacements without moving” referring to situations where communities witness the progressive loss of land, resources or characteristics of their territories, making them inhabitable. This environmental violence can be set in motion by structural reforms and neoliberal policies and is difficult to reverse (Nixon, 2011).

These environmental injustices inevitably cause social tensions and have been a catalyst for communities to rise and collectively defend their rights and territories. Nowadays, we assist to the rise of the number of ecological distribution conflicts – a key term in this study. For Martinez-Alier (2019), these are conflicts over conditions of livelihood, natural resources use and access, and the burdens of pollution. They are different from economic distribution conflicts but they can overlap with them (Martinez-Alier, 2002). The protagonists of these conflicts do not necessarily see themselves as environmentalists, and their preoccupation is rather livelihood (Martinez-Alier, 2002). These disputes over land and natural resources asymmetrically oppose local communities to powerful economic actors and state-owned enterprises (Svampa, 2019). One essential element in these conflicts is they are often imbricated with other types of conflicts over class, gender, ethnicity or indigenous identity (Martinez-Alier, 2019). As part of this study, I consider these struggles as not only conflicts over livelihood and resources, but also as conflicts over valuation (Martinez-Alier, 2002).

2.2.2 Languages of valuation

As I previously explained, environmental violence is causing local uprisings and resistances that have both material and immaterial aspects. Ecological distribution conflicts have a symbolic and narrative component (Nixon, 2011) and resistance is expressed in different languages (Martinez-Alier, 2002). This type of conflict brings together a multitude of actors

that have distinct reasons to preserve natural resources or defend territories. Some of them would want to preserve them for their aesthetic or ecological values, others because their survival depends on it. Sense of culture and place and even sacredness might also be invoked (Martinez-Alier, 2002). The different languages used by the social groups reflect the existence of various valuation standards, to value for example potential or existing damages and losses (Martinez-Alier, 2002). This speaks of a value pluralism present in ecological distribution conflicts (Martinez-Alier, 2002). Social groups might also use discursive strategies and adopt different standards of value in order to increase the visibility of their claims (Martinez-Alier, 2002).

Ecological distribution conflicts also arise from a clash between different valuation standards (Martinez-Alier, 2002). The languages of environmental security, indigenous territorial rights, or sacredness tend to enter in conflict with monetary valuation (Martinez-Alier, 2002). Moreover, monetary valuation is not just a standard of value among others, it is also a reflection of real power structures (Martinez-Alier, 2002). A crucial aspect to consider is which social group effectively has the power to decide which values should be included or excluded (Martinez-Alier, 2019). As described by Svampa (2019), territory appropriation is also never only material but also symbolic, and the imposition of resource use actions is frequently parallel to the undermining of local and regional economies. Similarly, Nixon (2011, 17) discusses the imposition of official landscapes that are bureaucratic, instrumental, extractivist and short-term driven. Their arrival discards and threatens “vernacular landscapes”, imbued with cultural meaning and necessary for the functioning and survival of communities (Nixon, 2011, 17). The idea of a spatial, temporal, and in fine ideological imposition is central in this research.

2.2.3 Coloniality and decoloniality

The notions of coloniality and decoloniality are also essential in this study, and they can be connected to this idea of ideological imposition as well the resistance to it. Coloniality can shortly be defined as “a logic, metaphysics, ontology, and a matrix of power that can continue existing after formal [colonial] independence and desegregation” (Maldonado-Torres, 2016, 10). Coloniality shapes power, knowledge and being and is also what creates a divide “between the human and non-human, between the world where perpetual peace is considered a possibility

and the world that is defined as perpetual or endless war” (Maldonado-Torres, 2016, 20). In turn decoloniality designates “the efforts at rehumanizing the world, to breaking hierarchies of difference that dehumanize subjects and communities and that destroy nature, and to the production of counter-discourses, counter-knowledges, counter-creative acts, and counter-practices that seek to dismantle coloniality” (Maldonado-Torres, 2016, 10). Resource use actions that do not aspire to progress ideals are considered less valuable, portrayed as inefficient or regressive, and the social groups that carry them as irrational (Svampa 2019). These social groups have therefore an important battle to fight in the arena of ideas through a process of revalorization of multiple forms of being and living in the world.

3. BACKGROUND

In this section I further detail the background of the study. In 3.1. I introduce the materiality of the conflict. In 3.2. I attempt to shortly narrate the story of the mobilization in La Huasteca Potosina. Both sub-sections were partly based upon the information that was shared with me by the participants during fieldwork. Finally, sub-section 3.3. provides some information concerning that region.

3.1 Materiality of the conflict

3.1.1 The energy constitutional reform and the five-year bidding plan

The Energy Reform was an initiative passed by the former Mexican president, Enrique Peña Nieto. Published in December 2013, this transformation of the energy sector made foreign investment’s participation into the oil industry possible and allowed to grant contracts to private companies for the exploration and extraction of hydrocarbons (Jacobo Marín, 2017). These decisions ended the 75-year monopoly of PEMEX, the state-owned oil company and one of the major oil exporters in the world. In addition to these measures, it publicly placed fracking in the governments’ agenda, even if this technique was already being used in some parts of the country (EJ atlas, 2017). From the Energy Reform stemmed a new Hydrocarbons Law that was written and issued by the National Commission of Hydrocarbons in August 2014 (SENER, 2015). An official document was subsequently published by the Ministry of Energy in June 2015, called the *Five-year bidding plan for the exploration and extraction of*

hydrocarbons 2015-2019. This document can be described as the execution plan of the Hydrocarbons Law and one of the key instruments for the implementation of the Energy Reform (SENER, 2015). It clearly points out areas with non-conventional hydrocarbon deposits that would require the use of non-conventional extraction methods, such as fracking. These areas were intended to be actioned to national and foreign private companies during a period of five years through a competitive process (SENER, 2015).

The five-year plan considered a total of 24 areas for the exploration of non-conventional hydrocarbons and 17 among them were situated in the Tampico-Misantla basin (SENER, 2015). Part of this basin is in turn located in La Huasteca Potosina. It is estimated that the 17 areas contain approximately 18,152.5 million oil barrels. According to strategic document, Tampico-Misantla is one of the two provinces with the most promising potential for the development of the oil industry (SENER, 2015).

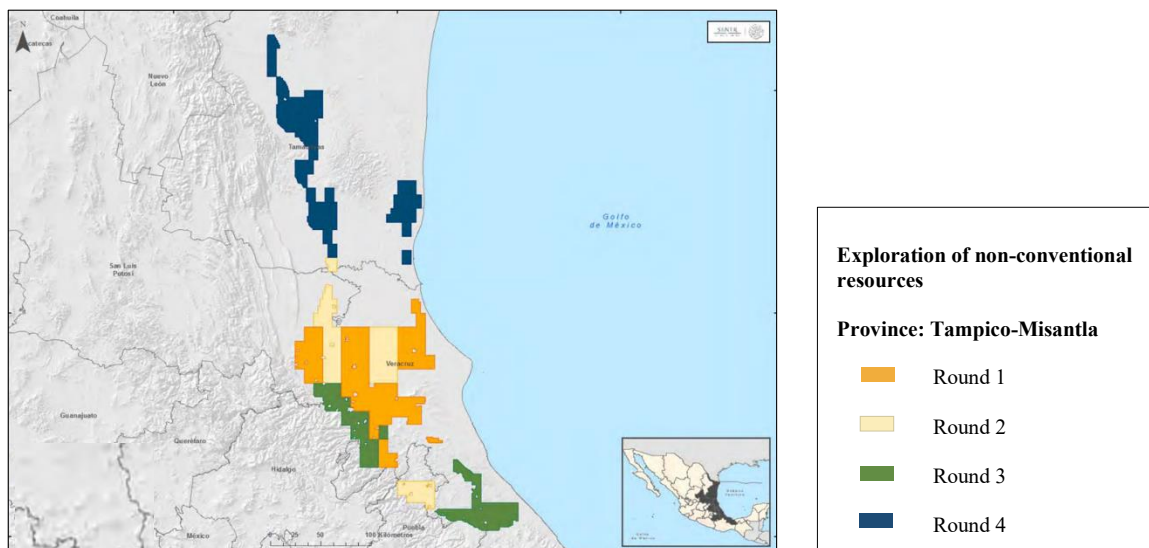


Figure 3. Areas for the exploration of non-conventional resources in Tampico-Misantla (SENER, 2015, 57)

As for La Huasteca Potosina, the movement has estimated that 4820km² and 18 municipalities are at risk. As a comparison, this surface represents approximately 42% of the territory of Skåne in Sweden. So far, no contract has been granted but the grand economic potential associated with the region heavily threatens its population.

3.1.2 Fracking, water and socio-environmental impacts

According to Aidun and Giunta (2019), fracking consists in “drilling vertically underground (from 1000 to 5000 meters) and then horizontally (from 1000 to 4000 meters), and then

injecting a fluid at a very high pressure to fracture the rock and release the hydrocarbons contained there”. As I previously mentioned, this technique is used to extract non-conventional hydrocarbons such as shale oil and gas (Aidun and Giunta, 2019). Fracking therefore causes serious water depletion and goes hand in hand with water privatization. Indeed, each well requires from 9 to 29 million litres of clean water (Alianza contra el fracking, 2018). In 2018, just before the end of his mandate, the former president removed the protection of 300 water basins, which represented more than half of the rivers and lakes of in the country (Fariza, 2018). Some of these water basins are located in La Huasteca Potosina. These measures open up the possibility to grant water concessions to private companies for the use of fracking (Fariza, 2018). Fracking can also lead to serious surface and groundwater pollution (Aidun and Giunta, 2019). Indeed, the fluid that is injected to fracture the rock is composed of a mixture of water, sand and 750 chemicals, and 29 of which can cause cancer (Jacobo-Marín, 2018).

Other devastating environmental impacts include greenhouse gas emissions, deforestation and earthquakes (Aidun and Giunta, 2019). It is estimated that fracking causes around 30% more methane emissions than conventional extraction methods, and that methane generates a greenhouse effect that is 86 more powerful than the one caused by CO₂ (Alianza contra el fracking, 2018). These socio-environmental impacts could never be compensated or repaired by the supposed economic benefits of fracking. The Federal government estimated that more than 90% of the areas that were identified for the extraction of hydrocarbons coexist with another human activity, and principally with agriculture and livestock (SENER, 2015). It is for these multiple reasons, that fracking has generated mobilizations worldwide, including in La Huasteca Potosina.

3.2 Anti-fracking movement in La Huasteca Potosina

This section is based on the information that was shared by the participants of this study.

3.2.1 The role of civil and environmental justice organisations

In 2014, members of national organizations began to gather in the region and raise awareness on the threats posed by the fracking projects. The Alianza Mexicana contra el fracking, a national coalition comprised by more than 40 civil and social organizations across the country,

played an important part at the time. Once the population understood the socio-environmental implications of these projects, a mobilization to stop them began to emerge. The movement brought together Indigenous communities, habitants of ejidos², and local, regional and national civil organizations. Two civil organizations seem to have had an active role in the movement. Indeed, the Coordinadora de organizaciones campesinas e indígenas de La Huasteca Potosina (COCIHP) has been the most visible civil organization in the movement. It is followed by the Observatorio Indígena Mesoamericano, which is a civil organization whose members are located in different parts the state of San Luis Potosi. Both of these civil organizations coordinate their actions with the objective of strengthening indigenous communities, who are also articulated locally at the level of municipalities, as well as regionally.

² A system of land distribution and ownership that was institutionalized after the Mexican Revolution (1910-1917). It consists in assigning a piece of land to a specific group of people for agricultural purposes. The difference between ejidos and communities is that the ejidos may or may not be indigenous.

| Scale/Actors | Government | “Movement” | Companies | Other actors less directly involved |
|--|--|---|--|--|
| International | | | Foreign companies in the case contracts were to be granted | |
| National (Mexico) | | Alianza Mexicana Contra el Fracking | PEMEX | |
| State (San Luis Potosi) | Secretaria de Energía (SE) Comisión Nacional de Hidrocarburos (CNH) Secretaria del Medio Ambiente (Semarnat) Comisión Nacional del Agua (Conagua) | Observatorio Indígena Mesoamericano | | Agua Para Todos, Agua Para la Vida Centro de Capacitación y Defensa de los Derechos Humanos e Indígenas |
| Regional (La Huasteca Potosina) | | Coordinadora de Organizaciones y Comunidades Indígenas de La Huasteca Potosina (COCIHP) | | Frente Amplio Opositor (FAO) Universities ³ : • UASLP Clinica de Litigio Estratégico, • COLSAN |
| Local (municipalities) | | Asociaciones de comunidades indígenas de la Huasteca Potosina⁴ 9 municipalities officially against fracking ⁵ | | |
| Micro-local (Ejidos and Indigenous communities) | | 200 indigenous communities officially against fracking | | |

Table 1. Mind map of involved actors and the scale at which they operate

³ Specific academic programs and experts

⁴ Tanlajás, Tancanhuitz, Axtla de Terrasas, Aquismón, Matlapa, Xilitla, Tamazunchale, Tamuín

⁵ Xilitla, Tancanhuitz, Tanlajas, San Antonio, Valles, Ebano, Tamuin, Tanquian, Tamazunchale

3.2.2 Strategies of resistance

Five regional meetings of representatives and associations of indigenous communities have been organized in La Huasteca Potosi since 2015; almost one annually. The objective of these gatherings was to voice the demands of the movement and raise awareness, but there have also been hundreds of smaller forums and meetings that aimed at organizing and coordinating the actors. Peasant and indigenous communities also banned fracking locally. By 2018, nine of the 18 potentially affected municipalities and 200 indigenous communities had declared their territories free from this extraction technique (Rieublanc, 2018).

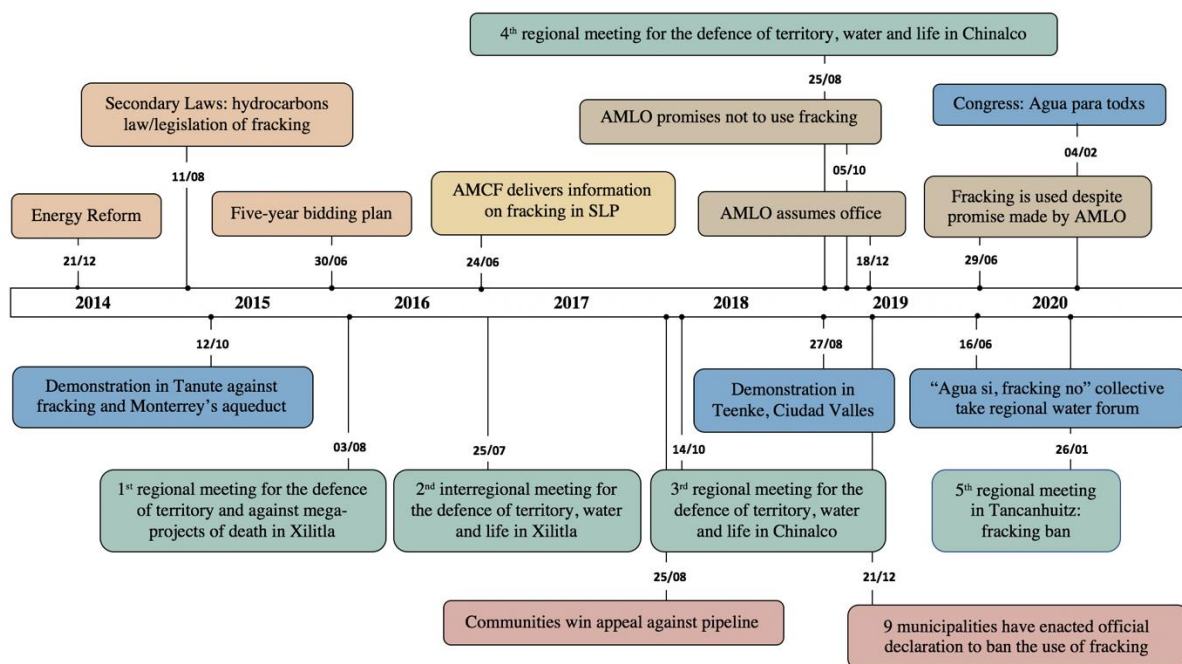


Figure 4. Timeline of the conflict and the mobilization

3.2.3 A victory?

To this day, the movement has successfully stopped the fracking projects and no contract has been granted to private and foreign companies. It is also in the state of San Luis Potosi in 2018 that the current Mexican president Andrés Manuel López Obrador publicly declared that fracking would not be used under his mandate (Ramírez, 2018). This was perceived as a victory by some, but the current government has not yet made any legislation changes to ban fracking. The win is therefore solely based on the president's promise. In the meantime, fracking is

already happening in other parts of country and the current government continues to increase the public budget for the use of this technique (Alianza Mexica contra el fracking, 2020). The movement is thus still fighting for a constitutional change.

3.3 Information about the region

3.3.1 General information

La Huasteca Potosina is located in the eastern part of the state of San Luis Potosi in Mexico. It extends over 11,409.46 km² and is divided into 20 municipalities (Instituto Nacional de las Mujeres, 2009). Its climate is tropical and the region is characterized by its abundance of water resources and the great diversity of its topography and vegetation (Ávila and González, 1998). Land is primarily used for agriculture, livestock farming and fruit production (Instituto Nacional de las Mujeres, 2009). In particular, agriculture predominates in the municipalities where more than 30% of the population speaks an indigenous language (Ávila and González, 1998).

3.3.2 Demography

La Huasteca Potosina is the territory of a four-thousand-year-old civilization (Achilles, 2008). More precisely, it is home to a multi-ethnic society with diverse cultures and Peoples that have shared the territory and a common history (Ávila and González, 1998). According to Ávila and González (1998), identity cannot be considered as a homogenous concept in the region but rather as an articulation of differentiated identities and cultures. Unfortunately, I cannot make justice to this vast diversity in this study and I will therefore only report on a few geographical and organizational elements that are necessary to ground the conflict and understand the mobilization.

In the State of San Luis Potosi, there are 36 Indigenous Peoples groups (Aguiles, 2008). The Indigenous Peoples whose presence is the most significant are the Náhuatl, the Téenek and the Pame (Aguiles, 2008). Most of them are located in La Huasteca Potosina, especially the Náhuatl and the Téenek.

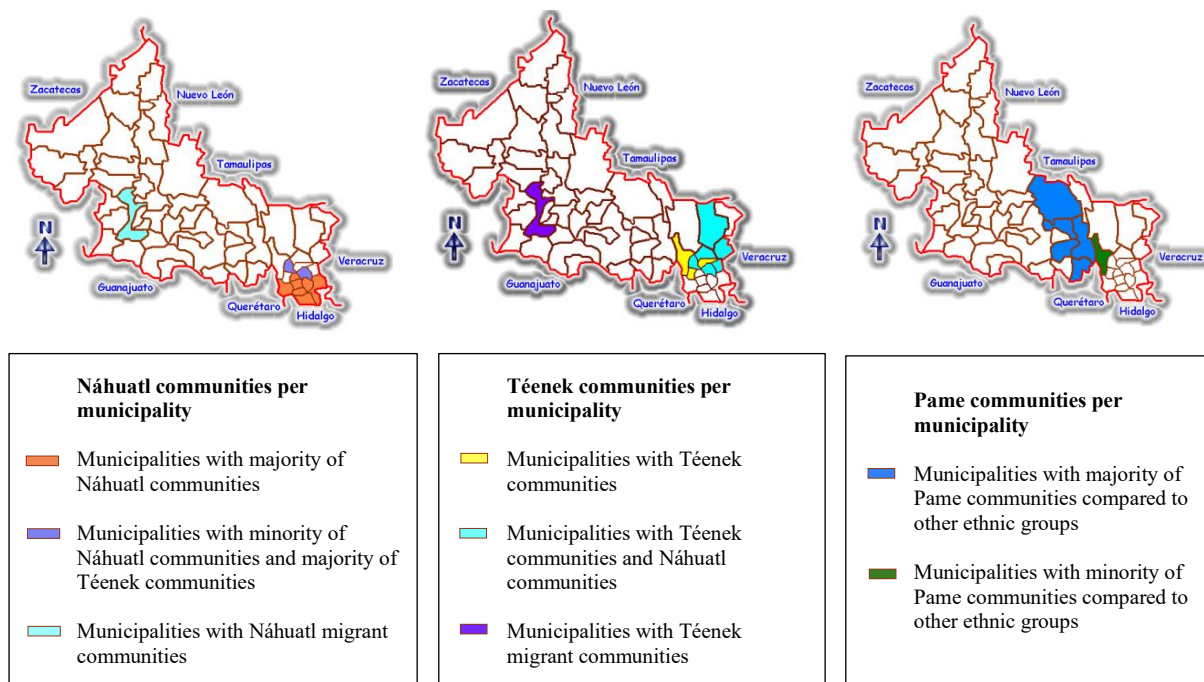


Figure 5, 6 and 7. Maps of demographic distribution (Aquiles, 2008, 63-65).

The municipalities where the Nahuatl population is located are the following: Tamazunchale, Axtla de Terrazas, San Martín Chalchicuautla, Xilitla, Coxcatlán and Matlapa (Instituto Nacional de las Mujeres, 2009). Next, the municipalities where the Téenek population is situated are Aquismón, Huehuetlán, Tanlajás, San Antonio, Tampamolón, Tancanhuitz de Santos, Ciudad Valles, Tanquián de Escobedo and San Vicente Tancuayalab (Aquiles, 2008). Finally, the Pame population of La Huasteca Potosina is situated in the municipalities of Tamasopo and Aquismón (Aquiles, 2008).

3.3.3 Social organization

The social organization of Indigenous Peoples in La Huasteca Potosina is extremely complex. To simplify, they are regrouped in communities that can be composed by several localities. According to Bartha (1997, 2), communities are “a form of organization of society, space or territory, and production”. Nowadays, Indigenous Peoples of La Huasteca Potosina still have a set of social and political structures that constitute the basis of a form of self-government (Bartha, 1997). In fact, they possess organs that establish rules, reach agreements and sanction (Bartha, 1997). The Community Assembly constitutes the highest authority in a given community. From there, community tasks can for example be regulated and coordinated

(Bartha, 1997). Such organizational normative systems are intimately linked to the norms, values and worldviews of Indigenous Peoples (Bartha, 1997).

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 Qualitative case study

My overarching methodology is qualitative case study, characterized by Yin (2018) as an empirical enquiry that explores in-depth a contemporary and context-dependent phenomenon. I choose this overarching methodology since I wanted to delve into a concrete example of an ecological distribution conflict, and of the environmental injustices that some social groups in Mexico are confronted to. After a phase of exploration in the State of San Luis Potosi, I came across this case of social resistance to extractive projects. The conflict was ongoing and its study required a comprehensive description of this social phenomenon, so the choice of a qualitative case study proved to be appropriate (Yin, 2008).

More precisely, I chose to do a single and explanatory case study with an adaptive design (Yin, 2008). My research was situated somewhere between deductive and inductive. Although I carried out a previous literature review and had some theoretical presuppositions guiding my data collection, I stayed flexible and open to change in my research design in the light of new data during fieldwork. Indeed, every interaction raised new questions and influenced this research in terms of where to go, who to speak to, what aspects to explore or what kind of material to collect.

I limited the scope of this research to the actors that were somehow involved in resisting the fracking projects in La Huasteca Potosina, even if they were not necessarily located there. To have a broader understanding of the conflict I also spoke to functionaries that worked in some of the concerned government agencies. The mobilization in La Huasteca Potosina started around 2014 but this study looks at it at a specific point in time since the fieldwork lasted from mid-January to mid-February 2020.

4.2 Ontological and epistemological stand

This work is influenced by feminist and decolonial theories of knowledge. I believe there is not just one truth but many constructions of the world, and different perspectives on these constructions. More precisely, I concur with Mignolo's (2013, 2) concept of "pluriversality", opposed to (Western pretension to) universality but differentiated from cultural relativism. Thus, I am not looking truth, but for meaning and understanding (Potts and Brown, 2005). I do not believe in the possibility of an objective observation, of a disembodied knowledge that is devoid of cultural biases. Indeed, also concur with Haraway (1998, 581), who insists on the "embodied nature of all vision" and introduces the idea of "situated knowledges". I sustain that the observer is part of the observed phenomenon, and thus the researcher is never separate from the social phenomenon that is being observed. As a consequence, I tried to be constantly reflexive on my positionality and my role as I researcher throughout the research process. I also consider there is no such thing as neutrality, and that all research serves interests whether explicitly acknowledged or not. As Livholts and Tamboukou (2015, 3) argue, knowledge and social action go together, and knowledge is created within relations of power. Thus, this research is explicitly political and attempts to work towards social justice and change.

4.3 Discourses and power

Discourse can be defined as "an analytical concept that acknowledges the active role of language in the production of knowledge and power through text and talk, genre and representation" (Livholts and Tamboukou, 2015, 4). My standpoint concerning discourses is important for this research and its objectives.

I conceptualize discourse as having agency and power to shape our social world, as producing and reproducing inequalities, positions of domination and subordination by means of ideology (Livholts, 2015). In addition, institutional power plays a role in legitimizing the discourses of certain social groups, therefore contributing to a "construction of desirability" in society (Mona Livholts, 2015, 81). From there stems the importance of deconstructing social policies, such as the energy strategy of the Mexican federal government.

According to Livholts (2015, 82), in order to have a critical approach it is necessary to study the relations of domination from the perspective of the oppressed groups, and to evaluate the dominant discourse from their experiences. Hence the interest to look into the demands of the

anti-fracking movement as a whole, that I conceptualize as a counter-discourse, and to understand the experiences of the struggle of people involved in the mobilization.

4.4 Positionality and ethics

Since I conceive discourses as having power to shape our worlds, I also have to be reflexive on my own discourse, on its implications, its assumptions and the factors that can influence it. I identify as a queer cis-woman and I come from the capital of the state of San Luis Potosi, which is the state where La Huasteca Potosina is also situated. This project had a personal dimension and I partly saw it as an opportunity to learn more about my country. In fact, I moved from Mexico when I was 10 years old, but all my family is Mexican and I kept strong ties to my hometown. I have an in-between position, even if I am Mexican, I surely do not grasp the social dynamics as much as someone that has lived there their entire lives, and this was reflected in my interactions.

I was deeply moved by the situation and the stories that the participants shared with me, and more than interviewees I saw them as people that had a lot to teach me. The participants gave me their trust and time, and one of my biggest concerns is that I somehow want to give back. However, during the research process I was strongly confronted to my privileges. I have socio-economic status, an international profile and have benefited from some of the dynamics that oppress the people I was interacting with.

I encountered a sort of dilemma whenever I had to mention that I come from the region but I live and study abroad, because it could either create distrust or grant me privilege. Moreover, I identify as 'mestiza' which means mixed race, and in Mexico 'mestizos' dominate the political and economic spheres and the relations with Indigenous Peoples are marked by social discrimination (Instituto Nacional de las Mujeres, 2009). I attempted to be as aware and respectful as possible, but these relations of oppression can be reflected in my work.

The interviews were carried in Spanish and I translated them in the discussion. I tried to honour what the participants said and shared while making it comprehensible for the reader, but this inevitably creates some distance. It is even more the case for the participants whose mother tongue was not even Spanish. The anonymity of the participants was also an important aspect

to consider. Between 2002 and 2013, 83.7% of the environmental activists that were murdered worldwide, lived in Latin America (Svampa, 2019, 70). For safety reasons, I am not disclosing their names and giving only the most necessary information.

4.5 Limitations of the research

It is crucial to acknowledge and report that this study encountered some important limitations. First of all, most of the participants I spoke to directly did not identify as indigenous. The only participant that did was a local indigenous representative, but I only could speak to him over the phone twice. Moreover, I could not communicate with him in his mother tongue since I only speak Spanish. I attended an event organized by the movement where other indigenous representatives spoke publicly. All of them spoke Spanish, but first began by speaking in Téenek or Náhuatl to address themselves to the indigenous communities that were in the audience, and I did not understand or managed to translate what they said.

Another real limitation to this study is that I unfortunately only spoke to one woman from the movement twice, and she did not identify as indigenous. A few of the participants mentioned that women were quite active in the movement, but it was particularly challenging to get access to them. The phone reception and the access to internet are very limited in some parts of La Huasteca Potosina. I had one phone number from an indigenous woman representative but I did not manage to reach her.

During fieldwork, I was mostly staying in the capital of San Luis Potosi, which is approximately 3 hours away from La Huasteca Potosina. The reasons were mostly practical since I had the opportunity to stay there with my family. However, this indisputably influenced whom I could get access to. My gender also impacted this research in the sense that I could not travel to the region alone. Mexico is a particularly dangerous country for women and I depended on the availability of other people to get there, and would have otherwise stayed longer.

To sum up, this study gives a partial and incomplete view of the conflict and the movement, limited to my observation of a specific point in its history, and to my interpretation of the stories

that were shared with me by the participants I had access to, and who were certainly not representative of the whole movement.

5. RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS

In the following section I detail my research instruments. In 5.1. I expand on the methods of data collection I used. Then, the section 5.2 explains the methods of analysis I applied to the set of data I collected.

5.1 Methods of data collection

This section explains in detail my methods of data collection. I used a mixed-methods approach that consisted in a 5.1.1. participant observation, 5.1.2. qualitative semi-structured interviews, and a 5.1.3. document collection. The use of a fieldwork diary also accompanied and complemented both the participant observation and the semi-structured interviews.

5.1.1 Participant observation

I had the chance to participate to the 5th regional meeting of the anti-fracking movement in La Huasteca Potosina. The meeting was named ‘Community voices against fracking: a dialog for life and dignity’, and it took place in an ejido called San José de Pequetzén which is located in the municipality of Tancanhuitz. I learnt about the event through a political ecology professor in my hometown, who also introduced me to a person that is quite involved in the movement. Prior to my participation in this event, I had mostly carried explorative and informal interviews. This regional meeting was an ideal opportunity to have a broad understanding of the conflict, and to get a rough panorama of the involved actors. In addition, it allowed me to get an insight into the dynamics between the different actors, and to gain an understanding of the current stakes and debates.



Picture 1

A wide variety of actors attended this regional meeting. They came not only from different locations of La Huasteca Potosina, but also from other parts of the state and even the country. First of all, there were representatives and associations of indigenous communities. These associations take place at the level of municipalities, and one of the speakers mentioned there were 8 different associations there⁶. For example, if we just take into consideration the municipality of Tancanhuitz, it was mentioned that representatives and inhabitants of 20 different communities attended the event. There were also authorities and representatives from different ejidos of the region⁷. The members of a range of civil and environmental justice organizations were also participating. Among them, there were Alianza Mexicana contra el fracking, Agua para Todos, Observatorio Indígena Mesoamericano, COCIHP, and FAO.

Two representatives of the Federal government attended the event. The Secretary of the SEMARNAT was apparently initially supposed to attend the meeting, but instead he sent these two functionaries. Other representatives of the local municipalities and one Federal senator were also there. To my surprise, no representatives from PEMEX, SENER, or INDEPI attended the event. Some individuals seemed to play an important role since they were sitting in a table that was facing the audience. The purpose of the meeting was to voice the demands of the anti-fracking movement and other communities from other parts of the State, to the representatives of the SEMARNAT.

⁶ Tanlajás, Tancanhuitz, Axtla de Terrasas, Aquismón, Matlapa, Xilitla, Tamazunchale, Tamuín



Picture 2, 3 4 and 5

During the event, representatives of associations, organizations and institutions successively hold speeches. There were a total 23 speakers, but four of them spoke more than once. The first eight speeches seemed to have already been planned beforehand. Most of the demands that were voiced by these participants came from agreements and statements elaborated in previous organization meetings by the anti-fracking movement, or by the associations of indigenous communities. These participants were mostly reading these agreements. This was useful to understand what brings these actors together despite the variety of social groups. After that, whoever wished could held a short speech and voice other specific demands. These participants successively expressed their concerns and denounced the oppression their communities were experiencing. At the end, some individuals handed in official documents to the Federal authorities in order to get their signature and official commitment to consider their requests.

The event started in morning and ended in the afternoon, but the speeches lasted for approximately 4 hours and a half. I recorded and fully transcribed them⁸. During the meeting, I used the fieldwork diary to write down my observations, and reflect on my positionality. I also took pictures of the event and the banners. At the end of the event, I had the opportunity to meet some of the speakers and participants.

5.1.2 Qualitative semi-structured interviews

To complement my participant observation, I carried a total of 13 semi-structured interviews with 10 different participants. I principally drew from Kvale and Brinkmann's (2009) work, to elaborate the interview design. I had a sequence of themes to be covered while staying open to changes of sequence and forms of questions. Indeed, I wanted to be flexible, formulate specific follow-up questions, and mostly give space to the participants to share their perspectives and experiences. I elaborated two different interview guides; one for the participants that were somehow involved in the mobilization and one for the functionaries of government institutions. However, I personalized the interview guides beforehand, since the participants were part of different organizations and institutions, and I had specific questions for each of them. This allowed me to better grasp the dynamics of the conflict.

In practice, most of the interviews took the form of fluid conversations. I did not set a specific time limit. I adapted to the time every participant was able or willing to give. Some of them had a tight schedule and the interviews were brief, but with other participants the interviews lasted for several hours. I recorded most of the interviews with the consent of participants, and I took the fieldwork diary with me every time to write down my impressions. Staying flexible, and giving time and space to the participants allowed me to obtain unexpected answers and learn a lot about the conflict. However, some interviews were quite long and the transcription process particularly time-consuming.

After each interview, I used the fieldwork diary to reflect on my positionality, synthesize the information, highlight specific points and write down arising questions. I was constantly reflective on each of my encounters. I only transcribed some of the interviews; the rest mostly contributed to my general understanding of the conflict. I used the diary to elaborate a table

⁸ 44 pages of transcription in total for the meeting

synthetizing all the interviews, and I transcribed the interviews I had with 5 out of the 10 participants⁹. This choice is justified by the fact that these actors were more directly involved in the mobilization. Three of them spoke during the regional meeting for example.

I interviewed every person in the mobilization I could get access to, and my strategy mostly consisted in snowball sampling. The participants would refer to and connect me with other participants and so on. I interviewed 5 people that were directly involved in the mobilization, 2 academicians that were less directly involved, and 3 public workers.

Table 2. Overview of conducted interviews¹⁰

| # | Participant's characteristics | Form of interview | Date and length |
|---|--|---|--|
| 1 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Male - Very involved in the mobilization - Active with FAO in SLP | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Two face-to-face interviews - Use of interview guide - Recorded and transcribed | First interview: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 23/01/20 - 48min Second interview: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 12/01/20 - 1h |
| 2 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Male - Actor with a major visibility in the movement - Active with COCIHP in La Huasteca Potosina | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Face-to-face interview - Simultaneous interview with another participant - Use of interview guide - Recorded and transcribed | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 01/02/20 - 4h |
| 3 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Female - Very involved in the mobilization - Active with COCIHP in La Huasteca Potosina | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Two face-to-face interviews - Use of interview guide - First simultaneous interviewed with another participant (refer above) - Second time only with her - Recorded and transcribed | First interview: (refer above) Second interview: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 02/01/20 - 2h |
| 4 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Male - Identified as Téenek - Representative of Asuntos Indígenas of Tancanhuitz, in La Huasteca Potosina - Active with the mobilization | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Two phone interviews (first on the phone and then through zoom) - Use of interview guide - Recorded and transcribed | First interview: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 05/01/20 - Around 1h Second interview: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 02/11/20 - 1h30min |

⁹ A total of 66 pages of transcription for the interviews

¹⁰ No names or age included for safety reasons. A more detailed overview of the conducted interviews is included in the appendix.

| | | | |
|----|---|---|--|
| 5 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Male - Very involved in the mobilization - Active with OIM in SLP | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Two face-to-face interviews - Use of interview guide - Recorded and partly transcribed | <p>First interview:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 05/01/20 - 3h20min <p>Second interview:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 11/01/20 - 4h40min |
| 6 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Male - Director of delegation office of SEMARNAT in SLP | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Face-to-face interview - Use of interview guide - Recorded | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 07/01/20 - 35min |
| 7 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Female - Public worker of the INDEPI in SLP | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Face-to-face interview - At her office (INDEPI's building) - Use of interview guide - Recorded | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 10/01/20 - 1h40min |
| 8 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Male - Researcher at COLSAN, water politics specialization - Ally of the movement | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Face-to-face interview - Use of interview guide - Not recorded | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 10/01/20 - 30min |
| 9 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Male - Professor at UASLP - Part of CLEDH | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Face-to-face interview - Use of interview guide - Recorded | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 12/01/20 - 30min |
| 10 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Male - Public worker of CONAGUA in SLP | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Face-to-face interview - Use of interview guide - Recorded | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 14/01/20 - 34min |

5.1.3 Document collection

During fieldwork, I went to three government agencies hoping to have access to information concerning the fracking projects and the arguments that are used to justify them. However, the situation was characterized by a particular lack of transparency. Therefore, it was necessary to complement this study by a desk research. Almost all the participants mentioned one specific document, the *Five-year bidding plan for hydrocarbons exploration and extraction for 2015-2019*. This policy document was designated as the ‘proof’ of the government’s intention to use fracking in La Huasteca Potosina.

The 136-page document contains the energy strategy of the Federal government and describes the way it will concretely be implemented. In addition to mapping the areas with non-conventional hydrocarbon deposits, the document indirectly outlines the government’s justification for considering the use of fracking as viable and necessary. Therefore, I decided to select this policy document and analyse it in order to get access to the (hegemonic) national discourse. This document policy was accessible online through the Ministry of Energy official website.

5.2 Methods of data analysis

This research analyses different types of data; therefore, I use two different types of methods of analysis. In section 5.2.1. I describe the method I used to analyse the policy document. In section 5.2.2. I detail the method I applied to analyse the empirical data.

5.2.1 “What’s the problem represented to be?” approach

‘What’s the problem represented to be?’ (WPR) is a tool that has been elaborated by Carol Bacchi to assist in the critical scrutiny of public policies (Bacchi, 2012). The approach sheds light on the forms of knowledge and subjectivity that underpin public policies, and the idea is that proposed solutions reveal what one considers to be problematic in the first place (Bacchi, 2012). Indeed, policy proposals contain implicit “problem representations” (Bacchi, 2012, 21) and the objective of this tool is to help discern, examine and evaluate them.

I used this tool to analyse the bidding-plan and answer my first research question. The WPR approach was suitable for my research purposes, since I attempted to investigate the “unexamined assumptions and deep-seated conceptual logics” (Bacchi, 2012, 22) of the Federal energy strategy. In other words, this tool allowed me to have access to the logics of the hegemonic national discourse, in order to deconstruct the reasons behind the use of fracking. The tool consists in a set of six questions developed by Bacchi (2012). However, for the purposes of this research, I only selected four of them.

1. What’s the ‘problem’ represented to be in a specific policy?
2. What presuppositions or assumptions underpin this representation of the ‘problem’?
3. How has this representation of the ‘problem’ come about?
4. What is left unproblematic in this problem representation? Where are the silences?

5.2.2 Critical thematic analysis (CTA)

This tool developed by Brandi and Chen (2019) can be described as a critically informed thematic analysis that is used to code, analyse and interpret in-depth qualitative data. It helps to systematically identify shared phenomena among participants' discourses, as well as to interrogate the role played by power relations, ideologies and social hierarchies (Brandi and Chen, 2019). It is suitable for analysis that focuses on interview and ethnographic texts, and research that has critical agendas (Brandi and Chen, 2019). I used it to analyse and interpret the transcripts from my participant observation and qualitative interviews, and answer my second research questions.

The advantage of this tool is that it allows to work inductively to then move towards a macro-level of analysis (Brandi and Chen, 2019). It consists of a two-step analytical process, moving from an open coding to a closed coding (Brandi and Chen, 2019). During the open coding, I paid close attention to what the discourses revealed in order to discern prominent or meaningful patterns of information (Brandi and Chen, 2019). I built up themes by using three criteria: recurrence, repetition and forcefulness (Brandi and Chen, 2019). I tried to stay very attentive and honour what was said and shared by the participants (Brandi and Chen, 2019). Then, at the stage of closed coding I tried to interlink the themes with larger social ideologies and processes (Brandi and Chen, 2019). I examined the themes that emerged, investigated what they potentially concealed, identified similarities and disparities in the way participants talked about a specific theme and worked to understand why (Brandi and Chen, 2019). I also considered who exactly talked in a particular way, therefore taking into account cultural identities and social hierarchies. According to Brandi and Chen (2019, 103), "it is this level of analysis that moves us closer to challenging dominant structures and creating spaces, pathways, or opportunities for social justice". The following table summarizes the way I proceeded to analyse the data and answer my research questions.

| Research question | Material used | Method of analysis |
|--|---|---------------------------------------|
| <p>Overarching question: How can the (conflicting) discourses surrounding the fracking projects in La Huasteca Potosina be characterized and deconstructed?</p> | | |
| <p>How is the use of fracking framed, justified and legitimized in the hegemonic national discourse?</p> | <p>Five-year bidding plan for hydrocarbons exploration and extraction, 2015-2019 136-page document</p> | <p>Some parts of the WPR approach</p> |
| <p>How can the anti-fracking movement's discourse be depicted? How is the mobilization against fracking experienced by the involved actors?</p> | <p>Transcripts from the interviews and the participant observation 110 pages of transcription in total</p> | <p>CTA</p> |

Table 3. Overview of the analysis per research question

6. FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

In this section I simultaneously present my findings and discuss them. In section 7.1 I carry on a policy analysis of the bidding-plan of the Federal government. In section 7.2 I describe and analyse the critically informed themes I built from the empirical data. I do not have a positivist stance of “finding” something that exists independently from human interpretation, and the way I constructed the themes is already my own interpretation of people’s stories. The second section is longer than the first one, since the empirical data was more significant in terms of volume.

6.1 Hegemonic discourse

In this section I present the policy analysis of the bidding-plan. In 7.1.1. I start by a brief general description of the official document. Then, in 7.1.2. and 7.1.3 I respectively present the energy objectives and the national goals that are outlined in the official document, and that can be perceived as the justifications behind the use of fracking. My aim here is to understand the logics behind the exploration and extraction of non-conventional hydrocarbons.

6.1.1 Description of the policy document

The *Five-year bidding plan for the exploration and extraction of hydrocarbons* is one of the key instruments in the implementation of the Energy Reform (SENER, 2015). According to the document, this plan is supposed to play an essential role in promoting the sustainable development of the country in energy and economic terms (SENER, 2015).

The document is organized in six main sections. The first section provides a summary of the Energy Reform. The second section describes the normative frame in which this bidding plan is inserted, summarizing some key elements of the Hydrocarbons Law. The third section indicates how this five-year plan is a support in the fulfilment of the national goals of the National Plan of Development. The fourth section provides an overview of the hydrocarbon reserves of the country. The fifth section describes the participative process that allowed to elaborate this bidding-plan. Finally, the sixth part shows the areas that were auctioned (or planned to be auctioned) to foreign and private companies by the federal state between 2015 and 2019).

How is the use of fracking justified? What are the logics behind the justification? From a careful reading of this official document, it becomes clear that the exploration and extraction of non-conventional hydrocarbons responds to two principal objectives: on the one hand energy security and on the other hand national prosperity. I follow here the inversed logic of ‘What’s the problem represented to be’ approach that consists in departing from proposed solutions in order to understand and deconstruct the problems they are supposed to tackle. Following this logic, fracking is a solution supposed to address perceived problems in regards to energy security and national prosperity.

6.1.2 Energy security

To start this section, I will give a brief summary of the statements that are contained in the document and that I related to energy security. According to the official document, when it comes to the energy sector the main challenge is to ensure a reliable and secure supply of energy for the country (SENER, 2015). It is emphasized that the energy prices should be affordable and competitive, and that the energy production chain needs to be efficient (SENER, 2015). A concern that is accentuated in the document is that the government needs to guarantee the supply of crude oil and natural gas that the country population demands (SENER, 2015). For this, the document sustains that the state has to amplify its capacity of exploration and extraction of hydrocarbons (SENER, 2015). The increase of levels of oil and gas production is at the core of the government's preoccupations, and for example it is projected that PEMEX will maintain a production of 2.5 million daily oil barrels during 15.5 years (SENER, 2015, 10). Non-conventional hydrocarbons deposits are seen as a potential that the country needs to develop.

The document also emphasizes the importance of increasing the reserve restitution rate¹¹ (SENER, 2015). I will shortly explain what this rate consists in, since it is important for my purpose here. This rate is calculated yearly and it compares the hydrocarbon reserves – the ones that were already known and the newly discovered ones – to the volume that was ‘produced’¹² (SENER, 2015). To simplify, when the rate is higher than 100% it means that the volume of hydrocarbon reserves that are known to that day is greater to the volume of hydrocarbons that was consumed during a specific year. In other words, this calculation is a way to know the amount of fossils fuels that remain in the ground compared to the amount that is currently being consumed. The point here, is that the document repeatedly states that this rate has to be increased in order to increment the amount of resources that the future generations of the country will have access to (SENER, 2015). A peculiar statement that allows to understand the logics behind the use of fracking. The document presents a ‘diversified portfolio of projects’, an expression that the government uses here to designate a range of explorative activities in different areas of the country that would allow to increase the reserve restitution rate (SENER, 2015, 19). The government expects to reach a reserve restitution rate of at least

¹¹Translated from ‘tasa de restitución de reservas’ in Spanish

¹² Integral rate= (incorporation + delimitation + development + revisions / production) x 100 (SENER, 2015, 19)

100% through these explorative activities, therefore ensuring the sustainability of the national oil industry (SENER, 2015).

From all of this, I conclude that the problem fracking is supposed to address is represented as a lack of energy security resulting from the decrease of fossil fuels. From my interpretation, this is one of the two problem representations contained in this public policy. The energy situation is at risk since the reserves of fossil fuels are running out, and therefore we need to explore new areas that imply the use of even more damaging extraction techniques. I will now come back to certain points I mentioned above in order to analyse their underlying presuppositions.

First, the document states that more fossil fuels have to be explored and extracted since the population is asking for it. I find this point relevant because it was also mentioned by a federal representative at the regional meeting I participated at during fieldwork. The representative mentioned that the population is increasingly consuming more fossil energy and therefore the government has no choice but to find more. He declared that consumer society is the one to blame, and for example we all possess cell phones nowadays. This justification seems to be recurrent, and it implies that the change has to come from individuals and that the problem at stake are certain lifestyles. However, this logic masks structural problems and the undeniable existence of vast economic interests behind the extraction of fossil fuels.

Second, the document invokes the energy security of future generations as a justification to expand the frontiers of the fossil energy extraction. This paradoxical statement pretends that the persistence and expansions of the fossil industry is for the benefit of the future generations. The legacy that the government plans to leave to the future generations is an insurance that there are still enough fossil fuels to be consumed by them. This official statement allegedly possesses a long-term view whereas the actions that are proposed directly compromise the future. The emphasis that is put on the increase of the reserve restitution rate can be regarded as a sort of denial of the state of the current situation. The reserves of fossil fuels are decreasing, but we can keep digging and consuming fossil fuels as long as we find more reserves and therefore have the impression that this situation is sustainable. This logic silences a very crucial point: burning fossil fuels causes climate change and climate change will profoundly and negatively affect future generations.

Finally, the public policy shows an alarming intensification of the current fossil fuel energy model (Svampa, 2019). From the document, it becomes evident that the federal government aims to expand the frontiers of fossil extraction to unexplored territories. This energy strategy echoes the notion of “extreme energies” developed by Svampa (2019, 78). The imminent exhaustion of fossil deposits paradoxically causes the intensification of their extraction including through the use of more expensive and environmentally damaging techniques (Svampa, 2019). A government strategy that pursues genuine energy security would rather invest on the development and implementation of alternative energies. As Svampa (2019, 86) wrote “fracking implies the deepening of the current energy model based on fossil fuels, and as a consequence, a strong regression in terms [...] of the transition towards clean and renewable energies”.

6.1.3 National prosperity

In this section I will also start by exposing a few statements contained in the policy document that I connected to national prosperity. The bidding-plan is said to be aligned with the national goals of the National Plan of Development (SENER, 2015). Indeed, it is intended to help fulfil the national goal of building a more prosperous country (SENER, 2015). The document states that a sustainable and efficient use of natural resources will contribute to the country’s long-term development (SENER, 2015). More precisely, the government projects that the increase of the state oil revenues will contribute to this long-term development (SENER, 2015). For this, the Federal government advocates the modernization of energy infrastructure and promotes a coordination between the national and the international energy sectors (SENER, 2015).

The Energy Reform allowed PEMEX to establish partnerships with private and foreign actors. Before the constitutional reform the state-owned company did not have the possibility to partner with other companies (SENER, 2015). Part of the logic behind this change is to increase “its capacity to invest and access deposits that are situated at the technological frontier” (SENER, 2019, 9). In other words, these partnerships would facilitate knowledge and technological transfer (SENER, 2015). Above all, non-conventional hydrocarbon projects are considered as having a great potential to accelerate that technological transfer (SENER 2015).

In short, the contracts that the state auctioned as well as the possibility for PEMEX to establish partnerships with private companies are expected to promote oil activities in deposits that were previously inaccessible due to a lack of financing, execution capacities and technology (SENER, 2015). The policy document highlights that the objective behind this is to consolidate state oil revenues (SENER, 2015).

In addition, this five-year plan was defined under a participative and integral process, that according to the document, will benefit the entire Mexican population (SENER, 2015). However, by 'participative' the document refers to the fact that the interests of distinct actors involved in the hydrocarbons sector were considered (SENER, 2015). The purpose of this process was to identify and take into account the visions, expectations and plans of these actors (SENER, 2015). Companies even had the opportunity to nominate some areas of their interest, that the government evaluated and eventually included as part of this bidding plan (SENER, 2015).

From all of this, I conclude that the problem representation here is that there is a lack of prosperity due to the fact that the energy sector is not modernized. It could also be rephrased as such: there is a lack of prosperity coming from the fact Mexico does not possess the necessary technology to adequately profit from its hydrocarbon deposits. I will now analyse the presuppositions that underline this problem representation.

First, this statement assumes that the extraction of natural resources, including fossil fuels is necessary to national prosperity and development. As Svampa (2019) wrote there is an unspoken agreement on the irresistible nature of the current extractivist trend. As I explained in the framework this trend is currently widespread in Latin America. Governments' main justification consists in saying that the extraction allows to generate state revenues that would then be redistributed or used to finance programs and reforms (Svampa, 2019). The policy document presents a similar discourse, and as Svampa (2019) wrote Mexico, is today clearly heading into the same extractivist direction than other Latin American countries. During the regional meeting I attended, another of the federal representatives mentioned that the country 'lives' from the economic gains that are generated by fossil fuels. The inevitability of the extraction of these resources to sustain the country seems to be another recurrent argument. As Svampa (2019) argues, this can be interpreted as an internalization of the place these economies occupy in the global division of labour and of the "extractivist DNA" that dates back to colonial

times. Second, there is the assumption that technological transfer is necessary to prosperity and development. As the document shows, the actions of the government seek to attract private and mostly foreign investment with the justification of getting access to supposedly more advanced technologies. This logic comes with the idea that development needs to be imported, that there is a linear path that all nations must follow to attain prosperity (Bassey, 2019). This vision of development is closely related to the hegemonic ideology of progress, and promotes growth, enlargement, efficiency and productivism (Svampa, 2019).

The use of fracking is justified in these terms since as the document indicates the exploration and extraction of non-conventional hydrocarbons is supposed to accelerate the process of modernization of the energy sector. This echoes the notion of developmentalist illusion developed by Svampa (2019), consisting in a belief that extractive activities can impulse the economy and allow countries to rapidly ‘catch up’ and attain the long-promised level of development of Western countries.

Finally, this problem representation silences two essential points. First, this productivist vision of development completely disregards ecological limits and considers that societies can endlessly exploit natural resources (Svampa, 2019; Bassey, 2019). Extractive activities generate environmental destruction which considerably limits the possibility to attain a prosperous Mexico. As Acosta (2013) claims, the socio-environmental costs that have to be carried by societies largely outweigh the benefits that are generated by extractive activities. Second, private companies are actually the ones that will benefit from this national energy strategy. As I previously indicated, these actors even had an influence in the shaping of the bidding-plan. As Anglés Hernández (2017) argues, this regulatory framework responds to the interests of the hegemonic neoliberal project and not to the needs of the population, especially the most vulnerable groups.

To summarize, the hegemonic national discourse justifies the exploration and extraction of non-conventional hydrocarbons by two different arguments whose logics I attempted to deconstruct in this section. On the one hand, it is supposed to help guarantee the energy security of future generations. On the other hand, it aims to contribute to the modernization of the energy sector which would bring prosperity to the country.

6.2 Counter-hegemonic discourse(s)

In this section I outline the three critically informed themes I built from both the interviews and the participant observation. In the elaboration of the themes, I took in to account positions of power and social hierarchies, and attempted to connect them to larger social processes. The three following themes attempt to grasp the motivations behind the mobilization and the issues at stake in the conflict. I divided the three themes in sub-parts in order to guide the reader.

6.2.1 Expropriation of land and resources

Fracking was a trigger for an important mobilization in La Huasteca Potosina. However, not a single one of the participants mentioned fracking as being the only threat in the region or the only issue at stake. What brought a multitude of actors together seems to be larger than just fracking. At the regional meeting and during the interviews, all the participants explicitly or implicitly mentioned the importance of considering fracking as being part of a bigger picture or/and larger process. For example, an interviewee mentioned that it is very important to understand what preceded it and what is around it.

6.2.1.1 The proliferation of extractive projects

During my participant observation, I was surprised to discover that even if the regional meeting was named ‘Community voices against fracking’, participants expressed in their speeches their opposition to a multitude of other projects as well. As expressed by one of the speakers during the regional meeting, the region is being affected by a “catalog of megaprojects”. Another of the speakers, enumerated all these megaprojects and the list was composed by thermoelectric plants, gas pipelines, aqueducts, a highway, the extraction of oil and gas by conventional methods as well as non-conventional methods. Some of these large-scale and resource intensive activities are already implemented, such as two thermoelectric plants, and others are temporarily suspended such as a gas pipeline. It is important to note that all the projects included in this list fall into the category of what Svampa (2019) denominates as neo-extractivism.

Some members of the movement perceive the multiplication of extractive projects as a proof that the extraction by means of fracking is still under consideration. One of the interviewees declared that “everything is articulated”. By this, he referred to the fact that the projects are dependent on each other to function, and he considered that the struggle against fracking has to be treated in connection to these other problems. For example, the thermoelectric plants and the construction of the highway are said to be needed in order to carry on with the exploration of non-conventional hydrocarbons. Participants also repeatedly mentioned that the economic actors behind these long-term projects expect to encounter some social resistance and have already taken into account the economic cost of waiting for more favourable socio-political conditions. Fracking in La Huasteca Potosina would then just be on hold. As explained by another interviewee, the infrastructure is modernized in the meantime and these surrounding extractive projects are “signals” of the latent threat. Svampa (2019) wrote that a disadvantageous socio-political context can slow down but does not necessarily stop the expansion of extreme energies, and that in the meantime the territory can still be reconfigured.

6.2.1.2 Defence of the territory

Most of my interviews with members of the movement and some of the speeches of the regional meeting revealed an awareness of a wider process of expropriation of land and resources. One of the interviewees reported that fracking is a massive expropriation and behind it there is a general interest in the natural resources of the region. In his opinion “they come for everything, not only a small part”. Similarly, another interviewee said that fracking is a form of “invasion of the territory”. The anti-fracking struggle has also another slogan, “Por la defensa del territorio, el agua y la vida”, which can be translated as “the defence of the territory, water and life”. This slogan was repeated during the speeches that were held at the regional meeting, especially by individuals that identified as indigenous. The defence of the territory seems to be the common larger cause that brought together indigenous communities and civil organizations. The concept of territory was defined by one of the participants as “everything that is inside the area, principally the land, water, air, forests, animals, human beings, houses, existent infrastructure, the culture and the form of organization”.

One of the members of the COCIHP, reported that before the Energy Reform he never imagined that the organization he belongs to would end up being involved in the defence for

the territory. According to him, there is a “process of neo-liberalization” that started 1992 with the implementation of national structural reforms that had implications for the region, especially in terms of land tenure. The structural reforms were a condition to be part of the North-American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) signed with Canada and the United States. In his view, a lot has changed in the region since the reforms of 1992. This could be interpreted as a “displacement in place” (Nixon, 2011) resulting from these structural reforms and subsequent neoliberal programs, since the interviewee reported that he witnessed a progressive loss of land and resources from that date. He did suspect that the Energy Reform of 2013 could accentuate the expropriation of land, but he did not expect that the authorities could consider projects that involved this level of environmental destruction.

In contrast, another of the interviewees that identified as Tének suggested that this situation is not new or particularly surprising. To paraphrase his words, indigenous communities have come to the conclusion that if they do not raise their voices, situations in which they are unfairly put into a disadvantaged position tend to be repeated. His reflection suggests that there is a historical antecedent, and the current defence for the territory is the continuation of a longstanding and ongoing fight. This was echoed by other speeches at the regional meeting. Another person that identified as indigenous expressed the idea that powerful actors have grabbed everything they had over the past and they would continue to do so if the communities do not organise themselves well. As explained by another of the interviewees, the history of the region is being revitalized and connected with the present moment. This suggest that for indigenous communities the defence of the territory is a defence for their territorial and historical rights.

6.2.1.3 Privatization and contamination of water

As previously mentioned, the movements’ slogan also underlines the importance of the defence of water. Indeed, the consequences of the expansion of extractive projects are already being felt by the regional communities due to the contamination of this vital resource. During the regional meeting, there were numerous testimonies of the suffering endured by the communities due to operation of the thermoelectric plants. For example, a person that identified as indigenous reported:

“I live close by a thermoelectric plant. The ones that do not live nearby do not know how it is. They are injecting a poison. And who drinks it? And who denounces it? No one denounces it. But many people, many children are dying.”

Participants repeatedly mentioned that the thermoelectric power plants were illegally dumping their toxic waste in the rivers. Communities are being exposed to the slow, insidious and murderous violence Nixon (2011) mentioned in his work. In a statement elaborated by indigenous communities and distributed to the attendants during the regional meeting, they declared that the thermoelectric plants have provoked the increase of diseases, the decrease of the fertility of their lands, and contaminated the water of their rivers.

There is a spread awareness that if the exploration and extraction of non-conventional hydrocarbons gets the green light, these socio-environmental injustices would be exacerbated. As an example, I asked one of the interviewees how he thought fracking would affect the region to which he answered that it would contaminate the aquifers of the region. Another interviewee that identified as Téenek, said that in the eventuality of the contamination of the springs, entire populations that depend on them for their survival would be affected.

During the regional meeting, the topic of water had a central focus and was mentioned in almost all the speeches. The privatization of this resource by powerful actors for profit-oriented purposes was repeatedly denounced by the participants. In one of the speeches, it was claimed that the water reserves of the region are not in the hands of the communities, their administration is granted to individuals and companies that have the right to exploit them. As one of the interviewees explained, the National Water Law that was approved in 1992 has provoked this situation since it operates under a system of licenses. Similarly, another interviewee claimed that since this law was approved the government has granted 538 000 licenses. To paraphrase his words, the government has acted as if it was a matter of selling out the products of a store. In the official statement elaborated by indigenous communities for the regional meeting, they declared that the purchase and sale of water should not be allowed by the authorities since it belongs to the entire nation and to Indigenous Peoples. For Martinez-Alier (2002) ecological distribution conflicts can also result from a clash between different valuation standards and in this case, we can see a clear opposition to the language of monetary valuation.

To summarize, a reconfiguration of the regional territory is experienced by indigenous communities and members of organizations. This situation has led to the convergence of struggles against different extractive projects, not only under the anti-fracking slogan, but also for the “defence of the territory, water and life”. The actors are using the languages of environmental justice, livelihood and indigenous territorial rights to denounce the murderous violence that is committed against them by powerful actors that are increasingly privatizing and contaminating the resources of the region.

6.2.2 Representation and visibility

6.2.2.1 Heterogeneity voices in the movement

During fieldwork I kept asking myself the following question: What could be considered as a representative message of the movement? I went into fieldwork expecting to get access to a sort of unified counter-discourse but instead found out that there is a multiplicity of voices. The counter-discourse can be described as heterogenous. One of the interviewees confirmed this by saying that one thing is how the discourse is constructed by the Alianza Mexicana contra el fracking, or by people that are involved in a civil association or in the COCIHP, and another thing is how the discourse is constructed by the population of the region. He pointed that the position of indigenous representatives is different and that we need to pay attention to the construction of this discourse. The actors involved in the mobilization have different visions due to their different social positions, cultural identities as well as affiliations to specific organizations and institutions. This could be connected to the concept of value pluralism evoked by Martinez-Alier (2002), who wrote that ecological distribution conflicts are fought by the actors in different languages.

6.2.2.2 Representative power

Although there is a heterogeneity of voices in the movement, not all the social groups have the same visibility. If one comes from an external perspective and for example looks at press articles, some individuals can be perceived as spokespeople of the movement since their names are recurrently mentioned. During my participant observation at the regional meeting, I was paying close attention to elements that revealed differences in the public visibility of the actors,

such as who spoke more. I consider this event as allowing to get an insight into the dynamics of the movement. There was a total of 23 speeches during the regional meeting. Among the speakers, 12 were from the region, 7 of them identified as indigenous, 6 of them were female, and only 3 of them were both female and identified as indigenous. Apart from the federal authorities, only two other people spoke twice and none of them identified as indigenous. In addition, the federal authorities identified some of the participants by their names or addressed themselves directly to them, suggesting that these individuals might be perceived by these authorities as leaders. One of the interviewees, explicitly referred to this matter by expressing that some individuals have a position of leadership and others have the possibility to influence the public opinion. Therefore, some individuals possess what Nixon (2011) calls a representative power.

During the regional meeting, two of the speakers explicitly addressed this issue of representation. The federal authorities reacted to the demands for justice of the speakers by claiming they were already paying attention to the issue of fracking, since they had had meetings with one of the organizations that attended the regional meeting, the Alianza Mexicana contra el fracking. A member of this national coalition, reacted to this by saying that civil society organizations have been granted way too much legitimacy by the government, and that this voice should neither be mistaken for or replace the voice of Indigenous Peoples. To paraphrase his words, there are many actors that are not part of the Alianza Mexicana contra el fracking but have a lot to say on the topic, and that this abuse of representation is overlooked. That point was emphasized by another speaker that identified as Tének suggesting this is an important concern for the indigenous communities of the region. To paraphrase his words, the federal authorities need to find a way to include in the discussions those who truly represent Indigenous Peoples and who emanate from them. Thus, there are differences in the way actors are represented and heard by the authorities, and this is closely linked to their cultural identities, social positions and scales they are situated at.

6.2.2.3 Issue of consultation

Acosta (2013) wrote that neo-extractivism is a model that has a damaging effect on the democratic processes of countries. Beyond the problem of representation, there is more generally a problem of consultation of indigenous communities in the context of extractive

projects. A few of the interviewees mentioned that the authorities are legally bound by international treaties such as the ILO-convention 169¹³, to consult indigenous communities but this is largely disregarded. As expressed by one of the interviewees, the government does “consultation simulations” and wants to wipe off the map the legal personality of indigenous communities. His view was supported by another interviewee who said that even if most Indigenous Peoples are settled in La Huasteca Potosina, the authorities organize consultative forums in the capital of the State, which is approximately 3 hours away from that region. Ultimately, the demands that are heard the most by the authorities are coming from powerful economic actors. This issue was repeatedly raised in the regional meeting. As an example, a speaker mentioned that when it comes to water management decisions the authorities prefer sitting down with large water users that make profit out of this resource, and the authorities of the ejidos sit down in the back and are used as “decoration”.

I personally witnessed the lack of recognition from the authorities. The secretary of SEMARNAT was supposed to attend the regional meeting and it had been announced to the communities who came to the event in order to voice their demands to him personally, but he did not show up. Many speakers expressed their disappointment that he cancelled his visit to the region. As an example, a speaker that identified as indigenous had come to draw the attention to the suffering of her community due to the contamination caused by the thermoelectric plants. She reported that she could have instead been labouring the land that day since the weather was propitious.

6.2.2.4 Discursive strategies

Nixon (2011, 30) argues that in “the politics of the visible and the invisible, environmental justice movements [...] strategize to shift the balance of visibility”. For the author, actors can sometimes assume a “role of *porte-parole*”, as in the example of writer-activists (Nixon, 2011, 23). The individuals that have more visibility within the anti-fracking mobilization seemed to have used it, first to help launch the movement and then to amplify the demands. I consider that these actors strategically use specific languages that are likely to have a more significant echo among the federal authorities. One of the actors handled a juridical language with ease, and cited for example the ILO-convention 169 and other concerned Constitutional articles that

¹³ The Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention adopted in 1989

give legal force to indigenous territorial claims. Other actors employed a rather technical language to talk about the environmental risks entailed by fracking, and others supported their claims by figures from reports and research. We can consider that this type of language is used as “rhetorical strategies” (Nixon, 2011, 24) to increase the visibility and legitimacy of the movement’s demands in the eyes of the government and the public opinion.

6.2.2.5 A movement?

As I previously mentioned, there is not just one counter-discourse but many visions within the mobilization. Some actors explicitly use the word ‘movement’ to designate their collective action against fracking. However, I wish to bring forward that one of the interviewees – the only one that identified as indigenous and whose vision I am paying a particular attention to – mentioned that people in the region did not conceptualize their mobilization in terms of a movement. As he expressed:

“For us, the term movement does not exist. [...] It is not like there has to be a leader [...].

The movement is all of us, all the communities, all the Peoples. We are the movement”.

According to him, there are no leaders but some people informed themselves before and realized what was going on. In echo to this another interviewee reported that the access to information is very disperse and undemocratic. National, statal and regional organizations such as the Mexican alliance against fracking, the Observatorio Indígena and the COCIHP seemed to have played a role in the dissemination of the information. As one of the interviewees said, the population is building their discourse from everything they hear and from all the information they directly and indirectly get. However, the information is redefined and re-interpreted by the indigenous communities who collectively decide to mobilize themselves through their pre-existing structures. As the participant that identifies as Téenek explained, the communities that are already established unite themselves if they want to; together they decide if what is at stake is something that they need to defend and mobilize themselves for. As Escobar (2007) wrote, subaltern groups are not only objects of power but also subjects of agency.

To summarize, the counter-discourse is heterogenous. We are in presence of a convergence of actors that have different social positions and cultural identities. Members of organizations and indigenous communities use distinct languages of valuation and have different ways to represent the issues at stake. However, not all the social groups have the same visibility. There is a representation issue that cannot be overlooked if one is interested in the “movement”’s discourse, and that is tied up to a larger problem of consultation and recognition of indigenous communities by federal authorities. It is important to note that there are voices that do not perceive the mobilization against fracking in terms of a movement but rather as a struggle.

6.2.3 Cultural identities and development

There are multiple actors and voices in the mobilization. However, I wanted to give a special attention to the voice of Indigenous Peoples. From the speeches in the regional meeting and the two interviews I had with a local representative that identifies as Téenek¹⁴, it became evident that cultural identity is a crucial element to understand the reasons behind the mobilization of indigenous communities. As I previously mentioned, the communities collectively decide to mobilize themselves if the issue at stakes moves them, if its meaningful for them or echoes with them.

6.2.3.1 Cultural identities and territory

During the interview I asked the participant what the slogan of the movement – the “Defence of the territory water and life” – evoked for him. To paraphrase his words, he answered that ancestrally these territories have belonged to Indigenous Peoples¹⁵. He reported that:

“Here in the community, you are free, you are anything you want. Because you know [the territory] and you are from here. [...] The freedom has to do with the fact that we know the crossings, we know something that anyone who comes here and does not know would say ‘Oh here you can see a hill, it is not accessible’, but for us it is accessible, because we know how to access it”.

¹⁴ In this section I mostly report, interpret and discuss what this participant shared with me. For practical purposes I will refer to him as ‘the participant’ here.

¹⁵ Closest translation to the words “pueblos originarios” in Spanish

To this he added that this aspect of the territory can only be understood if one is from the region. All of this suggests that their knowledge, cultural heritage and collective memory are closely linked to everything that exists within their territory. This could be connected to what Nixon (2011, 17) denominates as vernacular landscapes referring to the affective, historically impregnated maps that communities have constructed over generations. Nixon (2011, 17) estimates that these landscapes are intrinsic to the socio-environmental dynamics of a given community. Following this logic, the loss of ecological and geographical features that fracking and other extractive activities entail would endanger the survival of the indigenous communities of La Huasteca Potosina.

6.2.3.2 Coexistence with nature

It is important to underline that the objective of this study is not ethnographic and I do not pretend to be exhaustive in the description of the relation that the diverse communities of La Huasteca Potosina have with nature. My aim here is to report some elements that were brought by the participant and that seem to have an importance for the mobilization of indigenous communities. One of the members of the COCIHP reported that according to her, the movement has grown for two reasons; the first has to do with the pre-existing organization that communities have and the second with their relation to nature.

The participant shared with me that the communities greatly value natural balance, economic balance, and the fact of having a culture of subsistence. To paraphrase his words, the secret for them is not money but time. He elaborated this by saying that if he has the seed and puts it in the right place at the right time, he just has to wait for time to give the fruit and collect it when it is ready, and that he does not need to spend any money for it. As the participant explained, “the natural factory is the earth”. He added that if one gives a good use to the land, a wide variety of products can be obtained from the same harvest. Yet, he repeatedly emphasized that the finality is not commercial. The participant claimed this can be regarded by many as poverty, but for them it means subsistence and coexistence.

In regard to the issue of fracking, he said that it is not a matter of economic compensation; it is about not altering something they have not wanted to alter since they have found a major benefit on it just as it is. Similarly, during the regional meeting a speaker that identified as

Téenek, declared that “money is not development, money is death”. She added that indigenous communities see nature as development, since it is from there that they eat. For Reichel-Dolmatoff (1976), aboriginal cosmologies reveal a deeper understanding of the nonhuman world and of the necessity to exist within its material limitations.

6.2.3.3 Defence of life

During one of the interviews, I used the word ‘resistance’ to qualify their mobilization. The participant reacted to this by saying that their vision does not have to do with resisting, it has to do with “anteponer”, a Spanish word that can be translated as ‘putting something before something else’. This suggests, that for them is a matter of shifting what is valued. As the participant said, more than a resistance, it is just a way of seeing things. As the participant reported, the communities do not understand the approach of the government since they place the environment before a natural resource that will sooner or later run out. The participants rhetorically asked: “yes, they would enjoy this resource but for how long and at what cost?”. As Martinez-Alier wrote (2002), these populations sense that extractive activities might provide quick economic profits today but they will endanger their future economic security.

During the regional meeting, all speakers that identified as indigenous insisted on the fact that this is a struggle for life. As an example, a woman that identified as Téenek and seemed to play an important role in the mobilization stated:

“This is a struggle for our lives, for the present day and for the life of tomorrow, for those of the future generation.”

Similarly, in the official statement elaborated for the event indigenous communities declared that they only defend the creation and life and oppose themselves to the destruction of Mother Earth. As expressed by Nixon (2011, 17), the increasing conflicts that oppose indigenous communities to powerful actors can be conceptualized as disagreements over times scales. On the one side, actors that value short-term and “arrive [...] to extract, despoil, and depart” and on the other side actors who “must live inside the ecological aftermath” and thus value long-term (Nixon, 2011, 17).

6.2.3.4 The respect of their own vision of development

From the regional meeting and the interviews, I conducted with the participant, it progressively became evident that the core demands of indigenous communities revolve around the respect of their own vision of development by the government. As an example, in the official statement elaborated for the regional meeting, indigenous communities declared that:

“The federal government has to guarantee our development and growth based on our way of thinking and living. We Indigenous Peoples are the root of the nation and we want the human and collective right to development to be guaranteed”.

The official statement, composed of five different demands was first entirely read by one of the participants, and later on another participant went back to this specific point in order to emphasize its importance for indigenous communities. As the participant I interviewed mentioned, they are not opposed to cooperating with something that could be developed, but it needs to be something that guarantees their cosmovision. To this he added, that the only thing that matters for them is balance in their environment, and in this aspect, they are experts. Similarly, during the regional meeting another speaker asserted that what the communities want is to be heard and respected, that they know how to labour and take care of the land. He added that they want laws to prevent people from coming and destroying everything that is alive. The previous demands echo the notion of colonial difference developed by Escobar (2007). According to the author, coloniality of power enacts a subalternization process and colonial difference refers to the knowledge and cultural dimensions of that process (Escobar, 2007). This notion brings attention to the persistence of cultural differences within power structures (Escobar, 2007). In the same speech, the person said that environmental government agencies such as the SEMARNAT are the ones responsible for the current situation, and yet they receive environmental awards; the indigenous communities are the ones defending the environment and the animals without any recognition, and what they get is violence.

Another element that was recurrent during the speeches is that the national programs that the government implements in the region are inadequate since they are not designed from their perspective. As one of the speakers in the regional meeting declared, it is as if a cake was displayed behind a shop window and they are looking at it but cannot eat it. As one of the members of the Observatorio Indígena explained, the conditions to enter the programs do not take into account the realities of people in the region, when it comes for example to how land

is distributed. Another speaker during the regional meeting asked the authorities to respect their way of being and working and use this as a basis for social programs. He added that federal government programs are not designed from where they are located and for that reason most of people are left out and only a few can enter these programs.

According to other participants, the programs are not only inadequate but they also deteriorate their lives. For example, the indigenous local representative I interviewed said that the programs are not adapted, they do not take them into account and only bring them problems. Similarly, one of the speakers rhetorically asked the audience at the regional meeting: “When were we poor? Were we poor some time ago or are we poor now? Is anyone’s food guaranteed? No, so actually we are poorer now than we were some years ago”. She added that this is due to the fact communities have neglected their daily nourishment, they have neglected the countryside, and have allowed foreign ideas to come in and make them dependent. The previous reports of people’s views suggest that the notion indigenous communities have of development diverges from the notions of development and prosperity that are promoted by the federal government and materialized in the socio-economic programs that are implemented.

Other declarations suggest that federal government programs are not only perceived as prejudicial but also as imposed. During one of the interviews, the indigenous representative mentioned that the issue with fracking is they are extracting a resource at any cost, they are forcing the Earth to give this resource no matter what, and they are doing it within their territories whereas they never asked for that. He explained their vision by saying that:

“If one day someone comes and tells me ‘I like what you did there, how did you do it? I can share it with that person, but because they want it right? Not by force. It is about sharing, not imposing”.

This echoes the work of Nixon (2011), in the sense that “developer-dispossessors” arrive and impose instrumental and extractivist official landscapes in the name of some supreme edicts such as the free market or national development. Another of the interviewees argued that the government conceptualizes some areas as marginalized zones, indicating that for example they have no roads; the government then says ‘we have to help these communities and build roads so they can stop being marginalized’, but these roads are actually a way to dispossess these communities. As Svampa (2019) wrote, the arrival of development models that follow the

ideology of progress are often concomitant to the depreciation of local communities and regional economies.

6.2.3.5 Indigenous communities as permanent structures of resistance

I want to address one last point the indigenous representative shared with me, and I consider essential to understand the mobilization. As the participant explained,

“We do not necessarily have to be a permanent, recognized or popular movement. No, because we do not need it. Because in the end, it is our way of life, it is the way we organize ourselves, it is the way we live collectively, and it is the essence that we already possess. [...]

If we have suffered from anything, it is from this.”

In resonance to this, another interviewee argued, that indigenous communities are permanent social movements due to their historical processes of resistance. The interviewee added that there will always be conflicts, communities will always encounter problems with the distinct government levels; structures of power will always seek to undermine them because these societies go against the logics that the national projects want to impose. This echoes the notion of coloniality/modernity (Maldonado-Torres, 2016). Modernity/coloniality is “a construction of knowledge, power and being” that creates a divide between a zone of being and a zone of not-being human, and submerges those who are located in the zone of not-being in a perpetual state of war (Maldonado-Torres, 2016, 19).

According to Maldonado-Torres (2016, 22), decoloniality turns away from modernity/coloniality. Decoloniality can consist of (re)valorising different ways of being that challenge modernity/coloniality. After all, decoloniality refers to the efforts to “breaking hierarchies that dehumanize subjects and communities and that destroy nature” (Maldonado-Torres, 2016). During the regional meeting one of the speakers explained that the contribution from her community is that they are working to value the Earth, the trees, water. At the end of her speech, she said that:

“We are going to defend our land by producing it, giving it the importance, giving it that value, that many would not want us to have”.

To briefly summarize, the respect for their own vision of development is at the core of the demands of indigenous communities. The vision of development of these communities cannot

be dissociated from their cultural identities, and it clashes with the logics that are brought by extractive projects such as fracking.

7. CONCLUSION

In its official discourse, the previous Federal government justified the use of fracking by invoking imperatives of energy security and national prosperity. The exploration of non-conventional hydrocarbons helps guarantee a reliable supply of energy for present and future generations, and accelerates a much-needed technological transfer. An analysis of this hegemonic national discourse enabled me to problematize this view and to reveal its assumptions.

Firstly, the energy security of the country is perceived as being at risk because of the imminent exhaustion of fossil fuels. Instead of transitioning to renewable energies, the previous Federal government promoted the exploration of new areas that entailed the use of extraction techniques that cause greater environmental damage. This strategy allegedly possesses a long-term view for the country, whereas these actions show an alarming deepening of the current fossil fuel energy model that is compromising the future (Svampa, 2019). Secondly, the ongoing modernization of the energy sector to adequately profit from the country's hydrocarbon deposits is perceived as a requirement for prosperity. Such a logic implies that the extraction of these resources is needed to sustain the country, and with it comes the belief that extractive activities can boost the economy and enable countries to rapidly 'catch up' and attain the long-promised level of development of Western countries (Svampa, 2019).

The actors involved in the mobilization against fracking in La Huasteca Potosina had different discourses due to their different social positions, cultural identities as well as affiliations to specific organizations. Although there is just not one but multiple counter-discourses, not all voices have the same visibility. In the attempt of looking for a unified message I came across a problem of representation in the mobilization. Some individuals and organizations appeared to have a representative power (Nixon, 2011) that they nonetheless use to push for the ban of the hydraulic fracturing technique and the respect of indigenous territorial rights. Indeed, what is at stake is more largely an issue of consultation of indigenous communities in the context of extractive projects. Although Federal and statal authorities are legally bound to all communities

by international treaties such as ILO-convention 169, they mostly listen to the demands that emanate from powerful economic actors.

Throughout this study, I attempted to understand the conflict from the perspective of those who are mobilized against fracking and connected their experiences of struggle to larger social processes. A reconfiguration of the regional territory seems to be experienced by members of organizations and indigenous communities. Thermoelectric plants, gas pipelines, aqueducts, a highway, the extraction of oil and gas by conventional methods as well as non-conventional methods... the region is increasingly affected by a long list of extractive activities that are already implemented or have been temporarily suspended. The consequences of the expansion of the extraction frontiers are already being felt by the regional communities, particularly through the privatization and contamination of water. Beyond the exploration and extraction of non-conventional hydrocarbons, there seems to be a general economic interest in the natural resources of the region. Fracking was definitely a catalyst for the mobilization in La Huasteca Potosina, but organizations and indigenous communities are more largely converging in the defence of the territory against *all* extractive activities.

As suggested by one of the participants, indigenous communities in La Huasteca Potosina are the backbone of this movement. In this study, I paid a particular attention to indigenous voices. However, I do not pretend to be exhaustive and only based my interpretation on the two interviews I conducted with one local representative and the speeches heard at the regional meeting. Cultural identity appears to be central to the mobilization of indigenous communities, and at the heart of all discourses there seems to be a call for a shift in values. Indeed, the vision that was put forth by these community representatives directly clashes with the logics of the extractive projects that the federal government seeks to implement.

All participants that identified as indigenous mentioned that the government development programs are generally inadequate, prejudicial and/or imposed. Ultimately, indigenous communities appeared to be fighting for the respect of their own vision of development. As the associations of indigenous communities of La Huasteca Potosina declared in their official statement: “the federal government has to guarantee our development and growth based on our way of thinking and living”. Federal government projects and programs need to take this into account if they truly expect to contribute to a more prosperous country that is conscious and respectful of its multiethnicity.

This study aimed to contribute to the understanding of the conflict arising from fracking projects in La Huasteca Potosina from the perspective of the mobilized actors. I attempted to amplify the voices of less visible actors in the mobilization, but this study encountered significant limitations. Indigenous women find themselves in a vulnerable position due to both social discrimination and gender inequality (National Women's Institute, 2009). Therefore, further research is still needed to investigate the gendered aspects of the conflict and movement.

Word count: 17 538

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APPENDICES

Appendix A. Quality semi-structured interview guides

Tailored for individuals within the social resistance

I) Obtaining the informed consent of the interviewee

The objective here is to provide information concerning:

- Purpose of the interview
- Terms of confidentiality
- Format and approximate length of the interview
- Ask for the authorization to record the interview

II) Main themes and follow-up questions

1) Situating questions:

The objective is to obtain some information about the background of the interviewee.

- What is your profession?
- Where in the region do you live? How long have you lived there for?
- Do you identify yourself as being part of an ethnic group?
- How have you been implicated in the struggle against the fracking projects?
- Are you part of a specific organization?

2) Social movement's depiction of the conflict:

The objective here is to obtain a description of what has been happening from their perspective.

- Can you give some details about the conflict?
- What is the current situation?

3) Resistance and counterhegemonic discourses:

The objective here is to have a glance on the alternative vision of the movement.

- What does the movement stand for?
- What is the movement opposed to?
- What are the demands of the movement?
- What the proposals advanced by the movement?
- Which authorities are you addressing this message to?
- Does everyone in the movement agree with this message?

4) Human-nature relations within the movement:

The objective here is to approach the relation of the movement to the 'natural world' so to speak. However, it is crucial to consider that some indigenous groups have a radically different conception of this term.

- I have been told that you call your struggle ‘movement for the defence of land, water and life. Why do you call it this way?
- In which ways is it important for you as a person to fight for the land, water and life?
- What does the land, the water mean for you as a person?
- How would you describe your own relation to the land, water and other natural resources of the region?
- In which way does this meaning/ relation contribute to your mobilization against the projects?
- Would you describe your own relation to the land and water as being representative to the relation most of the people that are part of the struggle have?
- Are there any differences in the way people in the movement value the natural resources of the region?
- How would you describe the local communities’ relation to the water, land and natural resources?

5) Resource use and control by the authorities:

The objective here is to get some information on the perspective the interviewee and/or the movement have regarding the resource use actions carried out by the authorities. My aim here is also to obtain a further understanding on how the movement’s way of framing resource use differs from authorities’ way.

- What do you think about the attitude and actions of the authorities so far?
- What do you think about the way authorities see and use (or plan to use) the natural resources of the region?
- What do you think of the way the authorities justify these projects?
- Do you consider that this opinion is shared by a majority of people in the region or in the movement?

6) Broader context

The objective here is to obtain information concerning the interviewee’s knowledge of the broader historical, cultural, social or economic context of the conflict.

- What do you consider as being the political, historical, economic or cultural causes of the current situation?

Tailored for individuals working in **governmental institutions** and agencies

I) Obtaining the informed consent of the interviewee

The objective here is to provide information concerning:

- Purpose of the interview
- Terms of confidentiality
- Format and approximate length of the interview
- Ask for the authorization to record the interview

II) Main themes and follow-up questions

1) Situating questions:

The objective is to obtain some information about the background of the interviewee.

- What organism are you part of?
- What is your position?
- How long have you been working there for?
- Do you identify yourself as being part of an ethnic group?
- How have you been implicated in the planification and/or implementation of these projects?

2) Authorities' depiction of the conflict:

The objective here is to obtain a description of what has been happening from their perspective.

- Can you give me some details about the projects?
- What did it consist of?
- Who was advocating for these projects?
- Who was supervising these projects?
- What is the current situation?

3) Official discourse:

Get an insight on the vision of the government, on their reasons for encouraging and implementing these projects.

- What was the principal objective of these projects?
- How would these projects benefit?
- What is the official statement concerning these projects?
- Can you describe the government's vision in relation to these projects? (potential difference between last government and the current one)
- Are there institutions that distance themselves from this vision? (what is the difference between for example the organism responsible for energy and the organism responsible for the protection of the environment?)
- Do the opinions regarding these projects vary depending on the different official institutions and organisms?
- What is the general opinion about these projects inside your organism?

4) Actions and demands from the resistance movement:

The objective here is to get some information on the perspective the interviewee and/or the institution have regarding the actions and demands from the resistance movement. My aim here is also to obtain a further understanding on how institutions' way of framing resource use differs from the movement's way.

- What was the public opinion about these projects?

There was apparently a strong opposition to these projects.

- What do you think about the demands of this movement?
- What do you think about the proposals of this movement?
- Is your opinion representative of the institution you are part of?

5) Human-nature relations within the institutions:

The objective here is to approach the relation of the authorities to the 'natural world' so to speak. How do they frame resource use and control?

- How does your institution see the natural resources of the region?
- What do the natural resources of the region mean for your institution?
- What are the planned actions concerning the resources of the region?
- What is the potential of the resources of the region, according to your institution?

6) Broader context:

The objective here is to obtain information concerning the interviewee's knowledge of the broader historical, cultural, social or economic context of the conflict.

- What do you consider as being the political, historical, economic or cultural causes of the current situation?

Appendix B. Overview of conducted interviews

| # | Participant's characteristics What stakeholder do they represent? | Form of interview (type, place, recorded or not, transcribed or not) | Date and length | How did I get access to them? Why did I interview them specifically? | Use of the interview |
|---|---|---|--|---|---|
| 1 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Male - Very involved in the mobilization Active with FAO in SLP | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Two face-to-face interviews -sitting in a calm restaurant - Flowing conversation, use of the interview guide - Recorded and transcribed | <p>First interview:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 23/01/20 - 48min <p>Second interview:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 12/01/20 - 1hour | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Connected to him through a political ecology professor - My first and main contact with the movement | <p>Information about the conflict and the mobilization</p> <p>CTA</p> |
| 2 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Male Actor with a major visibility in the movement - Active with COCIHP in La Huasteca Potosina | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Face-to-face interview - Different locations some of them quite noisy - I talked to him for about 1hour alone and then I interviewed him and another participant simultaneously - Flowing conversations, use of the interview guide - Recorded - Fully transcribed | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 01/02/20 - We talked during a whole afternoon - 4 hours of recording | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I met him at the forum through another participant - He had a lot of visibility, seemed to be very involved in the struggle from the start | <p>Information about the conflict and the mobilization</p> <p>CTA</p> |

| | | | | | |
|---|--|--|--|--|---|
| 3 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Female - Very involved in the mobilization - Active with COCIHP in La Huasteca Potosina | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Two face-to-face interviews - Flowing conversations, use of the interview guide - I first interviewed her and 4. simultaneously (refer above). The second time I was just with her in a calm restaurant. - Recorded and transcribed | <p>First interview: - 01/02/20 - 4 hours of recording</p> <p>Second interview: - 02/01/20 - Spent a whole afternoon together - 2 hours recording</p> | <p>(Refer above)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I met at the forum the first time through another participant. Then I contacted them back by mail asking if we could see each other again - Very involved in the struggle from the start | <p>Information about the conflict and the mobilization</p> <p>CTA</p> |
| 4 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Male - Identifies as Téenek - Representative of Asuntos Indígenas of Tancanhuitz, in La Huasteca Potosina - Active with the mobilization | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Two phone interviews (first one by phone and second one through Zoom) - Flowing conversations, use of the interview guide - Recorded and transcribed | <p>First interview: - 05/01/20 - 1h10min</p> <p>Second interview: - 02/11/20 - 1h30min</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - He was also at the forum and I was connected to him through another interviewee (snowball sampling) - I wanted to understand the perception people in the region had concerning the threat of the fracking projects, and the reasons for their mobilization | <p>Information about the conflict and the mobilization</p> <p>CTA</p> |
| 5 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Male - Very involved in the mobilization - Active with OIM in SLP | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Two face-to-face interviews - Sitting in a calm restaurant - Flowing and long conversations, use of the interview guide - Recorded and transcribed | <p>First interview: - 05/01/20 - 3h20min</p> <p>Second interview: - 11/01/20 - 4h40min</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I met him at the forum and was introduced to him via another interviewee (snowball sampling) | <p>Information about the conflict and the mobilization</p> <p>CTA</p> |

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| 6 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Male Director of delegation office of SEMARNAT in SLP | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Face-to-face interview - Reception of the SEMARNAT's building - Use of the interview guide - Recorded | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 07/01/20 - 35 minutes | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I just to the building and asked if someone could answer some questions regarding the fracking projects - I wanted to know more about the situation and to get an insight into the national discourse, and the reasons behind the fracking projects | Information about the conflict |
| 7 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Female - Public worker of the INDEPI in SLP | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Face-to-face interview - Her office in the INDEPI's building - Use of the interview guide - Recorded | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 10/01/20 - 1h40min | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - She personally arranged my meeting with her so I could get more details on the situation (snowball sampling) | Information about the conflict |
| 8 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Male - Researcher at COLSAN, water politics specialization - Ally of the movement | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Face-to-face interview - His office in the COLSAN - Informal conversation, I had some questions in mind - Not recorded | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 10/01/20 - 30min | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Connected to him through one of my interviewees who recommended me to talk to him - People in the water politics program had apparently been indirectly involved in the resistance - He had provided people in the resistance movement with his expertise - The situation was complex and lacked transparency so I wanted to know his opinion | Information about the conflict |

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|------------------|---|--|---|--|---------------------------------------|
| <p>9</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Male - Professor at UASLP - Part of CLEDH | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Face-to-face interview - At his office in the UASLP (Autonomous University of San Luis Potosi) - Informal conversation, I had some questions in mind - Recorded | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 12/01/20 - 30min | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Connected to him through one of my interviewees - The organization he is part of had helped to stop other megaprojects in the region, that had some connection to the fracking projects | <p>Information about the conflict</p> |
| <p>10</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Male - Public worker of CONAGUA in SLP | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Face-to-face interview - At his office in the CONAGUA's building - Use of the interview guide - Recorded | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 14/01/20 - 34min | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Connected to him through a family member - CONAGUA had some implication in the conflict - I wanted to know more about the water concessions | <p>Information about the conflict</p> |

Appendix C. Information concerning the conflict

Name of the conflict: fracking in La Huasteca Potosina

Country (Mexico), state (San Luis Potosi), location (La Huasteca Potosina), level (regional)

Type of conflict:

- First level: Fossil fuels, climate justice, right to self-determination
- Second level: Fracking
- Specific commodities: (shale oil and gas)

Start of the conflict: 2013

Company names, state enterprise: PEMEX from Mexico and potentially private and even foreign companies, if the contracts were to be granted and signed

Relevant government actors: [refer to mindmap]

Environmental justice organizations and members of the civil society: [refer to mindmap]

Groups mobilizing:

- Indigenous communities, habitants of ejidos, women, ethnically discriminated groups
- Local, regional, statal and national organizations
- Other citizens and institutions (less direct implication)

Forms of mobilizations:

- Forums and Meetings (five so far)
- Demonstrations
- Declaraciones de asamblea
- Actas de cabildo
- Official letter to the president
- Information meeting organized by the organizations
- Lawsuits, court cases
- Involvement of national organizations
- Creation of a network, a coordination between the COCIPH and the Observatorio Indígena but also between the communities themselves
Facebook page from the COCIHP

Countless environmental, health-related, socio-economic and cultural potential impacts

Outcome: The mobilization stopped the projects for now, no contract has been granted so far by the government. considered as a victory by some but the threat remains and so does the mobilization.