

# **Texaco's Legacy: Ghost Acres and Dirty Technology Transfers in the Indigenous Amazon Region of Ecuador**

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The soils of Latin America—in terms of its plantation crops and the riches that lie below it—have played a key role in the development of the global capitalist system. The exploitation of vast areas of land, conceptualized as “ghost acres” by Georg Borgstrom, with local and imported labor has facilitated the rise and wealth of European colonizers and triggered structural global inequalities. The history of oil exploitation in Ecuador offers an abundant record of these dynamics. After more than three decades of oil exploitation by the American multinational Texaco starting in 1964, the country bears a tragic environmental record caused by negligence, the use of outdated technology, careless waste management, and noncompliance with environmental legislation. The adverse impacts of this transfer of “dirty” industries on environment and the health of the local population are key to today's most important international environmental law case.

My project aims to shed light on the actors, dynamics, and discourses that create and shape the Amazon ghost acres used by oil and hazardous waste regimes within and beyond Ecuador. These are formed by and condition the operations of multinational companies and the transboundary transfer of “dirty” technologies from the North to the Global South. The project provides an opportunity to explore different takes on ecology and economy in a setting where resource extraction, national development aspirations, and indigenous ways of living overlap and compete. The management practices and disposal of hazardous wastes from oil drilling in the Amazon speak to the development of environmental standards and environmental law. This research contributes a case study to the DFG Emmy-Noether Research Group *Hazardous Travels: Ghost Acres and the Global Waste Economy*.