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False promises of development? Oil extractivism in Uganda

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Master's Thesis

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Abbreviations

CDA	Critical Discourse Analysis
CNOOC	China National Offshore Oil Corporation
CSCO	Civil Society Coalition on Oil and Gas
CSO	Civil Society Organization
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
EACOP	East African Crude Oil Pipeline
EIIPs	Extractive Industries Investment Projects
EITI	Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative
ESIA	Environmental and Social Impact Assessment
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GHG	Greenhouse Gas
GPFOG	Guild Presidents' Forum on Governance
HRIA	Human Rights Impact Assessment
MEMD	Ministry of Energy and Mineral Development
NCEA	Netherlands Commission for Environmental Assessments
NEMA	National Environmental Management Authority
NPA	National Development Plan
PAPs	Project Affected Persons
PAU	Petroleum Authority of Uganda
POMA	Public Order Management Act
PSA	Production Sharing Agreements
PWYP	Publish What You Pay
TNC	Transnational Corporation
UNOC	Uganda National Oil Company

Abstract:

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Abstract:

Uganda's recent oil discoveries have been described as one of the largest onshore findings in Africa within the past 20 years. It has been estimated that there are 6.5 billion barrels of oil in the Albertine Graben, of which about 1.4 are recoverable. Since the foreign and national stakeholders have launched their oil investment projects, concerns around human and environmental rights violations have been raised internally and internationally.

Whereas much scientific work has been produced on oil in Africa, most of this can be placed under the concise umbrella of resource blessing and resource curse. The approach of 'extractivism' has come to challenge this simplistic dichotomy, but most of the work about extractivism focuses on Latin America. This thesis, thus, contributes to this growing body of literature. It does so by investigating the discourses that the Ugandan state and the transnational corporation TotalEnergies utilize to promote extractivism in Uganda. More specifically, this thesis aims to answer two questions, namely, *what justification methods does the Ugandan state use to legitimate oil extractivism in the Lake Albertine region, and how does the oil corporation Total reproduce narratives of extractivist mindset in legitimizing its operations in the Albertine Graben?* Data were collected from policy documents, newspaper articles, and website material. The methods of critical discourse analysis and content analysis and the approaches of extractivism and postcolonialism are applied.

The findings show that the Ugandan state legitimates oil through five discourses, namely: economic arguments, employment and social arguments, no substantial ecological effects arguments; statements for energy poverty, energy security, and just transition; and stigmatizing critics arguments. Total uses three distinct discourses, namely, self-regulation and best practice, social and developmental arguments, and no substantial ecological effects arguments. These discourses, while reproducing the extractivist mindset, should be taken seriously as they have severe implications for the wider world.

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Tiivistelmä:

Ugandan viimeaikaiset öljylöydökset ovat viimeisen kahdenkymmenen vuoden aikana Afrikan mantereella tehdyistä löydöistä suurimmat. Albertine Grabenin alueella arvioidaan olevan 6.5 miljardia barreliä öljyä, joista noin 1.4 miljardin arvioidaan olevan hyödynnettävissä. Ulkomaiset ja kansalliset yhtiöt ovat jo käynnistäneet öljyhankkeitaan. Paikalliset sekä ulkomaalaiset toimijat ovat nostaneet esiin huolia, hankkeisiin liitettäviin ihmisoikeus- ja ympäristöoikeuksiin liittyen.

Vaikka Afrikan öljystä ja öljyteollisuudesta on tehty paljon tieteellistä tutkimusta, suurin osa siitä sijoittuu kapean kahtiajakautuksen alle: resurssikiros ja resurssisiunaus kirjallisuuteen. Ekstraktivismi -lähestymistapa on tullut haastamaan tämän yksinkertaistetun kahtiajaon. Kuitenkin, suurin osa ekstraktivismin alla tehdystä työstä on tehty Latinalaisen Amerikan tapausten pohjalta. Tämä tutkielma täydentää tätä kasvavaa kirjallisuudenalaa, tutkimalla Ugandan valtion ja ylikansallisen öljyjätin Totalin ylläpitämiä diskursseja öljystä Ugandassa. Tässä tutkielmassa yritetään vastata siihen, miten nämä kaksi toimijaa legitimoivat öljyn porausta Länsi-Ugandassa. Aineisto koostuu poliittisista asiakirjoista, lehtiartikkeleista ja verkkosivumateriaalista. Tutkielma hyödyntää kriittisen diskurssianalyysin ja sisällönanalyysin menetelmiä, sekä ekstraktivismiin ja postkolonialismin lähestymistapoja.

Analyysi osoittaa, että Ugandan valtio perustelee öljyteollisuutta viidellä diskurssilla, jotka koostuvat seuraavista: taloudelliset argumentit, työllistymiseen ja sosiaalisiin hyötyihin

liittyvät argumentit; perustelut, joiden mukaan öljynporauksella ei ole merkittäviä ekologisia vaikutuksia; energiaköyhyyttä, -varmuutta, ja oikeudenmukaista siirtymää puoltavat argumentit; sekä öljyteollisuuden kritikoita leimaavat argumentit. Total, sen sijaan, käyttää kolmea erillistä diskurssia, jotka ovat itsesääteily ja parhaat käytännöt, kehitykseen ja sosiaalisiin hyötyihin liittyvät argumentoinnit; sekä perustelut, joiden mukaan öljyllä ei ole ilmastolle tai luonnolle merkittäviä negatiivisia vaikutuksia. Ekstraktivismia puoltavat ja tukevat diskurssit on otettava vakavasti, sillä niiden vaikutukset ovat sekä paikallisia että globaaleja.

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1. Introduction

1.1. Research Problem and Research Plan

The just-ended COP 27 Conference in Sharm El Sheikh, Egypt clearly showed the centrality of oil to ecological questions and development in Africa. Much of the attention during the conference focused on Egypt but, perhaps, a more ‘energetic’ debate was brewing elsewhere: in Uganda. President Museveni of Uganda was absent, but his criticisms of the conference were present (AFP, 2022; Mugume, 2022).

Both the case for and against continuing oil-based development must be contextualized in Uganda itself. A series of oil discoveries put Uganda on the global energy map in 2006. It is estimated that there are 6.5 billion barrels of oil in the Albertine district alone. Of these, 1.4 billion are believed to be recoverable. These fortuitous findings put Uganda among the largest owners of proven oil reserves in Sub-Saharan Africa. (Mawejje, 2020). So, Uganda has become a new hub for oil transnational corporations. By 2021, the transnational corporation TotalEnergies had signed the final investment decision with the government of Uganda. The production of oil has faced several setbacks due to ‘complicated relationships between the companies and the Government, extensive negotiations, and tax disputes’ (FHRI and FIDH, 2020, p.14). While the second *National Development Plan of Uganda* (NPA, 2015) estimated the oil would start being pumped in 2018, the newest estimation of commercial production has been postponed to 2025 (Murungi, 2022). Whereas the current ambivalence of international oil prices will likely influence the timing of the oil projects, estimations have put the production peak at 230,000 barrels per day for 15 years (World Oil, 2022).

The main transnational corporations (TNCs) involved in the oil extractive industry in Uganda are currently the French oil major TotalEnergies (previously Total Oil) via Total E&P Uganda, its local subsidiary. Another major is China National Offshore Oil Corporation (CNOOC). It functions via its local subsidiary CNOOC Uganda Ltd. (FHRI and FIDH, 2020). The government of Uganda is hopeful that the newly arising oil industry will have prominent positive effects on Government revenue, the country’s geopolitical standing and parts of the Ugandan economy. Indeed, the second *National Development Plan of Uganda* (2015/16-2019/20) presents extractive industries as one of the Government's key areas of development (The Republic of Uganda, 2015), thus presenting oil as a resource blessing to the nation.

This belief in ‘resource blessing’ is analytically grounded in the ‘Staples thesis’. It was first popularized in 1870-1913. According to this view, nations develop through the utilization of their staples such as the drilling and export of natural resources. (Barbier, 2005, pp.81–83). Countries often cited as success stories include: Botswana, Chile, Canada, and Norway, all of which have been said to have, through the prudent and transparent governance, translated an abundance of resources into economic growth, poverty reduction, and development (Hartley and Otto, 2008).

Critics, however, point to a ‘resource curse’. Locally, these critics include Serwajja (2022), Olanya (2015), and Veit et al. (2011) who provide analyses of the early signs of oil curse, including low-level conflicts that “*could metamorphose into large scale and fully-blown countrywide conflicts*” (Serwajja, 2022, p.43). Sceptics contend that, although the government has made efforts to put in regulations, laws and policies to govern the industry, the negative social implications and secrecy associated with oil resources present an indication of curse rather than a blessing (Mwanguzi, 2022). These views, too, dovetail with a long-established academic literature on the ‘resource curse’, in development studies, often traced to Richard Auty, whose primary concern was the adverse impact of countries’ natural resource abundance on their *economic growth* (see Auty, 1993). To that, most studies about oil are steeped in this resource blessing/curse dichotomy (see e.g., Abumere, 2021; Hassler et al., 2013; Rosser, 2004; Hartley and Otto, 2008; Collins, 2022). In addition, this extant literature is overly growth-centric, typically ignoring the more ecological and distributional questions that come with oil-based approach to global development.

For all these reasons, this thesis moves away from the simplistic dichotomy of resource curse/blessing (subsection 2.1.1.). Neither resource curse nor resource blessing fundamentally questions resource-based, extractivist approach to global development (Collins, 2022). So, instead, this thesis uses the critical concept of ‘extractivisms’ to explore how an extractivist mindset gets reproduced by the Ugandan state and the TNC TotalEnergies.

A working explanation is needed for that purpose. Starting with a definition sets the scene. Extractivism may be defined as a “*particular way of thinking and the properties and practices organized towards the goal of maximizing benefit through extraction, which brings in its wake violence and destruction*” (Durante et al., 2021, p.20). The negative social and environmental impacts of extractive industries have been recorded worldwide (McKay et al., 2021; Kröger, 2021; Chagnon et al., 2022). In Uganda, civil society organizations have

documented violations of human rights and the environment rising from the ongoing extractive industry investment projects (EIIPs) (FHRI and FIDH, 2020; Atine et al., 2020). For example, a Human Rights Impact Assessment (HRIA) by FIDH & FHRI (2020) found that abuses for local people resulted from the oil activities of companies and state actors include, inter alia, violations on the right to land, adequate standard of living, clean and healthy environment, and the right to health and clean water. These violations, in turn, are inextricably linked to inadequate access to information, and violations on the right of access to justice and right to participation. The government of Uganda has not complied with its duty to respect, protect and fulfill human rights of its citizens and alarmingly, the trend of narrowing civic space has simultaneously made it difficult for the human rights organizations and activists to advocate for transparency and justice related to the extractive industry. (FHRI and FIDH, 2020).

The long history of extractivism proves its persistent nature in a wide range of political contexts, and thus, it becomes important to study the ways in which extractivism is reproduced as a mindset and as the physical act of extracting earth's resources (Gudynas, 2020). Whereas impacts and violations of these EIIPs in Uganda have been widely recorded (e.g., FHRI and FIDH, 2020; Atine et al., 2020b; Serenkuma, 2022), most of the work on oil (see 1.2) has still been framed around 'resource curse' and 'resource blessings'. This thesis, on the other hand, focuses on the justification and legitimation discourses that the TNC TotalEnergies uses to legitimate its projects, as well as the discourses that the Ugandan state upholds to justify oil extractivism. These powerful actors have a way of shaping extractivist narratives and the means to generate vigorous subjectivity on the contexts of development and progress, as well as our relationship with nature.

These considerations raise two questions. Firstly, what justification methods does the Ugandan state use to legitimate oil extractivism in the Lake Albertine region? Secondly, how does the oil corporation Total reproduce narratives of extractivist mindset in legitimizing its operations in the Albertine Graben?

1.2. Previous Literature

Much scientific literature has been produced of oil in countries in the Global South, most of which can be placed under the division of 'resource blessing' or 'resource curse' (e.g., Auty, 1993; Badeeb et al., 2017; Hodler, 2006; Barbier, 2005). Whereas Uganda is a new oil country, and the oil industry's effects on the country's economic, social, and cultural development can

only be estimated at this early stage, literature on the fledgling oil and gas industry and its effects have already been published. For example, Human Rights Impact Assessments on the oil industry in the Albertine Graben region have been produced by local and international NGOs (FHRI and FIDH, 2020; Bart et al., 2020; Atine et al., 2020), and several aspects of the extractive industry has been studied to provide estimates on early symptoms of resource blessing or resource curse (see, e.g., Mbabazi, 2013; Langer et al., 2020)(see, subsection 2.1.1. for a literature review on resource blessing/curse).

This thesis employs a more recent approach of extractivism, which refuses to settle on the dualism of a blessing or a curse. On the contrary, this approach challenges this two-fold perspective by viewing natural resources such as oil beyond their physical attributes to symbolic and social spaces as well (Kröger, 2020). Literature on extractivism is growing (see subsection 2.1.2.), but much of the research produced within this approach is still predominantly focused on countries in Latin America (see e.g., Kröger, 2020, 2021; McKay et al., 2021; Konforti, 2022). This thesis contributes to the growing literature by studying how prevailing discourses by powerful actors reproduce the extractivist mindset in the Ugandan context. Section 2.1. of this thesis provides a more profound look into previous literature on the questions of oil in Africa and Uganda more specifically, and subsection 2.1.3. outlines the gaps in the literature that this thesis complements.

1.3. Data, Results and Key Arguments

This thesis utilizes a variety of empirical data from different sources to answer the proposed research questions. To analyze what justification methods the Ugandan state uses to legitimate oil extractivism in the Lake Albert region, three types of primary material were collected. These consist of policy documents by the Uganda Planning Authority, website textual material of the Petroleum Authority of Uganda, and newspaper articles by various media channels. To answer how the oil corporation Total reproduces narratives of extractivist mindset in legitimizing its operations in the Albertine Graben, two types of primary material were collected, namely, policy documents and website textual material. (See section 3.2.)

Results of the critical discourse analysis and content analysis show that the Ugandan state legitimates oil through five distinct discourses, namely, economic arguments, employment and social arguments, no substantial ecological effects arguments; statements for energy poverty, energy security, and just transition; and stigmatizing critics arguments. Total,

on the other hand, utilizes three discourses of self-regulation and best practice, social and developmental arguments, and no substantial ecological effects arguments. While the state's and Total's arguments are separately analyzed, it is showed that they also have similarities. Analysis and results are presented in chapter 4.

This thesis argues that the discourses by state and Total are not separate and innocent instances of a textual world but bare serious implications on the Ugandan society and on the wider world. Thus, not only is it shown how the actors use these discourses to legitimate oil extractivism, but the consequences of these discourses as well as how they shape the way that development is understood are presented in chapter 5.

1.4. Thesis Structure

This thesis is divided into six chapters. *Chapter 2* reviews earlier literature and locates this study within various theories of resource-based development. The chapter critically appraises different approaches to development, from the dichotomous resource curse/blessing theories and postcolonialism, to extractivism. *Chapter 3* presents research approach & positionality, data collection, methodological framework for data analysis, as well as the background information to the Ugandan oil and gas industry, by showcasing its main shareholders and stakeholders, as well as the effects of the industry to the civil society and local affected communities. The analysis of the oil legitimating discourses is presented in *Chapter 4*, which is divided between the state discourses and Total's discourses. *Chapter 5* will thereafter complement the previous chapter by providing critical remarks on the discourses and their implications to the wider society and the world. Lastly, *Chapter 6* will give the overall concluding remarks.

2. Theories of (Resource-Based) Development: Development with What and for Whom?

2.1. Literature Review

A large literature has been produced about oil and development in Africa. Most of this literature can be organized around the main approaches on the studies of natural resources and oil in particular.

2.1.1. Resource Blessing and Resource Curse

A doctrine which has believed that natural resources such as oil and gas is the base for development and economic prosperity and sustained growth, has been deep since Adam Smith and David Ricardo (Badeeb et al., 2017). Historically, however, this belief goes much deeper, since as Barbier notes, natural resource exploitation has been key factor in economic development throughout most global history (2005, p.52). World systems analysts have traced the destructive extraction and anthropocentric appropriation, aimed towards building empires, to start take place 5,000 years ago (Frank and Gills, 1993 as cited in Francesco Durante et al., 2021), whereas the Golden Age of Resource-Based Development is often cited between 1870-1913 due to the many ‘periphery’ areas that benefited from exporting their primary products to the ‘core’ industrial areas at this time (Taylor and Williamson, 1994; Barbier, 2005). The ‘Staple Thesis’, developed by the Canadian economic historian Harold Innis (1954), gained inspiration from the Golden Age of Resource-Based Development arguing that countries such as Canada had developed and grown their economies significantly, through the exports of natural resources or ‘staples’ (Obeng-Odoom, 2013; Barbier, 2005; Polterovich et al., 2010). His view has later been endorsed by anthropologists (Richardson & Weszkalnys, 2014; Weszkalnys, 2018 as cited in Obeng-Odoom, 2021b, p.135), sociologists (Davidson & Dunlap, 2012 as cited in Obeng-Odoom, 2021b, p.135), and applied local economists (Murais et al., 2018 as cited in Obeng-Odoom, 2021b, p.135), all of whom believe that oil resources in Africa can actually bring forth prosperity without causing ecological trauma, or poverty (Obeng-Odoom, 2021b).

This conventional story of oil as a pillar for development could be regarded as naïve at first, when in fact, its foundations are grounded in economics. Even organizations such as the

African Union, United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, and the African Development Bank, seem to promote this conventional wisdom that holds that corporate led oil extraction, if well managed, is key for development and dynamic growth for the African continent (African Progress Panel, 2012:11 as cited in Obeng-Odoom, 2021b). Importantly, Morten Jerven (2015) in his book *'Africa: Why Economists Get It Wrong'* explains why the Conventional Wisdom thought produces quite simplistic and misleading conclusions. First, much of the studies explaining resource curse by corruption or inefficient management of resources is ahistorical by nature, thus overlooking contexts and colonial past of nations. Related to the first reason, the second derives from the methodological practice of relying on numeric data in explaining complex phenomena without taking insights of specific contexts into account. Third, Jerven (2015) notes that economic analyses often draw simplistic correlations and equivocal causations without durable and detailed assessment of growth and change in Africa.

Resource curse theory came to challenge the conventional perception of resources being a blessing to 'developing countries' and started gaining popularity around the late 1980s and early 1990s both in the scholarly research and policymaking departments of development organizations (Murrey and Jackson, 2019). Natural resource curse was first coined by Richard Auty, an economic geographer, in 1993, in his book *'Sustaining development in mineral economies: the resource curse thesis'* where he discusses the 'counter intuitive outcome' of bad performance of countries abundant in resources (Auty, 1993). The curse is commonly defined as an "*inverse association between natural resource dependence and economic growth*" in other words, to an event in which resource rich countries tend to perform worse off than their resource poor counterparts (Badeeb et al., 2017, p.123). More specifically, those countries relying their economies heavily on oil production, may be attributed to 'oil curse' (Badeeb et al., 2017).

Two main strands on the study of resource curse can be distinguished, depending on what aspect of the curse is put under the microscope (Vahabi, 2017). As seen in the definition, the first (dominant) strand emphasizes the economic meaning of the curse by implying that resource rich countries tend to grow less rapidly than countries without this paradox of plenty, as it has been coined (Auty, 1993; Sachs and Warner, 1995). Previous scholarly work has explained the underlying economic causes in the following ways: Dutch disease models (see e.g., Gelb, 1988; Matsuyama, 1992; Torvik, 2001; Auty, 2001), referring to "*poor macroeconomic performance*" of a nation, namely, an effect where a non-mineral sector loses

its competitiveness, resulting in a negative relationship between abundance of resources and growth rates (Hartley and Otto, 2008, p.290); corruption and rent-seeking models that underlie the failure of political institutions to transfer benefits of resources for the society as a whole (see e.g., Acemoglu, 1995; Baland and Francois, 2000; Deacon and Rode, 2015), and finally; institutional explanations, that emphasize the importance of strong and high quality institutions in mitigating resource curse (see e.g., Atkinson and Hamilton, 2003; Hodler, 2006; Wiens, 2014). The second strand is a literature on *political* resource curse. This body of work has studied the propensity of resource rich countries in being more authoritarian and more inclined to unrest, conflicts and civil wars than those without such wealth (Humphreys, 2005; Smith, 2007; Ahmadov, 2014 as cited in Vahabi, 2017, p.3). Generally speaking then, resource curse refers to a phenomena by which resource abundance results in growth collapses, political and governance shortcomings, and/or corruption and instabilities (Global Witness, 2010, p.2; Di John, 2011, p.168), although some studies have extended the concept to other human development outcomes, such as lower life expectancy, high rates of child mortality, and weak provision of health and education services (Karl, 2004).

Demographically, most studies associated with resource curse literature focus on the negative experiences in the Global South (e.g., Nigeria, Angola, the Democratic Republic of the Congo), yet it is important to emphasize that Northern countries such as Norway, and Canada are not the only nations having experienced the so-called resource blessing. Mozambique is often cited as the African success story, along with other Southern countries such as Chile and Malaysia that have avoided the curse. (Hartley and Otto, 2008; Kiiza et al., 2011). Scholarly work on Mozambique – a country abundant in natural resources such as gas, titanium and oil - has expressed how the country's new legislative frameworks, fiscal policies, and commitment to transparency and good governance have helped the country to move 'in a good direction', creating poverty alleviation and unprecedented Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth. (Hartley and Otto, 2008; Green and Otto, 2014).

Although it is too early to study the Ugandan oil industry and its impacts on the economy of the country in a similar vein, scholars and organizations have already done work on the early signs of oil curse within the resource curse/blessing framework, pondering which route Uganda will follow, and whether it will be possible to avoid worst outcomes (see e.g., Global Witness, 2010; Mbabazi, 2013; Hassler et al., 2013). For example, Mbabazi (2013) has compared the policies and type of leadership between Uganda and the above showed success story and articulated how the former could learn from the latter in terms of combatting

corruption and strengthening its public institutions. Additionally, a co-authored book ‘Oil Wealth and Development in Uganda and Beyond: prospects, opportunities and challenges’ edited by Langer et al. (2020) reviews various aspects of the Ugandan extractive industry and its impacts on community rights and environmental sustainability. Factors either contributing to, or mitigating the curse, such as fiscal regimes, corruption, institutions, and human resource development are extensively covered in this book.

As we have seen, the resource curse thesis is vast and has been extensively used in explaining why natural resources do not always materialize as economic growth and increased societal well-being. Despite its popularity, the theory has gotten its share of critique. Indeed, one of the main critique provides that the theory mismatches causes from effects, that it is poor governance of politics and economics that creates the curse and not the other way around (Kiiza et al., 2011, p.10). Sociologists have developed critical views on resource blessing, a work called anomie (by Emile Durkheim) which emphasizes the breakdown of social systems during resource booms to that of economic outcomes. This approach has been critiqued as well, however, of its ahistorical nature, ignorance towards distribution and institutions, and the way that TNC are perceived as agents for development. (Lawrie et al., 2011; Ayelazuno, 2013 as cited in Obeng-Odoom, 2018a, p.24). As Obeng-Odoom has stated “[t]he major strategic significance of [resource curse] thesis is that it turns attention away from the methods by which TNCs continue to extract economic rents from Africa or invite foreign military assistance to protect their rents. It focuses instead on the presumed deficiencies of Africans in managing their own affairs.” (Obeng-Odoom, 2020, p.284).

This thesis aims to move forward from this dichotomy and opposes the strong economic foundations of the resource curse, especially in terms of how development is equated with economic growth. While the theoretical background for this thesis is drawn from elsewhere, it is crucial to understand the debates around resource curse and blessing because references to both will be traced from the discourses by the state and Total. As provided by Obeng-Odoom “to replace simplistic questions that lead to dichotomous analyses framed around euphoria (resource blessing) and pessimism (resource curse)” new questions need to be asked about lived experiences of oil in Africa (2021, p.138). By extension, new approaches need to be used.

2.1.2. Extractivism

Extractivism is one of such ways. Originally, carved out of the Latin American concept of '*extractivismo*' – commonly used in the 1970s to explain developments in the oil and mining sectors in Latin America (Gudynas, 2018 as cited in Francesco Durante et al., 2021, p.21) as well as the resistance of indigenous peoples' and post-extractivist alternatives in relation to natural resources (Gudynas, 2015, 2021, as cited in Chagnon et al., 2022), extractivism is now increasingly widely used. The term is commonly used to refer to destructive or extensive forms of extraction and has a negative undertone, as the word itself stems from the Latin '*extrahere*', meaning 'to pull out' (Kröger, 2020). Academic discourses have started using the concept since the 2010s, and extractivism is now used in several disciplines from political ecology and social sciences to those in the digital and financial sectors (Francesco Durante et al., 2021).

Scholars have produced several notable definitions on extractivism, and while there are spatial limitations that prevent a detailed discussion on all of them here, some key positions shall be identified to show the shared and contending meanings within the use of the context. Starting from the shared threads of what extractivism entails, Chagnon et.al., (2022, p.5) have identified the following: extractivism implicates extraction of raw (or minimally processed) resources and leads to depletion and possibly permanent harm; extractivism exists due to relational power inequalities; is locally rooted, yet may be analysed in various relational levels; and lastly, extractivism has persisted and is thus an 'integral force' in several of historical and current systems such as capitalism, imperialism, colonialism, and modernity, yet does not depend on any of these particular systems. These attributes are commonly acknowledged by scholars using the concept and next, contending meanings will follow.

Current debates have been dealing with controversy on whether extractivism should be seen solely in terms of physical, tangible natural resources, or within a wider sense to include intangible resources such as data, finance and ontologies. Eduardo Gudynas, (2018 as cited in Chagnon et al., 2022, pp.5–6) a respected Latin American social ecologists, contends that the wider meaning of extractivism to other than physical natural resources as this would, in his opinion, result in too broad analysis and consequently, hamper the processes of identifying alternatives and resistance modes to extractivism. As mentioned, however, the term has already expanded as the lenses of extractivism has been applied to other resources such as academic extractivism (Icaza, 2018), epistemic and ontological extractivism (Grosfoguel, 2020), indigenous knowledges (Klein, 2013), and financial extractivism (Gago and Mezzadra, 2017).

Other scholars have studied digital extractivism, data extractivism most notably (see e.g., Morozov, 2017; Couldry and Mejias, 2019 and Sadowski, 2019, 2020; Moore, 2020 as cited in Chagnon et al., 2022, pp.29–30), and argued that, indeed, if virtual platforms are now a defining characteristic of present-day capitalism (Sadowski, 2020, p.30) and extractivism aims at building a comprehensive understanding of the contemporary world, then this aspect should be included (Chagnon et al., 2022).

To emphasize, extractivism is locally rooted but its analysis may take place in several dimensions, be it state level, national, regional, or global (Chagnon et al., 2022; Kröger et al., 2021). While studies on resistance to extractivisms (Kröger, 2020; Ehrnström-Fuentes, 2022) and extrACTIVISM (Willow, 2018) review local activism in particular places, they also acknowledge the global aspect within these struggles. For example, Kröger (2020, p.xii) has studied resistance strategies of local communities against forestry and mining extractivism in both Brazil and India, as well as how these strategies influence local, national, and global extractive projects. Global extractivism is used in explaining the extractivist world-ecology (Kröger, 2020, p.4), as a global pattern, which is intertwined in the daily lives of most people around the globe, leaving no ecosystems untouched nor unharmed (Chagnon et al., 2022).

Much of the work on extractivisms has initially focused on Latin America (Chagnon et al., 2022), and not surprisingly so, as the region has suffered most of the extinction crises that go hand in hand with contemporary extractivisms (Kröger, 2022). However, recently, the critical attention to global extractivisms has increased, creating research more widely on different continents, including: palm oil extractivism in Indonesia (Brad et al., 2015) and mining resistance and legitimation strategies in Kyrgystan (Ocaklı et al., 2021); and people-resource relations in the Arctic Russia (Stammler and Ivanova, 2016). Mining and development projects have been studied in the African context (see e.g., Ayelazuno, 2019; Greco, 2020), gender and environmental politics of resource extractivism in Niger Delta (Ashamole, 2019), and the gendered nature of extractivisms in Africa more generally (Pereira and Tsikata, 2021). This study will contribute to the wider understanding of oil extractivism in Africa, Uganda.

Extractivism does not exist merely as a physical process but also within symbolic and social spaces, this being a crucial distinction that extractivism has to other analyses that study similar phenomena from economic or material point of view (e.g., literature on resource curse). Thus, extractivism opens up new avenues for the study on oil extractivism and additionally, goes well with analyses of discourses and power, as “*extractivism entails a type of mind-set,*

ideology, and practice that seeks to primarily take from nature without giving back” (Kröger, 2020, p.5). Due to the social aspect of extractivism an organizing concept, my thesis adopts the definition of extractivism as a *“particular way of thinking and the properties and practices organized towards the goal of maximizing benefit through extraction, which brings in its wake violence and destruction”* (Francesco Durante et al., 2021, p.20).

Much work has been done on extractivism in Africa, too. Many of these, however, focus on governance questions centred around the ‘Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative’ (EITI) (see e.g., Stuesson and Zobel, 2015; Van Alstine, 2014). Research like these ones, much like research on oil curse/blessing could be quite ahistorical. As an important aspect, extractivism acknowledges the colonial underpinnings that the current global extractivisms hold, and thus, overcome the ahistorical nature of other approaches. Of course, the resource blessing was pioneered by economic historians, but such studies were most focused on economic, not ecological questions (e.g., Barbier, 2005; Hartley and Otto, 2008).

Although I am in much favour with the approach of extractivism - its critical take on extractivism that is - there is one shortcoming that must be addressed, namely, its lack of economic approach for issues addressing development. To tackle this issue, this thesis will complement the ecological approach of extractivism with a particular type of postcolonial analyses (see section 2.4). This postcolonial approach will help strengthen the political-economic analyses relating to natural resources, as well as the discursive approach of my study.

2.1.3. Gaps in the Literature and Research Questions

Concerns, risks and actual impacts of oil EIIPs to local communities in Uganda have been extensively covered by organizational work. For example, Oxfam together with other NGOs and the French International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) and Ugandan Foundation for Human Rights Initiative (FHRI) produced HRIA on the actual impacts and future risks of the upstream oil projects in Tilenga and Kingfisher areas in Uganda (FHRI and FIDH, 2020) and on the social, cultural and human rights risks of the East African Crude Oil Pipeline (EACOP) in both Uganda and Tanzania (Atine et al., 2020). Coalitions such as Publish What You Pay (PWYP) Uganda, and The Civil Society Coalition on Oil and Gas (CSCO) are both networks of organizations that work towards a more sustainable and transparent industry and have produced publications on the environmental and social implications of the oil and gas industry in Uganda (PWYP, n.d.; CSCO, 2020). However, a range of studies have documented

the narrowing of (legal and operational) civic space in Uganda, which has hampered the work of NGOs and human rights activists working around issues of oil and gas (see e.g., Mbazira and Namatovu, 2018; Musila, 2019; Global Rights Alert, 2017).

Academic work has also been produced on the effects of the oil industry to local communities in the Albertine Graben region. Yusuf Serenkuma, in his book *Before the First Drop: Oil, Capitalists, and the Wretches of Western Uganda* (2022) provides analyses from the perspective of the affected people, before the actual oil has started to flow. His fieldwork shows, how extractivism has resulted in traumas and violence of development, as displacement, resettlement, inadequate compensation, and aggression have become the norm. In addition to politics, institutions and policy frameworks, the previously mentioned book edited by Langer et al. (2020) covers similar issues resulting to the local populations and the initial optimism of oil which transformed to fear and desperation shortly after land grabbing, forceful evictions and other human rights issues started taking place.

Research on the prevailing discourses by state actors has been less produced in the Ugandan context. However, some similar questions have been raised by few scholars which I will go into more detail in my thesis. For example, Kiiza et. al. (2011), while engaging the resource curse discussion, have examined the management of popular expectations and anxieties in relation to the discovery of the oil. Their paper found that, the Ugandan government has been secretive and has withheld information from the public, as a strategy to manage public concerns that are widely a result of the corruption they have witnessed in the past. Holterman's (2014) article 'The biopolitical war for life: Extractivism and the Ugandan oil state', then again, assessed the new extractive state by both looking at the 'developmental benefits' of the industry as promoted by the state and the implications of extractivisms on the livelihoods of Ugandans. Central to his findings is that the Government has used a discourse of thanks and praise of oil, one which he calls 'oil for development'. He approaches this issue with biopolitics and security aspects, while arguing that the state threatens to violently strip lives of those who do not fit the vision of particular biopolitical life, to bare forms. While this thesis also investigates state discourses, it will do so from different methodological and theoretical standpoints, thus providing more current analyses from new aspects. Having produced his work in 2014, I believe that there is a research gap to which my work can add on, for example, my study will also focus on analyzing TNCs legitimation discourses, an area which he overlooks in his article.

Finally, Ocaklı et. al. (2021) have produced a study related to my thesis aim, since they investigated means by which powerful actors such as state and multinational corporations use discourses and narratives in reproducing extractivisms and legitimating their extractive projects despite their recorded social, and environmental negative implications. However, this is a case-study on the Kyrgyzstan mining industries, so a similar study with extractivism as strong theoretical background has not yet been produced in the Ugandan context.

None of these studies, however, address the question of discourse that I raised. This thesis thus aims to answer the following research questions:

1 - *What justification methods does the Ugandan state use to legitimate oil extractivism in the Lake Albertine region?*

2 - *How does the oil corporation Total reproduce narratives of extractivist mindset in legitimizing its operations in the Albertine Graben?*

The novelty and timelines of these questions become clearer when we step back to reflect on their place in the persistence of development as a linear process.

2.2. The Persistence of Development as a Linear Process

The way development is understood has changed throughout different periods of history. Before the 19th century, development was seen as an evolutionary and natural process with no intentionality. From 19th century onwards, however, development became more of a premeditated process that had intentionality, a ‘will to improve’ so to say (Li, 2007 as cited in McEwan, 2009, p.78). Although development indexes, and other development measurements have been long quantifying these processes, discourses of development have never been truly autonomous from suggesting it as a linear and evolutionary process (McEwan, 2009), not unproblematically so. Perhaps, the most powerful exponent of development as a linear process was W.W. Rostow. According to Rostow’s theory of development (1959), there are five stages of growth, that will, starting from ‘traditional society’, lead to the last stage of development, namely, ‘mass consumption’ which is characterized by global political influence, electric housing, private transportation, mass production and consumerism.

The political problem of the conceptualization of ‘progress’ or ‘development’ as an imminent fact lies in a few interconnected issues. Firstly, the institutions and standards of European or Western modernity are perceived as the desired end-result of the process of

development, however, ever acknowledging the material wrongdoings that served as a precondition for this to happen. For one, the rise of capitalism in Europe was enabled by the exploitation and extraction of both the colonies' natural resources and colonized subjects. (Allen, 2016). As summarised by Frantz Fanon "*Europe is literally the creation of the Third World. The riches which are chocking it are those plundered from the underdeveloped peoples*" (2004, n.p). Andre Gunder Frank was one of the first dependency theorists, who wrote about this uneven development and exploitation where the Global North (core) has been able to develop by the expense of the Global South (periphery). Whereas the former could thrive, the latter has been underdeveloping due to the dependency caused by unequal relations and colonialism. (Frank, 1969).

An ideological dependency persisted on top of the material one, for Europe's relation to its colonies reflected the way that it perceived its identity, namely, the 'us' as a distinction to 'them' as a separate entity by means of geographical, cultural, and historical othering. (Allen, 2016 see also, Said, 1978). These material and ideological relations have been "*shaping European modernity as a racialized construct*" (Allen, 2016, p.19) which in turn, continue to legitimate dominating forms of neocolonial and -imperial practices (ibid). As modernity remains seen as the unfulfilled scheme of the global South (McEwan, 2009), today's so-called 'developmental projects' can be seen as a continuation of this kind of logic.

Consequently, the idea and practice of development went through several forms. These include: an unacknowledged condition of colonialism, which was mainly organized towards exploiting natural resources legitimated by development; later, an intentional political, social and economic process, in which development was mainly understood as economic growth and modernization; and most recently, an aim towards sustainable development, a concept containing good governance, poverty eradication and the like (Koponen, 2020). Yet, even still, development continues to be seen as a linear process. This way of framing development is problematic because it presumes there to be a cutting point where development is suddenly achieved and stops, whereas 'developed' countries also develop continuously.

The second problem is an interlinked, epistemological one. While it is out of the scope of this thesis to provide a deep dive into this theory of knowledge on the matter, it should, nevertheless, be noted that questioning the basis through which one claims to know, and thus decide what progress is, is important. (Allen, 2016). This is an issue linked with power, or what Quijano (2000) has conceptualized as the 'coloniality of power'. This concept understands

European colonialism as an intertwining of economic and political domination. These are both linked with Eurocentrism which he defines as a “*specific rationality or perspective of knowledge that was made globally hegemonic, colonizing and overcoming other previous or different conceptual formations and their respective concrete knowledges, as much in Europe as in the rest of the world*” (Quijano, 2000, p.549).

These theories of resource-based development range from resource blessings to resource curse. More recently, extractivism has been significantly advanced to challenge such resource-based theories of development.

2.3. Extractivism as Development

As presented in subsection 2.1.2., the approach of extractivism is quite new, but has attracted a vast number of scholars from different disciplines due to its versatile nature (ecological, social, and political aspects on several levels) to study a range of unsustainable practices (Kröger et al., 2021). This part subsidises the introductory-literature review section, by giving a more profound take on extractivism and how this thesis aims to utilize it as an organizing concept.

First, to understand the intrinsic violent nature of extractivism, it should be reviewed how this ‘onto-logic’ has operated throughout the centuries and has thereafter formed the basis of our modern world-system and its functionality. (Francesco Durante et al., 2021, p.24). Scholars have noted that modern extractivist activities started to take place about 500 years ago (Acosta, 2012 as cited in Grosfoguel, 2020, p.204) thus, these practices are inextricably interwoven with European colonialism, as well as the Enlightenment and scientific revolution, and the development of our modern world system (Merchant, 1983, as cited in Francesco Durante et al., 2021).

The genealogy on the origins of ‘*terra nullius*’ (nobody’s land) provides understanding of the world as it preserved throughout the Ancient, Christian and Enlightenment histories of Europe (Fitzmaurice, 2007), and created basis for the prevailing extractivist logic/mindset of today (Francesco Durante et al., 2021). What was initially used as a philosophy/natural law by the ancient Greeks and the Romans, materialized in international law in the late 1800s as ‘a thing belonging to no one’. The concept of the natural law has been momentous for a couple of reasons. Namely, because the law claims that to own property (and therefore to claim

humanity) is only established through the exploitation of the physical environment and its resources. Consequently, where the European colonial powers interpreted that nature had not been exploited, this law was used to legitimate the domination and colonial dispossession of the lands. Extractivist mindset has thus been pondering the violence, and destruction of indigenous peoples and ecosystems for centuries, while simultaneously deepening the dominance of humans over nature. (Fitzmaurice, 2007; Francesco Durante et al., 2021).

While extractivist mindset has prevailed over centuries, it has undoubtedly become more permeating within the past century (Francesco Durante et al., 2021). This mindset represents an ideology where nature shall be exploited, where too much is taken too quickly, destructively and without giving the nature time to balance and recreate itself (Kröger et al., 2021). Whereas one of the preconditions of extractivism is to devalue nature and life forms into ‘exploitable natural resources’, not all extractivist activities count as what extractivism entails (although the former is a prerequisite to the latter) (Francesco Durante et al., 2021). Extractivism entails large scale extraction and is linked to ecological degradation and depletion (Ye et al., 2020). Other values of nature are decreased into the potential in converting its materials into commodities, commodification being what extractivism naturally revolves around – to serve capital accumulation (Kröger et al., 2021).

Indeed, as Kröger et al. (2021, p.244) note “*one cannot separate critique of extractivism from a critique of capitalist modernity*”. Of Ye et al.’s (2020) ten-point list featuring extractivism, half refer to the accumulation of capital to the hands of very few, the close linkages between state and transnational capital that extractivisms depend on, and the inequalities that these processes create and uphold. There exists a sharp gully between those who have access to the extracted resources and benefit from these activities, and those who are negatively affected by the processes and lack the access to the benefits. (Ye et al., 2020). Power inequalities between the global North and global South get produced by extractivism as more often than not, primary commodity extraction takes place in the South whereas capital accumulation and wealth is collected by the North through dominating transnational corporations (Bunker and Ciccantell, 2005 as cited in Kröger et al., 2021, p.245).

Extractivism is useful for the understanding of the varying and converging crises of our times, their underlying causes and the ways in which they threaten sustainability (Kröger et al., 2021). It recognizes climate change, pollution, ecocide, entropy and the radical transformation of ecosystems as some of these crises that have been driven by human activities, including

extractivism (Moore, 2016; Escobar, 2020 as cited in Kröger et al., 2021, p.243). Moreover, it provides means to look for sustainable alternatives and a post-extractivist era (Kröger et al., 2021).

The fundamental claims made by proponents utilizing extractivism as a framework to assess global development, thus, suggest the following: 1) extraction of oil is in direct conflict with sustainability and drives ecological crises, and 2) to resist unsustainability and promote ecological equity, investing in renewable resources is required. (Kröger et al., 2021). Modernization advocates hotly contest this take, as for them oil will bring a new modernity, a new development. Ecological modernization, for example, is a school of thought that promotes a possibility in which economic and environmental values may be mutually supporting. In other words, this theory assumes that institutional and technological modernization processes enable economic growth without creating negative environmental impacts. (Dryzek 2005, p. 168 as cited in Bradley, 2019, p.2).

2.4. Postcolonial Approach to Development

The postcolonial approach can help to resolve this impasse. For one thing, the extractivist approach could be quite ahistorical or, if historical, quite ‘ecocentric’. Modernization advocates are similarly narrow, often providing ‘Whiggish history’, considering development as linear, or conceiving social change as entirely ‘economic’ (Mayr, 1990). In my thesis, I use a particular postcolonial approach to extractivism. I provide a more comprehensive approach to extractivism which is sensitive to the social, economic and ecological, quite successfully utilized in previous studies (e.g., Lammensalo, 2021; Simberg-Koulumies, 2021). This approach derives and is mainly adopted from the book ‘Postcolonialism and Development’ by Cheryl McEwan (2009). While postcolonial tradition has been gaining dominance since the 1970s (‘Orientalism’ by Edward Said, 1979 as the locus classicus of postcolonialism), its approach to development has been relatively scarce before the publication of this book. Although they do consider many similar topics, development and postcolonial approaches consider them through different traditions, and the motives and terms by which these issues have been addressed differ. This is partly because the relationship between development and postcolonialism has often been opposing and mutually critical. After all, development represents one of the Western prevalent discourses which postcolonialism seeks to actively question and destabilize. (McEwan, 2009).

This thesis benefits from the criticism postcolonialism grants to development (and vice versa). While postcolonialism has been sometimes criticized for its ignorance towards ‘socio-economic inequality’ (Chibber, 2013), the approach presented in McEwan’s book does not overlook this framework but provides means to utilize postcolonial lenses to questions around ‘development’, and to challenge the Euro- and Western-centric understanding of the term. It does so by expanding the intersection and exchange between these two bodies of theory.

Originally, postcolonialism derives from literary criticism, where its aim is to analyse discourses (including but not limited to concepts, narratives, ideologies, and signifying practices) and critique representations, especially where actors from the global North have depicted persons and cultures from the previously colonized nations in a stereotypical, harmful, and negative manner (McEwan, 2009). The critique is relevant, even within the development studies discipline. For example, to distinguish global South/North, is preferred in this thesis to that of other terminologies such as ‘developing/developed nations, third/first world’ which are more problematic in that they carry a connotation of “hierarchy and value judgement”, such as economic backwardness and the failure of development. (McEwan, 2009, p.12). Whereas North/South division is not completely unproblematic either, since it is geographically generalizing and unable to carry the complexities within the different countries, it is the least to promote and strengthen the ideology that the relatively poorer continents of Africa, Latin America, Asia, the Caribbean, and the Pacific countries would/should follow similar pathways as the economically wealthier nations (‘development as a linear process’).

Because “[p]ostcolonialism demands more globally informed knowledges, rather than the western-centric ones” (McEwan, 2009, p.23) it provides means to challenge other binary oppositions that have been in the foundation of western knowledge since the Enlightenment and ancient Greek philosophy. Binaries such as Self/Other, Masculine/Feminine, White/Black, Development/Underdevelopment, Culture/Nature, Human/Nature, Civilized/Uncivilized, Reason/Emotion, function by systematically establishing the ‘good and normal’ as opposed to the abnormal and deviant. The use of these binaries is based on the logic of dominance, and has functioned as means to justify control, intervention, or violence, to those portrayed as ‘others’. (McEwan, 2009, pp.123–124). The analysis of the thesis will concretise the use of some of these, and other binaries used by actors that possess the extractivist mindset.

Postcolonialism, as well as a literary theory (which fits well with the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) employed in this thesis), may be used as a metaphysical, ethical, and political

theory. Within this approach, issues of identity, race, gender, and ethnicity are explored; and challenges of developing postcolonial national identities as well as connections of knowledge and power are addressed. (McEwan, 2009, pp.22–23). For the aims of this thesis, the latter comes with utmost importance, as within this framework, it is possible to better understand how colonial powers (or otherwise powerful actors) produce knowledges promoting their own interests at the expense of the previously colonized, therefore upholding similar power structures that existed before decolonization. The main aim in this thesis is to understand the discourses by which the Ugandan state and Total produce dominant discourses for their own interests. However, the analysis goes further in realizing that the question ‘who has the power to produce knowledges’ has implications on the lives of those who are colonized by these extractivist practices and discourses (of development).

As Rita Abrahamsen (2003) states, postcolonialism has been much criticised of its often theoretical and abstract language and emphasis on textuality and discourse - arguing that it is a mere theory without contact to the ‘real world’ (see e.g., Dirlik, 1994; Williams, 1997). Because postcolonialism is rooted in humanities (and inspired by Marxism and poststructuralism) this argument may provide some credence, but it overlooks the fact that discourse is deeply material. Discourse affects lived experience and the powers ordering the world are often producing narratives, texts, representations, that then translates into material life. (McEwan, 2009). Another common criticism even contends postcolonialism as apolitical, lacking the means to address issues relating to power. Postcolonialism, however, is not a unified theoretical body neither should it be treated as such. It should rather be understood as “multiple, diverse, and eschew[ing] any easy generalizations” (Abrahamsen, 2003, p.191). That being said, the more political branch of this rich body of literature does analyse more concrete setting such as practices, political institutions, developmental and geopolitical interventions, as well as policies that are relevant to its core strategies and aims. Framing postcolonialism as apolitical also averts the acknowledgement of one of its most momentous points, that is, the relationship between power, practices, discourses, and political institutions. (Abrahamsen, 2003). The case of resource extractivism encompasses many if not all these which is why postcolonialism supports the analysis of the Ugandan case in question.

It is important to note that the ‘post’ in postcolonialism does not imply there to have been a change in the global system of hegemonic power after decolonization. Rather conversely, since as Spivak holds ‘we live in a post-colonial neo-colonized world’ (Spivak, 1990:166 as cited in Abrahamsen, 2003, p.195) and thus, the post should be realized as an

indication of continuum of structures and power struggles that continue to exist ‘after’ colonialism.

Recent debates about postcolonial theory have centred on just how well it can address political-economic questions (Chibber, 2013). Others centre on the relationship between decolonialism and postcolonialism (Mignolo and Walsh, 2018). A critical difference seems to be linked to ecological questions. ‘Decolonizing nature, economy, and society’ is one way of bridging the gap (Obeng-Odoom, 2021b). So, probing how oil framed within this postcolonial approach to extractivism is critical. A fundamental question remains, namely, how to develop a geographically and historically specific approach to the issue of extractivism within an African postcolonial context. The surplus approach, is a useful point of departure, which has been significantly developed by Chibuzo Nwoke in his thinking of African resources (Nwoke, 1984). More recently, he has advocated for ‘independent development and self-reliance in Africa’, by noting that this will not be attained by external trade nor economic growth but by focusing on autonomous development through human beings and their well-being (Nwoke, 2020), reflecting a long commitment to ‘delinking’ advocated by Samir Amin (see Amin, 1990), Africa’s eminent political economist. Yet, even this advance can be further extended to consider ecological ways as Reginald Cline-Cole (2020) has done. Combining the economic and the ecological within a broad framework of social transformation could, therefore, be useful for this thesis.

3. Oil Extractivism in Uganda

3.1. Research Approach & Positionality

Answers to the proposed research questions must not be from Thomas Nagel's (1986) *A View from Nowhere*, but ontological and epistemological positions are needed to underlie the research approach and methodological choices that follow. My ontological position is close to that of an anti-foundationalist approach, assuming that there is not one real world existing independently from the meaning that an actor attaches to their action (contrary to the foundationalist approach). According to this position a researcher may never be completely 'objective', since the social world and social constructions of that world affects their 'reality' of the world. (Furlong and Marsh, 2010). In this section, I aim to articulate my own research approach, defend it, and reflect my own researcher positionality as well as ethical considerations.

Furlong and Marsh (2010) differentiate three epistemological positions of positivist, realist and interpretivist. Positivist and realist approaches utilize a foundationalist ontological position while arguing that there exists, indeed, a real world autonomous to the agents observing. The positivist tradition aims to create causalities between social phenomena and develop predictive models (by quantitative means), whereas the relativist takes that there are deep structural relationships that cannot be directly observed, but which are pivotal in understanding phenomena (qualitative & quantitative methods). These approaches differ from the interpretivist tradition, more interested in understanding than explaining, and producing an interpretation that is tied to the space and time of the phenomenon. My epistemological position falls within the interpretivist tradition, as rather than producing quantitatively generalizable results, my thesis aims to create in-depth understanding of my chosen case-study. (Furlong and Marsh, 2010). Differences between relativism and interpretivism are not so evident and being that the arising oil industry creates underlying structural relationships that explain the phenomenon, a relativist approach could have been chosen as well. Importantly, however, previous studies have been undertaken in this regard to provide understanding on the struggles between communities and agencies working on behalf of the Ugandan state. For example, Kinyera (2019) has studied the nexus between land and oil in Uganda, while revealing how the state aligns its socio-political-economic logic to petro-capitalism. Others have studied oil governance of the state in protecting its national interests during negotiations with foreign companies (see e.g., Hickey and Izama, 2016) and reviewed the politics and dynamics between

the Government of Uganda and foreign companies in the deal making processes for the oil sector (Bukonya and Nakaiza, 2020). Thus, the underlying structural relationships have already been extensively reviewed by earlier research.

My decision to adopt an interpretivist postcolonial extractivist approach stems largely from the fact that this combination provides unique lenses through which to study the Ugandan oil industry. Additionally, there are powerful commonalities between interpretivism and (postcolonial) extractivism. Both share similar rejections on the western binary-centric worldview and similar understandings of resource-based development. Indeed, these strengths are also reasons as to why they tend to overcome weaknesses of other approaches that could have been chosen, such as the resource curse/blessing frameworks. These are simplistic, dualistic, and ahistorical. Overall, they are incapable of helping to address the new questions that need to be asked and new knowledge produced on the lived experiences of oil in Africa.

Importantly, as noted by Furlong and Marsh (2010, p.21), “*a researcher’s epistemological position is reflected in what is studied, how it is studied and the status the researcher gives to their findings*”. Thus, the positions within the two, also have implications on a methodological level. My thesis undertakes critical discourse analysis (CDA), while investigating the ways in which the Ugandan state and TotalEnergies -operating in Albertine Graben reproduce the extractivist mindset and legitimate oil and gas industry in the country. Interpretive approaches presume that reality is constructed socially, and that discourses play a significant role in this process (Heracleous, 2004), which is why CDA is well suited for the aims of my study. CDA, unlike several other strands of discourse analysis, emphasizes that the construction of reality through discourses is neither unbiased nor neutral (Heracleous, 2004). Discourses are understood as ‘sites of power’ (Mumby and Stohl, 1991 as cited in; Heracleous, 2004), and CDA is committed in revealing the processes through which discourses uphold social structures that support and sustain the interests of dominant groups and classes. (Fairclough and Wodak, 1997; Wodak, 1990 as cited in Heracleous, 2004).

One of the criticisms of the interpretivist tradition quite bluntly equates it directly with subjectivism, because it is characterised by a recognition of the limits of objectivity to which a researcher can reach. This criticism suggests that there is a potentiality for unlimited interpretations without means of verification, and it further denies there to be any possibilities for generalization due to interpretivists belief that each situation is unique in its social settings and complex contexts. (see e.g., Denzin, 1983 as cited in Heracleous, 2004, p.175). However,

scholars emphasize this critique to be misleading and promote that generalization is indeed, ‘inevitable, desirable and possible’ within interpretivist research (see e.g., Williams, 2000). What Williams (2000) argues is that interpretivism – as any other approach - has its limits and is not built for total generalizations (axiomatic laws of nature) or statistical generalizations, but can produce moderatum generalizations where aspects of a phenomenon are examples of broader sets of features. Thus, to study meanings from single texts is not where CDA’s and interpretivist tradition’s capacity ends, but rather, meanings are drawn from multiple sources to understand broader social discourses and practices. (Williams, 2000; Heracleous, 2004). Utilizing methodological pluralism and avoiding methodological nationalism are both aspects which further provide objectivism and reliability of an interpretivist study. These issues are reviewed in more detail in section 3.2.

Ricoeur et.al. (1991, pp.1–20) explain that a text may have several interpretations subject to the reader’s preconceptions and how they interpret the text in relation to their own experienced situation. I am passionate about issues arising from the oil extractivist industry, and this research problem is close to my heart as I have previously interned in a Ugandan NGO, which during my time there, focused on revealing violations that local populations in Albertine Graben face by state officials and employees of the oil giants. I acknowledge that these past experiences – having visited the ‘field’ and seen the emerging oil projects, as well as how they resulted as fear, despair, and anger for the local people – shape the way in which this thesis is planned and executed, indeed, are reasons why this study was undertaken. Research fatigue was already evident among members of local communities, and their confidence in that the research carried out by several agencies and NGOs would alleviate their situation was waning at the time of my internship in 2019. This exhaustion from being interviewed is common in the literature (see e.g., Ashley, 2021; Jacquet et al., 2021).

Studying this complex phenomenon through conceptualizations of extractivism, postcolonialism, and CDA has called for constant self-reflection and navigation of my own many positionalities. As I have previously lived in Uganda for a year in total, I do understand aspects of the cultural, social, and political life. However, my own positionalities and privileges as a white academically educated woman from the Global North must be acknowledged. Although Nordic countries struggle to recognize their attendance in global colonial histories and continuations (Keskinen, 2019 as cited in Hoegaerts et al., 2022, p.4), Finland and ‘Finnishness’ do not function outside the colonial systems. Authors of ‘Finnishness, whiteness, coloniality’ have shown that whiteness is often experienced as the ‘invisible’ colour

and a non-racialized identity, the norm to which “*all other articulations of identity are compared and also condemned*” (Hoegaerts et al., 2022, p.3). This in itself is a privilege that I have and through which I perceive and understand the world.

So, clearly, my privileges and experiences differ from the realities of those who experience oil extractivism in their backyard. As Smith (1999, p.5) emphasizes, research is not an “*innocent or distant academic exercise*” but materializes in a set of social and political conditions of current and past times, which should not be overlooked by any study. Postcolonial approach provides means to critically examine oil extractivism and its alleged spinoff ‘development’ in Uganda’s socio-historical and spatial specificities, thus, linking current unequal power struggles to the legacies and continuities of colonialism. Additionally, as emphasized by postcolonial approaches, language, and knowledge hold power and as a researcher, I recognise the weight that my choices have in bringing forth new understanding of the issue at stake. A study of Africa by another white Finnish woman (Simberg-Koulumies, 2021) shows that taking such steps can help to ‘decolonize methodologies’ (Smith, 1999).

Finally, this research was conducted in accordance with ethical guidelines of responsible conduct of research as outlined by the Finnish National Board of Research Integrity (University of Helsinki, 2022), paying special attention to transparency, reliability and quality of research, throughout planning, reviewing and conducting of this research.

3.2. Data Collection

The empirical data for the analysis consists of primary documents that provide knowledge on the discourses that the Republic of Uganda, on the one hand, and the TNC Total on the other, uphold to keep the status quo of oil extractivism in the country. To answer research question 1) *What justification methods does the Ugandan state use to legitimate oil extractivism in the Lake Albertine region?*, I use relevant primary data sources. These are: three National Development Plans (NDPs) produced by National Planning Authority (NPA) in 2010, 2015, and 2020; Uganda Vision 2040 (NPA, 2013); two Petroleum Authority of Uganda’s (PAU) webpage news articles (2022), and 15 newspaper articles, published in some of the Ugandan largest newspapers, except for the two news articles published in *The Economist*, and the *Telegraph* (UK).

The media ownership structure in Uganda is diffuse. A pluralistic environment exists, meaning that private, public, and community media coexist. Of these, the privately owned media remains the most open. (United Nations Educational et al., 2018). The government's role in determining the level of media freedom is central within both public and private media houses, and journalists who criticize the inner circle of the government, or work with other sensitive issues face threats and assaults in the course of their work. (Cohen and McIntyre, 2020). The justification for regarding the chosen news articles as part of the wider state discourse on oil, stems partly from this contested press freedom in Uganda, because while civil society perspectives can occasionally be found from the media, the prevailing media outlet is still favourable to the government and its views. Additionally, many of the authors of the chosen data can be directly linked with either the government or other central oil actors. For example, the President Museveni published his comment in the *Telegraph*; and Irene Batabe, a permanent secretary in the MEMD, stated her government's oil policy in *The Economist*. Some of the articles published in Ugandan newspapers were published by government functionaries such as Ali Ssekatawa who is a Director Legal and Corporate Affairs at PAU, and Elison Karuhanga who is a lawyer and has worked in sectors of the government and for oil companies in Uganda.

To answer research question 2) *How does the oil corporation Total reproduce narratives of extractivist mindset in legitimizing its operations in the Albertine Graben?*, the following data were used: 'Tilenga Project: Environmental and Social Impact Assessment (ESIA): non-technical summary' (2019), 'East Africa Crude Oil Pipeline: ESIA Report: non-technical summary' (2019); Human Rights Briefing Paper Update (2018); and four of TotalEnergies' website page material from 2021 and 2022. These data were collected to comprise material that is highly relevant, focusing strictly on Total's activities in Uganda.

Table 1.4 Primary material for analysis

Type of data, codes	Material type	Author	Number of documents
S1 [State 1]	Policy Documents	Uganda National Planning Authority	4
S 2	Website textual material	Petroleum Authority of Uganda	2

S 3	Newspaper articles of several news channels (12 Ugandan, 2 from the UK)	Various authors, some of which have links to Uganda National Oil Company (UNOC)	15
T 1 [Total 1]	Policy Documents	Total	3
T 2	Website textual material, and pdf attachments of websites	Total	4
In total			28

To fill in blank spaces in these data sources, one open-ended interview was conducted with a Ugandan human and environmental rights activist in July 2022. Due to the sensitive nature of the subject, the activist is anonymized and referred to as ‘Albertine’ in this thesis. Albertine provided crucial information on the situation on the field (which has been most useful in the discussion chapter 5) and was very helpful in providing me access to some of the newspaper articles analysed for this thesis.

Having considered how to limit my data to an optimal amount, a decision was made not to investigate discourses by CNOOC, another oil major operating in Albertine Graben region. Although CNOOC is playing a big role in the ground and their operations are progressing rapidly, the reason to focus on the French Total arose from the fact that it is the biggest player in the extractive industry in Uganda, owning the largest (56.67%) share of oil. Extending the analysis for CNOOC would have exceeded the limits of this thesis.

Some background knowledge of natural science would have been helpful in the analysis of the environmental aspect of the ESIA's (NCEA, 2018, 2019). To ensure that this did not result as a limitation, supporting material such as the Netherlands Commission for Environmental Assessment's (NCEA, 2018, 2019) reviews on the ESIA's were used to back my own analysis in a few instances. Moreover, it should be acknowledged that a decision to utilize different data sources for the study (e.g., only government sources or only activist sources) might have resulted in slightly different findings. Such one-sided accounts lack analytical balance. Therefore, my decision to analyse data sources that provided a more comprehensive assessment is justified. Critical African development studied must be as holistic as possible. So, my aim to remain objective and comprehensive has been paramount throughout the whole research process.

Applying data triangulation is one concrete reflection of this methodology. Triangulation is also important for enhancing reliability and validity of my research results (Fusch and Ness, 2015). Triangulation may be done by employing multiple methods for data gathering, as well as for means of analysing the data (Denzin, 2009). To ensure triangulation (through methods and data), multiple sources from the state and Total for discourse analysis has been gathered. The critical approach of my analysis also benefitted from other primary sources such as the HRIAs that local and international NGOs have produced on the effects of oil investment projects in the Albertine Graben (e.g., FHRI and FIDH, 2020; Atine et al., 2020). Data saturation is tightly connected to that of data triangulation, for the latter is a sort of method to get to the former. To ensure that data saturation was reached, enough data and information for the replication of the study was used, until no more new information brought forth additional new information and coding of the data was no longer feasible. (Fusch and Ness, 2015).

3.3. Methodological Framework for Data Analysis

To critically examine prevailing justification methods for oil extractivism in Uganda, critical discourse analysis (CDA) was chosen as the primary method for analysis. As noted earlier, qualitative discourse analysis (interpretivist approach) assumes that reality is socially constructed and that discourses play a central role in this process. CDA shares the aim of investigating this process but emphasizes that the construction of reality is neither unbiased nor neutral. (Heracleous, 2004, p.186). Indeed, symbolic worlds not merely operate as communicational and reasoning mechanisms, but also as legitimating ones (Giddens, 1984) suggesting different and possibly conflicting positions of reality (Heracleous, 2004). Whereas situations (like the activity of oil extractivism) are often perceived as ‘natural’, they are discursively constructed by those in power who seek to distort social reality and institutional arrangements for their own benefit (Barthes, 1972; Gramsci, 1971). CDA aims to deconstruct and challenge this *status quo* (Heracleous, 2004) and uncover unequal power relations as upheld by discursive practices (Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002) which is why it is the best suited for the aims of my analysis.

This thesis employs CDA building on Norman Fairclough’s (1992) work, and the useful three-layer analytical framework for analysis which is provided. What distinguishes Fairclough’s analysis from other CDA (e.g., poststructuralist discourse theory) is that the

former sees discourse as not merely constitutive but also as constituted, meaning that discourse does not exist separately, but is in a dialectic relationship with other social elements. As discourse consists of written and spoken language as well as visual elements, images are accounted as constructing reality and in CDA, are analysed as if they were linguistic texts. (Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002). By investigating how extractivist mindset is reproduced by the state and Total, written documents are critically assessed.

Fairclough (1992b, as cited in Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002) distinguishes three dimensions of communicative events, namely, *text*, *discursive practice*, and *social practice*. My analysis will therefore focus on 1) the linguistic characteristics of the text, to assess the textual tools which provide backing for a particular (intended) interpretation, 2) the processes of production and consumption of the text, and 3) the broader social context of the text, to consider whether the *status quo* gets reproduced or restructured by the discursive practice by the Ugandan state and Total. While the two former dimensions can be analysed purely by means of discourse analysis, the third one requires drawing from other theories since analysing social practice encompasses non-discursive elements as well. (Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002). Therefore, using ‘extractivism’ and a postcolonial critique approach to development will contribute to the examining of the social practice in which oil and gas industry is advocated for.

Frame analysis can be understood as a specific type of CDA. It deals with analysing discourses and how they produce ‘frames’ through which an issue is portrayed to the public in a specific manner and further, how the audience interprets reality through the frames that media outlets, journalists or politicians have provided them (Pan and Kosicki, 1993). Erving Goffman (1974, p.21) defines these frames as ‘schemata of interpretation’ which we might be unaware of, yet through which we all interpret and locate what is happening around us. The political discipline of this method provides that frames are mechanisms in political discourse (Kinder & Sanders, 1990, as cited in Pan and Kosicki, 1993, p.57). Analysing the ways in which discourses (re)produce extractivism as a mindset is just this, which is why it is appropriate to say that a more specific CDA is utilized by characteristics of this strand of framework analysis.

Little previous research has been done by using CDA to understand the communicative events in legitimating and reproducing oil extractivist operations in the Albertine Graben region in Uganda. Holterman (2014) has studied the new extractive state by both looking at the ‘developmental benefits’ of the industry as promoted by the state and the implications of

extractivisms on the livelihoods of Ugandans. He, however, does not make a systematic discourse analysis on the justification of extractivism but has rather, looked at statistical and security aspects of the phenomena.

Because the distinction between CDA and qualitative content analysis is not so straightforward, I acknowledge that my thesis utilizes attributes from the latter as well. A few distinctions between the two should first be made. Perhaps the most fundamental difference becomes evident in the way that language is understood: as means to communicate our needs and wants (CA), or a means in which the preferences are compounded in the first place (CDA)? In other words, CA represents an approach in which reality is *reflected* through language, while CDA states that language itself is *creating* it. (Hopf, 2004). Another distinction may be done by looking at language and context: whereas CDA explores the relationship between the two (aspects of history, social setting et cetera), CA disengages the two as means to find consistency (Hardy et al., 2004). Generally speaking, CA assumes that “*all data are potentially quantifiable*” and that qualitative and quantitative approaches are mutually supplementing (Hardy et al., 2004, p.20). This aspect of content analysis contributes my thesis, because quantifying codes from the data helps me identify which justification discourses are more prevalent than others. Further, as CDA is concerned with how discourses create reality and power relationships, it could be noted that retrieving important information from documents by creating codes and themes could be seen to more easily fall within the tradition of CA. The objective of my thesis, thus, benefits from both methodologies that together provide creative means to analyse data.

A hybrid approach of inductive and deductive coding was utilized to create sub-categories from the empirical data, which further explains the combining of characteristics from CDA and CA. This methodological approach allows for both theory-driven (more common in CA) and data-driven (more common in CDA) codes to be integrated (Fereday and Muir-Cochrane, 2006; Hardy et al., 2004), to ensure the most comprehensive and exploratory way to critically assess a large amount of data. Deductive categories were derived from Eduardo Gudynas’ book *Extractivisms: Politics, Economy and Ecology* in which he explores lines of defence of extractivisms (2020). The categories which I found to be useful codes include: no substantive ecological effects, economic arguments, direct and indirect creation of jobs, social dimension of poverty reduction, and stigmatizing critics (Gudynas, 2020). The data-driven inductive coding, then, allows one to pay attention to transparency and therefore, offer credible interpretations from the empirical material (Gioia et al., 2013). The inductive

approach of coding helped me look outside the pre-allocated theoretical knowledge and find categories which were specific to the Ugandan context of oil extractivism legitimization. Coding was done by utilizing ATLAS.ti Windows (Version 22.1.5.0). This was a helpful software as it provided a means to easily organize files and tools to create codes, subcodes and code groups and to read them in tandem and with comparison.

To avoid methodological nationalism as a form of reasoning in this study, the internal and external factors explaining the discourses of oil extractivism in Uganda are not isolated or separated from each other (Gore, 1996, p.81). The orientation of this thesis is global and multiscale. So, the Ugandan state's discourses are studied but so are Total's. Additionally, extractivism is regarded as a global phenomenon, one which shall not be studied merely through national lens. Fairclough's framework on CDA is helpful in the process of avoiding methodological nationalism since investigating all three levels of discourses requires one to ask questions about the wider contexts of these texts, and how they situate in the world.

3.4. Uganda's Oil Extractivist Industry Today

The discovery of commercially viable quantities of oil in the Albertine Graben was announced in 2006 by the Government of Uganda (Veit et al., 2011). This was historic since the pursuit of oil had been a major feature of the Ugandan state since colonialism. The exploration of oil started already in 1910, and the potential of oil was first announced in 1925 by a "*colonial government geologist*" E.J. Wayland in his publication *Petroleum in Uganda* (Kalangi, 2022, p.42). Thus, the 2006 discovery was a much-celebrated news. After the passing of commercial threshold of oil discoveries, the industry has moved from small-scale exploration corporations to the larger oil majors with considerable development and production capacities (FHRI and FIDH, 2020). These oil majors include the French Total and CNOOC that together with the Ugandan state own the rights of production of the Lake Albert project which is under the scrutiny in this thesis. Whereas there are officially five sedimentary basins in Uganda (The Albertine Graben, Hoima Basin, Lake Kyoga Basin, Lake Wamala Basin, Kadam-Moroto Basin), the Lake Albert project is the first and most advanced of the EIIP (TotalEnergies et al., 2019; FHRI and FIDH, 2020; Directorate of Petroleum Uganda, 2022). The Albertine Graben runs along the Western border of Uganda, bordering the Democratic Republic of Congo, and forming the most northern part of the western arm of the East African Rift Valley System (500

km long, 45 kilometres wide and 23,000 square kilometres) (Directorate of Petroleum Uganda, 2022).

There have been numerous pushbacks on the extraction date of oil. The newest estimation is now expecting first oil to be attained early 2025 (Murungi, 2022; TotalEnergies, 2021c) reaching a cumulative plateau production of 230,000 barrels of oil per day (TotalEnergies, 2022d). At least five sets of reasoning have been given as to what has caused the many delays of oil production: 1) development of the legal and institutional framework for the oil and gas governance, 2) disputes around tax and contracts, 3) grievances over royalties, as well as other diverging expectations and interests between the state and society, 4) the Government of Uganda's versus TNCs opinions on the portion of oil to be exported as opposed to refined locally, and 5) substantial infrastructural constraints (Tshimba, 2022).

The oil blocks of the Lake Albert Project are geographically shared between Total (through its subsidiary Total E&P Uganda) which will operate the Tilenga project in the Buliisa and Nwoya districts, while CNOOC (through its subsidiary CNOOC Uganda Ltd) will operate the Kingfisher project on the shores of Lake Albert. (FHRI and FIDH, 2020). The Final Agreements for the Lake Albert resources development project, which includes the Kingfisher, Tilenga projects and the EACOP, was signed between the Ugandan and Tanzanian partners and TNCs on the 11th of April 2021. The upstream partners are Total, which has the biggest share of 56.67 % (after Tullow Oil sold its shares of the joint venture to Total in 2020), CNOOC with 28.33 % and UNOC with 15 %. (TotalEnergies, 2022d). Altogether, around 400 wells will be drilled from more than thirty well pads in Tilenga, and twenty production wells, as well as eleven water injection wells will be drilled from under the Lake Albert from four well pads in Kingfisher (FHRI and FIDH, 2020, p.16).

Whereas oil production will take place in the future, the exploration and preparing for extraction by construction of central Processing Facilities (CPF) has already started. The Tilenga (Kasenyi in Buliisa district) and Kingfisher (Buhaka in Hoima district) will both host a CPF through which the crude oil will transit. Furthermore, the Hoima district will also host the 'Kabaale Industrial Park' which is a project led by the state owned UNOC. The park will comprise Uganda's second international airport, petrochemical and fertilizer industries, and a crude oil refinery. (Uganda National Oil Company, 2022). Part of the oil will be refined in Uganda for local and regional market, a decision taken by the Ugandan Government in 2011. The crude oil refinery will be built in the park and has already resulted in thirteen villages to

eviction. (Serenkuma, 2022). The input capacity of the refinery is planned at 60,000 barrels per day in a modular manner (Ministry of Energy and Mineral Development, 2019).

Finally, the EACOP will be built to transfer oil for international market. It will mainly be operated by Total who has the biggest stake in the pipeline with 62%. The rest is shared between CNOOC that has 8% and UNOC and Tanzania Petroleum Development Corp (TPDC) that own 15% each. (Reed, 2021). The 1,443 km long pipeline will be the longest heated pipeline in the world and will export oil from Lake Albert area to the Indian Ocean coast of Tanzania, with an estimated 70 to 80% going for foreign trade. Transporting an average of 216,000 barrels of oil per day, EACOP will be one of the largest infrastructure projects in East Africa, with an estimated cost of 3.5 billion US dollars (Atine et al., 2020). In addition to the underground pipeline, the infrastructure required for the project includes roads, dams, maintenance yards as well as a marine terminal. As for Uganda, the EACOP project will traverse 10 districts, 25 sub counties and 178 villages over an area of 296 kilometres. In Tanzania, the 1,147 km long pipeline will surpass 8 regions in 25 districts, and no less than 231 villages. (Thierens, 2020). Altogether, more than 13,000 households will either lose their land, house or both and be economically or physically displaced by the EACOP project (Atine et al., 2020, p.34).



Figure 3.2. Planned route of EACOP from Hoima, Uganda to Tanga, Tanzania
Source: Boschee (2022 online)

As the Ugandan climate justice activist Vanessa Nakate states: “*Oil pipelines have become a symbol around the world of the fight for climate justice*” (Nakate, 2022 online) and this has happened in East Africa too. The EACOP project has faced an extensive amount of opposition from local communities, climate activists and environmental groups both in Uganda and globally. A Stop EACOP campaign has been formed by over 260 organizations who are trying to convince banks not to invest in this project (Banktrack, 2022), and over a million people have already signed their petition calling on Total’s CEO to cancel EACOP and stop drilling in national parks (Avaaz, 2022). On top of displacing communities and jeopardizing ecosystems, estimation puts the emissions of the burned oil exported by the EACOP at 36 million tons of carbon dioxide per year. This is about seven times as much as the total annual amount of emissions in Uganda (L’Héritier, 2022) at the time when scientific consensus warns us that “*committed emissions from existing energy infrastructure jeopardize 1.5°C climate target*” (Tong et al., 2019, online).

Ecological concerns have been raised on the other projects as well, as Uganda's largest national park Murchison Falls is located North of Lake Albert. Total has decided to plant ten of the 34 Tilenga project drilling stations inside the national park, covering an area between 32-45 hectares of territory, and influencing an even bigger area. (Eubel et al., 2022; FHRI and FIDH, 2020). What further raises concerns is the rich animal population which could suffer due to extractivist projects; 39% of the mammalian population, and more than half of the bird species of the whole African continent are represented in the Lake Albert Basin. (Al Jazeera, 2020). According to a review of the ESIA report of the Tilenga project, produced by the NCEA, the ESIA is not providing information on the animal population, especially in terms of their migration corridors and places where they frequently locate. Additionally, "*the ESIA does not provide insight in how the animals will react to the changes in the landscape and what the potential impacts of this will be on the other (non-project) areas in the park*" (NCEA, 2018, p.9).

In fact, the Ugandan authorities of the National Environment Management Authority (NEMA) and PAU were sued, by two organizations of Africa Institute for Energy Governance (AFIEGO) and Guild Presidents' Forum on Governance (GPFOG) in May 2019, for their approval of the ESIA of the Tilenga project. The 'EIA Tilenga court case' was filed at the High Court of Uganda. The plaintiffs claimed that a certificate of approval was not granted in accordance with the environmental laws of Uganda, and that the process itself involved procedural irregularities. Among other violations, that led the organizations to file the case, the plaintiffs found that there were severe shortcomings in the way that the public hearings of the ESIA were held. First, NEMA and PAU did not provide the public notice of 21 days to prepare and participate in the public hearings. The youth of the GPFOG were denied the opportunity to present formally at the public hearings, and those who were granted an opportunity were only given one minute to submit their views. These and other violations were against the legal regulations of such proceedings, and unfair given that the ESIA has over 6,000 pages that the public were expected to go through in such a short period of time. This case, despite its urgent nature, has suffered delays and the hearing was held three years after the filing, on April 12, 2022. (AFIEGO and GPFOG, 2022). Currently, the decision on this case is still pending.

Moreover, Albertine (2022, personal communication, 7 July) pointed out that this is not the only national case that has been brought against issues linked to oil. There are six other legal cases, some of which remain pending. The Greenwatch v. Attorney General case on the right of access to information to petroleum production sharing agreements was filed in 2009

and finally ruled in favour of the applicants eleven years later in 2020. Last year, Andrew Oluka filed against PAU, Total and CNOOC over disregarding the local procurement laws regarding EACOP, Tilenga and Kingfisher projects. He argued that foreign companies were given priority, while the Ugandan companies were neglected in contravention with the laws, but the case was dismissed by the judge for being “*frivolous and vexatious to the extent that it is an abuse of court process*” (Kalema, 2022 online). Furthermore, one of the seven cases that deals with forceful relocation and eviction without compensation to the PAP has been pending for over 10 years (Albertine 2022, personal communication, 7 July). As stated by Albertine, the state, by disregarding the cases, and judges by postponing cases until the complaints are no longer of interest provide examples of “*how they use judicial means to frustrate groups and activists*” (Albertine 2022, personal communication, 7 July).

3.4.1. TotalEnergies

At the heart of oil extractivism in Uganda is TotalEnergies. Total was founded in France in 1924, and is currently active in more than 150 countries, making it one of the biggest energy companies in the world (TotalEnergies, 2019). In 2021, its generated revenue was 205.9 billion US dollars, net income of 18.1 billion US dollars, with 101,309 employees and Patrick Pouyanné as the chairman and CEO since 2014 (TotalEnergies, 2020; Statista, 2022). Over the years, Total has expanded on a global scale, moving from the mere exploration to production of gas, refining, petrochemicals, and petroleum product marketing, as well renewables. The company “*shares the ambition to get to net-zero emissions by 2050*” (TotalEnergies, 2019 online) and as part of their ambitions to move towards more ‘sustainable energy’ in the wake of climate change, they changed their name from Total SE to TotalEnergies in 2021 (TotalEnergies, 2021b).

According to the company “*Africa is at the heart of [its] global strategy*” (TotalEnergies, 2022b online). Indeed, the TNC has been present in Africa for more than 90 years and from their overall production and investments, around 30% is represented in the continent. Notably, the company controls vast amount of resources in Africa and with 17% of market share, it is the main distributor of oil products in the continent. (TotalEnergies, 2022b). What further speaks on the vast influence and power that this TNC holds, is that it operates actively in the whole value chain of oil and gas. Whereas most companies in the natural resources industry face the decision of focusing either one of these value chains (Singer and

Donoso, 2008), Total is active in all three: the upstream, namely, identifying, extracting and producing of oil and gas; downstream which refers to the post-production activities such as marketing and refining of oil and gas; as well as the midstream activities that links the two together, along with transportation and storage utilities (Kramer, 2022).

In Uganda, Total has been present already since 1955, before the country's independence and today it has around 200 active service stations around Uganda (TotalEnergies Uganda, 2022). Total's downstream operations started in the 1950s when it took over a distribution company previously named Ozo. Between the 1960s and 1990s, Total's distribution subsidiary Petrofina signed exploration agreements with Uganda and in 1991, started its upstream operations. The 2000s marked a strong development of upstream activities in the Albertine Graben, when in 2008, Total signed the acquisition of marketing and logistics assets agreement both in Uganda and Kenya, and in 2011, a deal was closed between Tullow, CNOOC, and Total all of which initially held 33,33% of interest in the Kingfisher and Tilenga licences. Operations of Tilenga project via Total E&P Uganda took off in 2012 and in 2017 Total acquired additional 21.57% of Tullow's interest in the project licenses. (TotalEnergies, 2022c). Combined, Total has 56.67% share in Uganda's oil production and, hence, is the biggest TNC in Uganda.

As stated by Hugh Evan (2022) the EACOP is vital for the Lake Albert project and indispensable for the first oil. The EACOP project is struggling to secure financing, as concerns for environment and increasingly conditional ESG investment criteria have resulted in several key financial institutions to rule out of the project. Total is expected to raise 2.5bn USD in debt financing for EACOP, but as the issue remains highly contentious and the company has been reluctant in commenting on the lack of financing publicly, the 2025 target for first oil may prove too optimistic. (Ewan, 2022).

Total has officially adhered to comply with the principles set out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the UN Guiding Principles on Business & Human Rights, the principles set out in the ILO's fundamental conventions, the principles of the UNs Global Compact, the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises, and the Voluntary Principles on Security and Human Rights, all of which it refers to in its Vigilance Plan. (TotalEnergies, 2021d). Moreover, Total is also a member of the EITI and has integrated these principles and norms into its Human Rights Guide. Regarding its operations in Uganda and Tanzania, Total has carried out a HRIA on the EACOP project (2018) in and ESIA's on the Tilenga and EACOP

projects (2019), which have been approved by the Ugandan and Tanzanian authorities (the former in April 2019, and the latter in December 2020). (TotalEnergies, 2020). As pointed out earlier, Total functions through its fully owned subsidiary Total E&P Uganda, and thus, is responsible for all the activities of its subsidiary in Uganda.

Courts are becoming more and more important in the fight against climate change, as different groups of people launch actions against governments and companies with regards to climate-related risks. According to the UNEP Climate Litigation Report, the number of climate cases has nearly doubled between 2017 and 2020. (UNEP, 2021). Currently, there are two legal cases filed against Total under France's new 'Duty of vigilance of parent and outsourcing companies' law, which was passed in 2017. This law mandates respect for human rights and environment to business activities and makes a parent company of a TNC legally responsible of its own activities as well as its subsidiaries', subcontractors', and suppliers' operations around the world. According to the French law, companies are required to have a detailed plan on how to prevent, mitigate, and redress such human and environmental right violations resulting of their business activities. (Bart et al., 2020; Business & Human Rights Resource Centre, 2020).

In 2019, six organizations: Friends of the Earth France, Survie (France), AFIEGO, CRED, NAPE/Friends of the Earth Uganda and NAVODA (Uganda) – issued a formal notice to Total to inform that its oil projects in Uganda had failed to comply with its legal obligations to prevent environmental and human rights violations (Bart et al., 2020). The formal notice included a demand for Total to revise its vigilance plan as well as the implementation of it (Friends of the Earth, 2019). Total immediately rejected these allegations of the human- and environmental rights breaches on the fundamental freedoms and the health and safety of persons under the Tilenga project, and the organizations brought a lawsuit against Total in October 2019. Among other violations, the plaintiffs found that the inalienable right to development (Article 1 of the UN Declaration on the Right to Development) of the local communities has been breached, as the right has been affected by the reducing standard to living and communities' impoverishment. As will be seen later in the analysis, this is completely opposite to what the TNC and the state are promoting. 'Friends of the Earth et al. v. Total' case is historical as it is the first case which has been filed under the French Duty of vigilance law. (Les Amis de la Terre France and Survie, 2019).

The case started off with complicated disputes and appeals over which court's jurisdiction should the case fall under. Whereas in January 2020, the French High Court Nanterre declared itself incompetent in handling the case and it was seen to fit better with Commercial Court, the second litigation after an appeal by the organizations led to a procedural win to the plaintiffs when the court recognized the organizations' right to choose litigation in either commercial or civil court, for they are non-commercial claimants. The case is now under the jurisdiction of the civil court of Nanterre, which is considered a huge win by the organizations. (Brem, 2021). According to them, handling the case in commercial court, consisting of judges that have been elected for their technical expertise on business world, would have downplayed the spirit of the law itself, as it might have reduced the issues at stake to the level of internal management of the company's affairs, when the law was drafted to make TNCs liable for the wider external impacts of their activities to third parties such as the employees, local communities and the environment. (Friends of the Earth France, 2020). While this win was important, these additional appeals have delayed what has been the main reason for this lawsuit, that is, to assess and record Total's activities and violations in Uganda and make the company implement the law in its operations.

The second case 'Notre Affaire à Tous and Others v. Total' was filed on the 28th of January 2020, by several French NGOs and local authorities who sued Total over greenwashing and misleading the public over net zero (ClientEarth, 2022; Climate Case Chart, 2022). More accurately, this legal action filed at the Paris judicial court, argues that the French Duty of vigilance law, and the European consumer laws are broken by Total's 'reinvention' ad campaign where the corporation misleadingly renders itself on track with addressing the climate crises, however without ever detailing a plan on how to follow the Paris Agreement's 1.5 % limit, or reach a net zero by 2050. (Business & Human Rights Resource Centre, 2020). Whereas Total's second vigilance plan (published on March 20, 2019) does recognise climate change as a risk in its risk mapping section, it does so incomprehensively, by stating that it is a "*global risk for the planet and results from various diverse human actions including the production and consumption of energy*". As noted in the plaintiffs' formal letter to Total (2019), this reference is inadequate because it does not link the risk to the activities of Total and its subcontractors. Furthermore, the plan does not include established mitigation and prevention mechanisms for serious harms of their operations to health and safety of environment and people. (Mabile and de Cambiaire, 2019).

Indeed, as a senior campaigner of the Friends of the Earth France Juliette Renaud has said “[w]hile every climate expert repeatedly says that there is no room for any new fossil fuel investment, Total expands its oil and gas mega-projects, into Uganda, Mozambique, or the Arctic. Each a climate bomb with serious impacts on human rights and biodiversity, that contradicts Total’s misleading claim that it’s a major player in the energy transition” (ClientEarth, 2022). As reported by Business & Human Rights Centre (2020), Total is responsible for over two-thirds of France’s greenhouse gas emissions and is one of the twenty biggest contributors of emissions globally. According to a study produced by the NGO Carbon Disclosure Project and Richard HEEDE in 2017, Total’s greenhouse gas emissions allocate for 0.9% of the global rate between 1988-2015. (Griffin, 2017).

Currently, both of these legal proceedings against Total remain ongoing (Chatelain, 2021) but this is not the first time the company has been taken into court. Notably, Total has previously been accused of human and environmental rights violations elsewhere, and the Business and Human Rights Resource Centre’s company profile has recorded five lawsuits against the company: two in France, one in California, one Belgium (for violations in Myanmar), and one in Nigeria. Moreover, the same resource has recorded 26 attacks against human rights defenders, in relation to Total’s operations in Uganda and elsewhere. (Business & Human Rights Resource Centre, n.d.).

3.4.2. State & Civil Society Organizations

The oil discovery has taken place at a specific socio-economic and political atmosphere that can be described as neo-patrimonial and semi-authoritarian. According to Barkan (2011) the discoveries of oil in the Albertine Graben has provided a potential lifeline for the regime by reinforcing the patronage networks. The ratings of Uganda’s political, economic, and democratic environment have been steadily declining in recent years (Kantel, 2019) and the ‘Freedom in the World 2022’ report now ranks Uganda with 11/40 in political rights and 23/60 in civil liberties (Freedon House, 2022).

Uganda’s President Yoweri Museveni came to power in 1986 just after a five-year insurgency of the ‘People’s war’ had ended in the victory of National Resistance Movement (NRM) (Sejjaaka, 2004). The economy had just collapsed, and total annual inflation came in three digits. Between 1992 to 2007, transformational improvements were registered as results of the government’s reforms and ambitions to attain economic growth and macroeconomic

stability. Within this time, the average of real GDP grew by 6% annually, export was diversified, and inflation was reduced to single digits. (Bategeka et al., 2011).

Strategically, the president, who has now ruled over 36 years has repeatedly made efforts to secure his ruling coalition against the excluded elites and opposition. For example, in 2005 he extended his hold on power by reintroducing a multiparty election and lifting the presidential terms limits. (Hickey and Izama, 2016). The latest presidential election which took place in 2021, was “*followed by the bloodiest campaigns in years*” as harassment, attacks on media and opposition figures were widely documented, and 54 people were killed in November 2020, while protesting one of the many arrests of the opposition leader Bobi Wine (Al Jazeera, 2021). Museveni won the elections with 58.6% of the votes, but the elections have been called out as fraudulent not least by the main opposition candidate who, according to the official results, won 34.8% of the votes (Al Jazeera, 2021).

The president acts through the inner and outer circles of his governing coalition, with only the inner circle being able to influence decision-making in strategic areas (Hickey and Izama, 2016). His inner circle consists of family and party members, military personnel and some leading bureaucrats (Lindeman, 2011 as cited in Hickey and Izama, 2016, p.169) who are also among the main actors within the oil sector. Indeed, the military plays a specific role in the maintaining and stabilizing the ruling coalition and is also where Museveni has further exercised his power by appointing his son as the brigadier of the army and the commander of the important Special Forces Group, and him being the lieutenant general himself. The accumulation of power is further evident from the way that the army leaders also bare leading positions in the police forces and Ministry of Internal Affairs. (Olaka-Onyango, 2020).

As Hickey and Izama (2016, p.172) have pointed out, it is unsurprising that the president has taken on a leading role in all the spheres of the oil governance, while referring the resources as his oil. Together with ministers from the Ministry of Energy and Mineral Development (MEMD) and some other actors, Museveni has been determining suitable partners to work with, negotiating contracts with them, and setting out an approach for distributing oil revenue. (Hickey and Izama, 2016). The PAU was established in 2015 to be the regulatory and monitoring body of resource governance (PAU, 2022c) and the operations of the TNCs (Ministry of Energy and Mineral Development, 2019). In addition to the parliament, MEMD and PAU, the petroleum sector’s oversight and governance institutions include supporting ministries of the Finance and Environment; authorities of the NEMA that function

as consultants in the environmental aspects of oil (ESIAs), Uganda Revenue and Investment; as well as the Bank of Uganda. (Mbabazi and Muhangi, 2020). The UNOC also functions as a separate commercial entity and oversees the business aspects and state participation in licenses and issues on that matter. (Ministry of Energy and Mineral Development, 2019).

The Parliament of Uganda has enacted laws, policies and regulations, to secure as much revenue as possible and develop such conditions that benefits may be expanded to other sectors of the economy. A backbone for this ‘local content’, as these mechanisms are collectively referred, is Article 244 of the Constitution of Uganda, which mandates the Parliament to make laws to regulate the exploitation and sharing of royalties of minerals and petroleum. (Muheki, 2020). Currently, the regulatory framework consists of the following: the National Oil and Gas Policy (NOGP), 2008; the Oil and Gas Revenue Management Policy, 2012; the Petroleum (Exploration, Development and Production) Act, 2013 (the ‘Upstream Act’); the Petroleum (Refining, Conversion, Transmission and Midstream Storage) Act, 2013 (the ‘Midstream Act’); and the Public Finance Management Act of 2015. (Olaka-Onyango, 2020). It is estimated that over 160,000 employment opportunities will be created directly and indirectly in the exploration and development of the oil fields in Uganda (Ministry of Energy and Mineral Development, 2019).

Critics have pointed out that the objectives in these laws are ‘quite noble’, but their operationalization remain unrealized (Muheki, 2020). Additionally, as secrecy and lack of transparency have been prevailing issues in the oil and gas activities, such as in terms of the production-sharing agreements (PSAs) that have remained inaccessible to the general public, the laws have been criticized for being contradictory in terms of the requirements in disclosing information (Veit et al., 2011 as cited in Mbabazi and Muhangi, 2020, p.43). The government’s management of oil has been criticized of subverting the quality and reliability of governance institutions and processes for the lack of information they have provided to citizens, especially to the directly affected local communities. (Mbabazi and Muhangi, 2020). Whereas the government on Uganda finally joined the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI)¹ in August 2020 (after an initial commitment to join in 2008), it has yet to publicize the PSAs with the TNC – both actors claiming confidentiality clauses as grounds for non-disclosure (African Centre for Media Excellence, 2022).

¹ EITI is an international standard, founded in 2002, to promote transparency and openness in the governance and management of oil, gas, and other mineral resources. Commitment to join EITI requires governments and corporations to disclose information on the different stages of an oil or mining project. (ACME, 2022).

What has further raised concerns and suspicion about the oil governance includes the militarization of the oil-producing areas, such as the Special Oil Protection Unit which was newly founded and has been involved in evicting PAPs from their lands and tracking civil society activities in the Albertine Graben (Hickey and Izama, 2016). Regrettably, allegations of high-level corruption within the Ministry for Foreign Affairs with regards to oil negotiations have been raised. While the Parliamentary committee found no evidence to support these charges “*due to an inability to access the necessary information*” (Brophy and Wandera, 2018, p.3) they did, however, find great sums of unaccounted transfers and discrepancy of over 500,000 USD missing from government entities that were responsible for collecting the oil revenue. (ibid., Hickey and Izama, 2016).

The relationship between civil society and the government of Uganda has been described as difficult and suspicious, and the co-operation between the state and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) working with areas that require accountability from the state, limited. The three fundamental rights of association, expression and assembly form the context through which the rights of civil society should be understood, and through which CSOs can operate. (Mbazira and Namatovu, 2018). Recently, however, a shrinking civic space, namely, the reduction of these rights and the power of the civil society to operate, has become a growing issue of concern internationally, as well as in the East African region (Maru, 2018). Several authors and organizations have reported about this concerning trend in Uganda, which is twofold by nature (see e.g., Mbazira and Namatovu, 2018; Human Rights Watch, 2019; Civicus and PWYP, 2016). Not only does it violate the CSOs right to defend human rights (The Declaration of Human Rights Defenders), but it also weakens the protection of several human rights of citizens which the work of the organizations would help guarantee.

CSOs that have been most severely affected by the restrictive laws and regulation and the shrinking operational civic space have been those working on pro-democracy and anti-corruption, governance, human rights (land rights, and sexual minorities rights in particular), as well as those investigating social justice issues deriving from the oil and gas industry (Mbazira and Namatovu, 2018; Human Rights Watch, 2019). In recent years, the government has introduced new laws including The NGO Act (2016) and the Public Order Management Act (POMA) (2013) which have created stumbling blocks to frustrate CSOs’ work in their human rights advocacy in the extractive sector in Uganda. In their careful assessment of these laws’ effects on CSOs’ operational civic space, Mbazira and Namatovu (2018) found that the NGO Act in effect imposes cumbersome processes of registration together with a redundant

amount of paperwork and bureaucracy for obtaining permits for operations and memorandum of understandings with different districts. The POMA, then again, creates impediments on the freedom of peaceful assembly by introducing much bureaucracy while giving the state a wide discretion to refuse notification. (Mbazira and Namatovu, 2018).

These laws provide vague obligations on the CSOs' side, which allow for arbitrary and vague interpretation by the state to either grant or deny the CSOs' permits or registration (Mbazira and Namatovu, 2018). To reference the severity of the issue, in 2021, 54 CSOs were arbitrarily suspended by the state, for an alleged non-compliance with the NGO Act. Many of these CSOs worked in critical areas of human rights advocacy, such as the accountability and transparency in the natural resource sector. (International Federation for Human Rights, 2021). AFIEGO, for example, being one of the CSOs that sued NEMA and PAU for their approval of the ESIA of Tilenga project in Uganda, and sued Total in the French court with other organizations, was one of those CSOs whose suspension was announced in 2021, just two months before six of their staff members were arbitrarily arrested in Kampala (Both ENDS, 2021).

3.4.3. Implications for Local Communities

Uganda's power and authority structures in societies appear to weaken the further from the centre one goes. Rural people – such as the ones inhabiting the oil rich areas in the Albertine Graben – are far from the decision-making powers and without political connections to such elites, are very likely to remain in 'the margins of the oil-complex'. (Serwajja, 2022, p.55). In connection with this, Ahimbisibwe et al. (2019) have studied the specificities that characterize citizenship in Uganda, and found that people feel stronger belonging to, and obligations to either their broader ethnic communities or their membership or 'residence' to a local community, than to a citizenship tied to the nation state. This might not come as a surprise in a country with more than 52 spoken languages and diverse ethnic groups, but it is interesting that from a rights-based approach 'good and responsible membership in a community' is more prevalent than the feeling of being a rights-holder by the state. (Ahimbisibwe et al., 2019, p.61).

Oil, however, is a highly strategic and contentious energy source and has shaped the power dynamics between the Ugandan state and the communities drastically. Whereas before the oil was explored, the communities could live their peasant lives without much presence of the state, they now find themselves in the midst of world politics. (Serwajja, 2022). The initial

optimism of oil promptly changed into desperation and confusion after the first stages of oil exploration (Twinamasiko and Muriisa, 2020). Indeed, communities that depend on the ecological resources are the ones who suffer most of the extractivist projects, and severe repercussions have already been reported on the sources of livelihoods for communities in the Albertine Graben in the oil exploration phase (Tshimba, 2022). The severity of the situation is captured in what Tshimba (2022, p.143) calls an ‘ongoing social-ecological war’ between the fishing, farming and grazing communities and the acolytes of the oil and gas industry, namely, the government and the private sector.

As most of the oil wells in Uganda are onshore, extraction will take place on land, the most valuable natural resource of them all as its importance transcends beyond economics, to social, political and spiritual significance (Alao, 2007 as cited in Tshimba, 2022, p.143). As recognized by the UN OHCHR “*land is not a mere commodity, but an essential element for the realization of many human rights*” (OHCHR, 2022). Internationally, the right to land is best protected by the ILO Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989 (No. 169). Although indigenous peoples include the traditional hunter/gatherer communities and pastoralists in Uganda, they are not officially recognized as indigenous by the Ugandan government. One of such groups, the ‘Banguru’, identifies as indigenous and lives by the shores of Lake Albert in Buliisa district and is thus affected by the oil projects, but does not enjoy the protection under the ILO because the Government of Uganda has neither recognized these groups nor ratified this convention. (Atine et al., 2020).

The protection of land rights for the PAPs thus derive from other international human rights instruments, including but not limited to: CEDAW (1979), ICCPR (1966), ICERD (1965), ICESCR (1966) and the CRC (1989), which contain provisions concerning land and natural resources (FHRI and FIDH, 2020, p.45). Nationally, the Constitution of Uganda 1995 protects the collective and individual right to property under Article 26, and provides that compulsory deprivation is only allowed if acquisition is necessary for public use, and when the compulsory taking is carried out in accordance with law. In case the acquisition of property, a prompt payment of fair and adequate compensation is required prior to the taking of property, and the person losing property shall have a right to access to a court of law (The Constitution of Uganda, Article 25).

Twinamasiko and Muriisa (2020) have found that land grabbing, namely, a practice in which land is acquired through fraudulent ways, has taken several forms in the Albertine

Graben. The acquisition of land has occurred through appropriation of public lands, dubious land deals, and forceful evictions, which fulfil almost all the land grabbing conditions including violation on the land rights, lack of information, and limited participation of the locals in the process. (Twinamasiko and Muriisa, 2020). Also FHRI & FIDH and Atine et al. who published a HRIAs in 2020, found that affected communities of the Lake Albert, and EACOP projects have suffered negative impacts on their right to land, including and as results of land-grabbing, inadequate redress, lack of access to information, a weak approach to gender, and situations of constraint and redress (FHRI and FIDH, 2020, p.45; Atine et al., 2020).

The related right to compensation has not been carried out as set out in the national and international human rights treaties. For example, many of the peasants were instructed not to till their land anymore before the compensation would be granted to them but ended up waiting for long. People were unaware as to how long they need to wait for compensation packages as they were inconsistently distributed to families in the same villages. While some started receiving their packages before others, some families stopped farming (as instructed) which exposed them to starvation and having to borrow money from neighbours that had received their share of compensation prior. (Serunkuma, 2022, p.14). As Serunkuma has importantly pointed out, the process of compensation is inherently violent because it “*humanizes the deprivation of the peasant, as they are cleared to make way for development*” (Serunkuma, 2022, p.16).

Whereas the government has denied any mismanagement on the processes of compensation or denying access to use of land before compensation (Ssekika, 2015) several sources point to the opposite by providing that the state has indeed failed to fulfil its duty to respect and protect human rights of its citizens (Twinamasiko and Muriisa, 2020; FHRI and FIDH, 2020). For example, Serunkuma argues that the compensation which should have been part of a process of securing the rights of displaced people was “*rather demonstrations of the power relation between state and its subjects*” (Serunkuma, 2022, p.2).

An estimated 200 households will be relocated in Uganda, and more than 3000 households will be economically displaced and lose land due to the EACOP. In Tanzania, the number of those losing land reaches beyond 10,000 and the physically relocated households to 313. (Atine et al., 2020). Thirteen villages were ordered for displacement for the refinery built in Hoima (Serunkuma, 2022) in the same district where organizations have also reported on violent events of eviction having taken place in 2014. In the village of Rwamutonga, 250

families were violently evicted, and two had died. (Albertine Watchdog, 2018; Ssekika, 2015). While over 60,000 people will be affected by the pipeline, an estimated 100,000 will be affected by EACOP and oil production (Eubel et al., 2022).

While it is impossible to cover all the negative implications of extractive projects to local communities, it is worth mentioning that beyond land and livelihoods related violations, issues concerning health, clean environment, and intimidation and harassment have also been raised. Several Ugandan human rights activists from the oil rich areas were intimidated, threatened and attacked both before and after they gave their testimonies in France, in the summary hearing of the case brought against Total on December 12, 2019. (FHRI and FIDH, 2020). The resistance of oil and TNCs in Albertine Graben continues (Twinamasiko and Muriisa, 2020), but it is hardly a self-evident manner, because as is the title of a report by Defend defenders ‘only the brave talk about oil’ (2012).

3.5. Conclusion

Uganda has one of the fastest changing climates in the world and has been ranked as one of the 12 most vulnerable countries to the effects of climate change globally, yet historically, the whole of Africa is responsible for only 3.8% of global emissions (Unicef and The Republic of Uganda, 2017; CDP Africa, 2020; Tenywa, 2021). Uganda, among other countries in the region are already severely affected by climate change (in forms of droughts and changes in rainfall patterns, as well as soil erosion and landslides) (Tenywa, 2021) and the new oil investments in the area will only accelerate this issue directly through further imbalances of ecosystems, as well as indirectly through increasing levels of greenhouse gas emissions.

As set out in this chapter, the international best practices, instruments, and declarations on human rights principles, as well as national legislation, and local content policies have not prevented social and ecological destruction of the Albertine Graben districts. The Tilenga project operated by Total is partly situated in a national park which is home to a variety of globally and regionally threatened bird and mammal species (TotalEnergies et al., 2019). According to Bart et.al, Total’s Tilenga and EACOP projects have affected more than 100,000 people in Uganda and Tanzania and tens of thousands have been displaced already. (Bart et al., 2020, p.7). Having studied oil extractivism in Uganda from the violence perspective, David Holterman (2014) calls this exclusion of local communities and HRDs from political and physical autonomy a ‘biopolitical war for life’. This war has divided the population into

different segments by means of justifying various forms of violence, in which these marginalized groups are pushed aside to make room for the ‘betterment of particular life’ purportedly fuelled by oil, to other segments of the population. (Holterman, 2014).

The next chapter of this thesis aims to assess the discursive methods by which the state (and its subordinate bodies) on the one hand, and the TNC Total on the other, promote this betterment of life as well as who are narrated as the beneficiaries of this wealthier future. Undoubtedly, critical assessment of these questions become crucial when considering the comprehensive impact of these multibillion projects, not only from the economic, but also from the social and ecological aspects. While predominant discourses on extractivism, such as the ones upheld by the operators of these oil projects, have a power of shaping the way this world is perceived, the fact that Vanessa Nakate has repeatedly emphasized remains. “*We can’t eat coal, we can’t drink oil or breath gas*” (Dunne, 2021).

4. Analysis and Results

4.1. Prevailing Discourses on the Legitimation of Oil Extractivism in the Albertine Graben

This thesis aims to answer two questions, namely, 1) what justification methods does the Ugandan state use to legitimate oil extractivism in the Lake Albertine region? and 2) how does the oil corporation Total reproduce narratives of extractivist mindset in legitimizing its operations in the Albertine Graben? To answer these questions, I have chosen CDA as the method of analysis. To analyse and identify legitimation strategies of the state, empirical data include: 4 policy papers, 15 newspaper articles, and 2 website articles. Total's discourses were studied from 3 policy documents, and 4 website materials.

I find that these discourses vary. While similar at times, and sometimes intersectional, they are quite distinct, too. On the one hand, the Ugandan state provides five main discourses. They range from economic arguments about growth and modernization, employment and social arguments about progress, ecological arguments that downplay environmental impacts and, instead, emphasizes energy security & just transition, to stigmatizing critics discourse. I find that Total's discourses are further divided into three, namely: self-regulation & best practice, social and developmental benefits of projects, and no substantial ecological effects. This chapter is organized as follows: section 4.2 presents state discourses, while section 4.3 will present Total's discourses. Finally, section 4.4 discusses concluding remarks of the analysis chapter.

4.2. The State of Uganda: Oil for Development

The 'state of Uganda' position can be found in (a) policy documents, (b) website material, and (c) state-owned and private media outlets.

4.2.1. Economic Arguments: Modernization and Growth

The discourse around economic arguments is the most prominent discourse in the policy documents of Uganda Vision 2040, and the three NDPs, all of which share the same vision statement: to transform "*Ugandan society from a peasant [...] to a modern and prosperous*

country within 30 years” (NPA, 2013, p.III). Indeed, the oil and gas industry is emphasized as one of the key priority areas in realizing this objective. To illustrate the logic of justification in this argumentation, the discourse can be fragmented into the following pattern: development is understood mainly in economic sense. The discourse is that economic growth is essential, extractivism brings economic growth, thus, extractivism is good.

The economic process by which oil extractivism is promoted throughout the policy documents include: increase in revenues and economic development which, in turn, should translate to enhanced competitiveness and a contribution to GDP (NPA, 2020). The revenues from oil resources, therefore, will be utilized to build infrastructure- and technology transformation (NPA, 2013, 2015) to facilitate a “*resource-based industrialization agenda*” (NPA, 2020, p.88). Moreover, the oil industry is portrayed as a supportive sector in strengthening enterprise development, especially the secondary and tertiary industries associated with oil extractivism (NPA, 2013).

The third NDP document quantifies some of the key expected outcomes of petroleum resources within the five years. These include: to “[i]ncrease oil and gas revenue from UGX 62.98 billion to UGX 265 billion”, and “[p]ercentage change in the amount of revenue from oil and gas by 2 percent” (NPA, 2020, p.89). Such statistical estimates provide means to strengthen the credibility of the argument (Jokinen et al., 2016), and here, to emphasize the vast scope of the expected oil benefit. Whereas the primary objective of this discourse is to present extractivism as key for prioritizing domestic needs for economic development, the realization of these objectives is always dependent on global conditions. These include market demand and supply, international prices, global investments’ availability et cetera. (Gudynas, 2020). Thus, the economic arguments display the global condition of extractivism, namely, the dependence of extractivism on the local act of extraction, on the one hand, and “*policy and governance relationship*” created by globalization, on the other (Gudynas, 2020, p.9). Strong statements such as “[t]he oil and gas industry has a potential to transform Uganda’s economy” (NDP III, 2020, p.88) were found in the policy document data.

Newspaper articles also made arguments to promote extractivism as a “*profitable commercially viable project*” (Barigaba, 2022 online). Often connected to the poverty reduction argument, the economic activity from the oil and gas industry is said to lead to “*a rise in incomes across the board and then, therefore, reduction in poverty*” (Busharizi, 2022b online). Moreover, the promoted revenues and returns on equity from the industry are seen to

contribute to the economic independence of Uganda. Both, articles and policy papers referenced the need for paying external debts (Barigaba, 2022; NPA, 2020, p.44), and decrease dependency on donor aid (NPA, 2010, p.54) by means of future revenues from the oil and gas industry.

4.2.2. Employment & Social Arguments

Social arguments and employment opportunities are understood as part of the same discourse, because of their overlapping presumed outcome of poverty reduction. The sub discourse for employment opportunities is predominantly upheld by the state's policy documents, whereas arguments in the social dimension, namely, for the 'betterment of life' are traced from all three data types: policy papers, website, and newspaper articles. While the economic arguments discourse incorporates the benefits that Uganda will achieve, the employment and social arguments discourse can be better understood as a compilation of arguments that target individuals as beneficiaries of oil extractivism.

The policy documents often use 'listing' when presenting expected benefits of the oil and gas industry. Listing is a rhetorical tool that is intended to increase persuasiveness of arguments and is particularly used when concisely presenting a subject matter (Jokinen et al., 2016). A statement such as "*[s]ustainable development of petroleum resources [...] contributes to export, employment, and improved quality of life*" (NDP III, p.117) is an example of such listing; its power concerns the provision of 'sufficient' evidence of the issue (Jokinen et al., 2016, p.364). This sub discourse also employs the tool of repetition, as several statements for possibilities in employment and sometimes training are traced throughout each of the policy documents.

The sub discourse of social dimension is built on several arguments that declare life post-extractivism as generally more stable and secured than life not blessed with this opportunity. Arguments in this sub discourse are presented by using a 'no-option strategy', meaning that the author only shows one viable option (Jokinen et al., 2016). Busharizi (2022a) summarizes the shared consensus: to not extract oil means to 'continue to be racked by poverty' therefore, there is no option but to extract. Oftentimes, the poverty alleviation argumentation, which is the most used within the social dimension sub discourse, has been linked to the discourse of 'stigmatizing critics' (subsection 4.2.5.). For example, Karuhanga (2022b online) suggests that "*we have no other option outside of developing our resources. Those who are*

bitterly opposed to us developing these resources are not really interested in preserving the environment but rather in conserving poverty". Overall, the presumed direct link between the extractive industry and poverty reduction is indicative of the broad role that extractivism is understood to play in social development.

Other social arguments presented as either potential or already realized benefits of the oil industry include improved 'livelihood security' (NDP III), and provision of social services (Busharizi, 2022b), increased promotion of human rights (PAU, 2022a), and fair compensation (e.g., Bwambale, 2022b; Karuhanga, 2022a; Batabe, 2022; Bwambale, 2022c). Arguments for the latter are especially stressed in this discourse and provide an interesting case for the legitimization of extractivism. Indeed, using compensation policies, and high acceptance rates of compensation as means for justification of extractivisms implies that this recompense should be accepted as a generous gift by PAPs. This narrative is strengthened by the neglect of addressing the loss of livelihoods, land, cultural and spiritual sites, and separation of communities due to relocation.

The next quote from PAU website (2022a) sums this sub discourse up well and shows how elements of other knowledge systems are systematically excluded from this discourse. It is said that "*the compensation and livelihood restoration programmes in the land acquisition process ensure that the communities enjoy a **better way-of-life** than before the onset of the oil and gas projects. For example [...] modern houses with land titles, livelihood improvement projects for agricultural production [...] are undertaken [...] to ensure the contribution of the sector to making the **lives of the populace better***" (emphasis added) (PAU, 2022a online). Not only are negative experiences of local people disregarded, but programs driven by the extractivist industry are promoted as the best thing that ever happened to locals.

4.2.3. No Substantial Ecological Effects

The 'no substantial ecological effects' is one of the most prominent discourses in the legitimization of oil. This discourse is best characterized by its reductionist ideas of nature; its emphasis on the optimistic scientific posture which additionally focuses on portraying the oil projects and actors as responsible; and its exclusion of other knowledge systems including those of the indigenous and local peoples whose ancestral lands are now used for extractivist means.

Policy papers contribute to this discourse by reproducing reductionist ideas of nature. This reductionism became visible by the use of mutually contradictory word pairs to create an impossible equation. For example, “*construct a pipeline [...] while conserving the environment*”, “*protect environment [...] in the oil and gas sector*” (NPA, 2013, p.64), “*[e]xploiting natural resource endowments with environmental protection in mind*” (NPA, 2020, p.56), and “*the [oil] industry is also central to sustainable development*” (NPA, 2020, p.117). Environmental protection and conservation are described as an effort that can be done simultaneously, even complementary to extractivism.

While downplaying negative environmental effects, the news articles published in newspapers such Uganda’s two leading media houses of New Vision (state owned) and Daily Monitor (privately owned) depend on reductionist ideas of nature. However, the articles rely on a scientific optimistic posture while ensuring application of every possible measure to avoid what is commonly understood as the (environmental) resource curse:

the exploitation of these resources can be done in a way that does not cause irreparable damage to our environment. As it stands now voluminous environmental impact assessments have been carried out on the project and provisions have been put in place to mitigate against the damage to the environment to the extent possible. This is not the Niger Delta. (Busharizi, 2022b).

This discourse legitimates oil extractivism as environmentally sound and predictable by referencing the ESIA’s (e.g., Barigaba, 2022; Ssekatawa, 2022; Bwambale, 2022a). Thus, the discourse creates a strong intertextual chain (Fairclough, 1992 as cited in Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002) binding Total’s policy documents to the Ugandan media reporting. The rhetorical use of extreme expressions such as “*most heavily scrutinised, independently reviewed, transparently monitored project **on earth***” (emphasis added) (Bwambale, 2022b), ‘*overstudied*’ and “*very sound and best in class [ESIA]*” (Bwambale, 2022c) is utilized to emphasize the alleged safety of the industry, while covertly hinting to the audience how to interpret the ESIA (Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002).

Another line of defence within this discourse suggests that oil extractivism may be implemented as part of the response to climate change. Negative ecological effects are not only downplayed, but the oil projects are projected as both the panacea for environmental issues, and as key for climate change mitigation measures (e.g., Busharizi, 2022b; Karuhanga, 2022c). Therefore, the title ‘To save the environment EACOP must continue’ is apt (Busharizi, 2022b).

Several authors explained that the vast majority of Ugandans now rely on firewood and charcoal for domestic energy such as cooking, claiming that the spillover effect of deforestation produces twice the amount of CO₂ (Karuhanga, 2022c) as the oil project, thus, making oil the preferred option (e.g., Kalinaki, 2022; Bwambale, 2022a, 2022b; Karuhanga, 2022a; Kobusheshe, 2022). These arguments are interlinked to the energy security discourse that is reviewed in the next section. EACOP has, moreover, been displayed as a net zero project (Barigaba, 2022; Kobusheshe, 2022) referring to a state in which greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions produced will be balanced by actions that remove them from the atmosphere (Oxford Net Zero, 2022). Bwambale (2022a), for instance, described EACOP as an “*insignificant -at least on a global scale project, yet which has **the greatest net positives of any oil and gas project in terms of influencing changes that help mitigate climate change***” (emphasis added). It remains unclear, however, as to how the net zero will be achieved because neither of the non-technical ESIA nor the news articles executed this plan any further.

4.2.4. Energy Poverty, Energy Security & Just Transition

The legitimization discourse that is concerned about energy security and just transition raised important and complex questions around the fight against climate change, and the power relations between the global North and South. This discourse was more prevalent in the newspaper articles but was also traced in the policy papers by Uganda Planning Authority.

The policy papers referenced energy security as one of the aims and outcomes of the oil and gas industry. While most of the statements affirm that oil projects will foster access to affordable energy locally and nationally, and thus promote economic and social development (NDP II, NDP III, Uganda Vision 2040), the first NDP also promotes the achievement of energy security regionally. The language in policy papers is formal and organized and needs not defend the statements as they are merely provided as facts. The energy security discourse in newspaper articles, however, represents a very different linguistic approach since the authors utilize somewhat emotionally appealing tactics, while discussing the problem of energy poverty in Uganda and Africa more generally. Moreover, this approach entwines the arguments of energy security for just transition that bring in its wake the question of power in global politics.

Several articles discussed the issue of energy poverty, by using numerical quantification as a factualization strategy (Jokinen et al., 2016) to emphasize the quantity and authenticity of

the problem. The next quote summarizes the interconnectedness of energy security and just transition to renewables with this strategy: “[u]p to 68 percent of people in sub-Saharan Africa have no access to electricity. That’s the energy poverty we are dealing with. You are not transitioning them from anything; they are at zero” (Barigaba, 2022 online). This quote is representative of other similar arguments that were made to present the extent to which the energy poverty issue can be tackled by investing in the oil resources (see e.g., Museveni, 2022; Karuhanga, 2022d; Bwambale, 2022c).

This discourse put great emphasis on contrast. On the one hand, the environmental impacts of Ugandan oil projects are compared to the concurrent fossil fuel investment in the global North, and on the other hand, the Ugandan responsibility is compared to the responsibility of the global North countries in causing the current climate catastrophe. For example, the banks that pulled out of financing the Uganda-Tanzania pipeline but have concurrently financed other such projects (e.g., the North Sea Project) were targeted by this discourse, to reveal the insincerity of the Western aim of transition to renewable energy. (e.g., Bwambale, 2022c, 2022b). Karuhanga (2022a, online) also used the quantification and comparing logic by explaining that “[t]his project is a rather modest project compared to the 9000 licences issued in America, the drilling in the Arctic and the 53 licenses in the North Sea issued by Norway or the coal plants fired up by Germany. Our modest project is aimed at fighting underdevelopment among some of the poorest people in the world”.

Many of the lines of defence in this discourse were intertwined with that of ‘no substantial ecological effects’. Not only were the Western objectives of transition to renewable energy questioned by showing the hypocrisy of banks and other actors, but the EACOP was portrayed as an insignificant project as compared to the more emitting projects in the West. Kobusheshe (2022) questioned the Western opposition of EACOP by declaring that 25% of CO₂ emissions from fossil fuels are traced to the US and Europe, while most of Africa only accounts for less than 5%. Together with the energy security aspect, the discourse leans on the pillar of why the Western world has been allowed to develop by exploiting and colonizing nature and humans while other countries should learn from the Western world’s mistakes and do better (e.g., Busharizi, 2022b; Karuhanga, 2022d).

4.2.5. Stigmatizing Critics

The discourse of ‘Stigmatizing critics’ has been extremely prominent in the various newspaper articles analysed for this thesis. These articles have been published between February to July in 2022, although the trend seems to be ongoing. Due to the critical content of these articles, they seem to have emerged largely as a response to the #StopEACOP campaign that is ongoing both locally and internationally. Exactly this is the wider distinction that can be made from the legitimization discourse that aims to stigmatize critics *abroad* and *at home*. Both discourses have sub discourses within. In the selection of my empirical data, the stigmatizing critics discourse was the third most coded in all state documents (and most coded in newspaper articles) but is assessed in this section for chronological reasons for this line of defence is often used when previous arguments prove “*insufficient or fail*” (Gudynas, 2020, p.55).

The identified sub discourses in stigmatizing local critics include the following: 1) patriotic discourse in which local critics are portrayed as a small/non-existent group, and 2) ‘Categorizing’ local critics as anti-developmentalists.

A few selected quotes will help clarify what I call patriotic² discourse. The first is written by the President himself, declaring that “[*t*]he discovery of oil in Uganda has been cause for celebration at home. Predictably, however, the Lake Albert basin oil project – which marks a milestone in Uganda’s ambition to become an oil producer and exporter – is being met with criticism from developed and already industrialized nations in the West” (Museveni, 2022). The second author explains that “[*t*]he environmental lobby has been going from strength to strength first in the West and then among a few impressionable youth locally” (Busharizi, 2022a). Both quotes are representative of the content found in several of the news articles (e.g., Karuhanga, 2022a; PAU, 2022a). The first suggests that Uganda (generalization) celebrates oil, and the second that criticism has started outside, ending up with just few locals. Whereas some of the news articles mentioned local critics by implying it is a minority (Karuhanga, 2022c; Busharizi, 2022a), much of the discourse focused only on the Western environmentalists, thus, reinforcing that same narrative.

The patriotic legitimization discourse utilizes a factualization strategy, more specifically, ‘a strategy based on social norms’ which rests on a majority principle. This linguistic strategy advocates the rights and opinions of the larger group (at least ostensibly),

² Patriotic understood as support, and national loyalty towards one’s country (Dictionary.com, 2020).

making this option the right and self-evident one (Jokinen et al., 2016). Patriotism comes in question when this strategy is used within the Ugandan context. Critics abroad are mentioned, as is visible in Museveni's quote, but the 'minority group' of those resisting oil extraction locally need not even be recognized. His argumentation rests on the 'fact' that all Ugandans celebrate the 'milestone' that the country has taken to become an oil exporter. The second quote presents critics of oil extraction as predominantly Western, later making a claim that there are only a few critics in Uganda. Thus, this sub discourse provides that locally, the norm and the principle is not to criticise but rather celebrate and support Uganda as a new oil country.

The second sub discourse within stigmatizing local critics is that in which activists are categorized as 'anti-development', and thus, the opposite of the 'patriotic' norm of the citizen that celebrates future benefits of oil. Categorization is a rhetoric means by which the author aims to justify, or as here, criticize the functions or people in question (Billig, 1987, p.149 as cited in Jokinen et al., 2016, p.354). In a few cases where local individual activists were specifically mentioned, it was easy to assume that authors referred to Vanessa Nakate, who is an internationally known Ugandan environmentalist. Bwambale (2022c online), for example, writes about her in the following way:

One of the most bizarre videos or messages is that of a Ugandan lady campaigner. She states that her people will be damned by the EACOP. Who are her "people"? Are they the over 100,000 people expected to be employed at peak by this project? Are they the 100 million plus Ugandans and Tanzanians expected to gain in a windfall of over \$15 billion in investments and more than \$60 billion in revenue over 20 years? [...] Are they the 3,648 project affected persons whose compensation is the most transparent, highest [...] of any project in Africa? [...] When would her people get to use an electric train or tram in this energy poor future she wants to consign them to?

This quote includes several legitimization discourses from employment opportunities to energy security and the like but is a great exemplar as to how an individual activist is portrayed an anti-developmental who wishes her fellow citizens to remain poor.

Because the Stop EACOP campaign is perceived predominantly foreign led by these authors, the categorization that is targeted towards this movement and its people will be assessed under the 'stigmatizing *foreign* critics' discourse. Sub discourses identified within this discourse are 1) Hypocritical and neocolonial West, and 2) Ignorance vs Expert knowledge.

The first sub discourse consists of a collection of arguments that emphasizes not only that most of the resistance is Western, but also that the environmentalists and lobbyists have vile intentions towards Uganda and its development. Foreign critics are, therefore, similarly categorized as anti-developmentalists but with a new element of neocolonialism and imperialism functioning as a fuel for this campaigning. While Stop EACOP has been described as “*a collection of climate change activists that have found a willing, some may say racist and prejudiced audience in Western Europe...*” (Bwambale, 2022c online), words such as ‘hysterically hypocritical’ and ‘feel-good colonists’ and campaign being ‘rooted in white saviorism’ (Bwambale, 2022b) were also used to depict the campaign and those in it.

Analysis on the intentions of those resisting oil projects in the West are common, and some authors concluded that the West would benefit if Uganda did not develop its oil resources but remained in a state of underdevelopment. The following quote is illustrative of this point. “*To be charitable to them I would say they are ignorant parrotters of slogans on an issue they have no clue about (African poverty), the more cynical view would be that, it is in their interest to remain in our state of underdevelopment so our living standards do not rise to their level, because they would have to better share the globe’s results*” (Busharizi, 2022b online). The author then concluded believing in the latter option.

On the other hand, the second sub discourse of ‘Ignorance vs Expert knowledge’ portrayed those resisting extractivism as either ignorant or spreading false information of the oil projects. Categorizing critics as ignorant took place by means of portraying them as ‘woke activists’, ‘teenagers’ (Bwambale, 2022c) “‘activists’” (Ssekatawa, 2022) et cetera. Categorization of activists as untrustworthy group of people is well summarized in a title ‘*Opposition against EACOP based on untruths, spin, not facts*’ (Ssekatawa, 2022). Among other accusations, activists were told spreading ‘doomsday narrative’ (Ssekatawa, 2022), and ‘wild and unverified claims’ on the number of displaced people, the pipeline route et cetera. (Karuhanga, 2022a, 2022c). While the intentions of those spreading misinformation were secondary in this sub discourse, the aim was rather to narrate activists as untrustworthy people. Expert knowledge such as that in the ESIA’s, and technical designs are contrasted to that of the campaigners who had “*deliberately opted to disregard every other information [...] to paint a different picture*” (Ssekatawa, 2022 online).

4.3. TotalEnergies' Discourses

The next three subsections will provide insights from the TNC Total's legitimation discourses on their oil operations in the Western part of Uganda. Material analysed includes Total's Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) reporting, ESIA's of Tilenga and EACOP projects, as well as relevant website material of the corporation. The discourses are discussed in order of magnitude, starting from the most prominent one.

4.3.1. Self-Regulation & Best Practice

Total's most dominant discourse is that of 'Self-regulation and best practice'. The underlying argument within this discourse is that oil extractivism brings no harm if it is done in an 'exemplary manner' (TotalEnergies, 2022d). Thus, Total organizes this discourse towards defending its self-image by referring to international best practices, national and international laws, and regulations and standards that it follows; and promoting its commitments for transparency, stakeholder engagement and safety that it has named as some of its key values.

One of the ways in which this discourse legitimates Total's operations is the self-regulation and promotion of best practices within the Tilenga and EACOP projects. References to the International Finance Corporation's Performance Standards are made repeatedly, both in Total's website material and in the ESIA's that are said to follow this standard (e.g., TotalEnergies, 2022a). More general indications to highest international standards and international best practices, as well as Ugandan laws are made to advertise self-regulation. The EACOP ESIA provides an example of such a vague argumentation to build legitimacy by stating that "*[s]takeholder engagement has been undertaken in accordance with the requirements of Ugandan legislation, international standards and EACOP project principles, protocols and policies for stakeholder engagement*" (Total East Africa Midstream BV, 2019, p.18).

The words 'responsible' and 'transparent' are commonly used. The next argument found in Total's Human Rights Briefing Paper (2018, p.29), which is part of its CSR reporting, also utilizes the developmental aspect of Total's projects to its host countries and communities.

As a company aiming to be the responsible energy major, we must take a demanding and transparent approach to such a process. For both host countries, Tilenga and EACOP are projects in the public interest and fundamental to the socio-economic development of the region. The downside

of this footprint is that some communities will be relocated. We have to make sure that as few people as possible are affected.

Indeed, stakeholder and community engagement has been cited as one of the integral components in project developments, as to allocate information, build consensus specifically with the PAPs. Whereas the objectives of Tilenga ESIA include the identification and evaluation of risks and impacts of the project, it also aims to “*provide means for adequate engagement with affected communities [...] and to ensure that relevant environmental and social information is disclosed and disseminated*” (TotalEnergies et al., 2019, p.13). Therefore, the accessibility of the ESIA should be of main importance in realizing this engagement and dissemination of information to PAPs. However, most of the printed ESIA reports were disseminated in the headquarters of universities and offices of relevant oil authorities that located in the capital area (TotalEnergies et al., 2019, p.4).

Whereas commitments to best practices can be positive contributions when realized, several of such ‘additional mitigation measures’ within both ESIAs referred to commitments that would be delivered in the future. Indeed, the Tilenga ESIA presented long lists of “*mitigation measures [that] will be adopted **during all phases of work** to minimise potential social impacts*” (emphasis added) (TotalEnergies et al., 2019, pp.89, 94). The statement of ‘all phases of work’ provides that these mitigation plans should have been in place when ESIA was approved in 2019, because the development of Tilenga project already commenced in 2017 (PAU, 2022b). Similarly, the ESIA for EACOP states that an emergency response plan will be developed, including “*oil spill contingency, spill management and response, and community health safety and security plans*” (Total East Africa Midstream BV, 2019, p.24). Failing to incorporate these plans into the ESIAs, or by very least indicate when they will be developed, gives the impression that pledges are used to build corporation’s profile as a responsible actor rather than for real commitment.

4.3.2. Social and Developmental Benefits of Projects

The second most prominent legitimating discourse of Total incorporates the social and developmental benefits that it expects the Tilenga and EACOP projects to provide. Many of such arguments for benefits are covered in the ESIAs which is surprising, because generally, the purpose of an ESIA is to predict and mitigate potential **negative** impacts. The Tilenga ESIA explains why, by stating that “*in line with feedback provided by NEMA, the purpose of this*

ESIA is to not only identify and assess negative impacts, but also identify and enhance any possible beneficial impacts associated with the Project” (TotalEnergies et al., 2019, p.13). Therefore, it seems that NEMA has specifically asked for this positive discourse of extractivism to be reinforced in the ESIA. Total’s discourse can be roughly divided into two sub discourses, namely, 1) economic and employment arguments, and 2) other social benefits.

Total (2021a) estimates that thousands of jobs will be generated in the projects they are operating. 11,000 direct and 47,000 indirect jobs are said to be created during the construction phase, and 900 direct and 2,400 indirect jobs during the production phase of the Tilenga and EACOP projects in Uganda and Tanzania (TotalEnergies, 2021a). These numbers are inconsistent with MEMD’s (2019) estimation of 160,000 direct and indirect jobs, which is an estimation for jobs created in Uganda alone (Kingfisher project is included). While employment opportunities are regularly displayed as positive benefits locally and nationally, the negative impacts from the loss of employment after the construction phase (in which most job opportunities are) are only mentioned once. (TotalEnergies et al., 2019, p.87).

Moreover, Total displays similar arguments for economic growth, as can be found in the state discourses. References to contributions for the economy are linked to economic growth, business opportunities and skills development, and “*economic boost due to the beneficial cumulative impacts from employment*” (Total East Africa Midstream BV, 2019, p.22), economic stability as well as “*general prosperity to the people of Uganda*” (TotalEnergies et al., 2019, p.115). Economic arguments are mostly presented by using the listing and repetition technique, and thus, detailed descriptions are not given. The next quote which discusses potential impacts on economic development from the Tilenga project shows the direct presumed link between economic growth and the betterment of life. “*Procurement of local goods and services by the Project and increased spending by people working on the Project and by in-migrants will stimulate local economic growth resulting in improved living standards and quality of life for local communities*” (TotalEnergies et al., 2019, p.87). Once again, development is mainly understood in economic means.

Some of Total’s statements within the second sub discourse of ‘other social benefits’ are ignorant of and discrediting of local knowledges. A section where the potential impacts of extractivism is studied with regards to archaeology and cultural heritage of local communities is illustrative of this point. The impacts, which are rated from low to moderate adverse significance, include possible damage and loss of (access to) sacred places such as religious

and cultural sites, graves and cemeteries, sacred trees, and worship places. The mitigation measures to these impacts include relocation of sacred sites, places of worship, and graves, and implementation of cultural heritage awareness training. Total rates the latter measure as a beneficial impact due to its contribution to “*national and international scientific knowledge*” (TotalEnergies et al., 2019, p.98). Although the mitigation measures are not targeted towards local peoples’ needs (as locals are expected to endure the insensibility of relocation of graves and sacred sites), Total still considers the impacts after the mitigation measures to be insignificant or low.

In some instances, it seems as if Total aims to find and promote positive impacts to local communities, where they do not exist. Another complacent argument that Total has invented is that PAPs will benefit and be empowered from being involved with the oil corporation’s processes. Total names this positive impact as ‘*Community Empowerment and Increased Community Participation in Decision Making*’ and explains that “[t]he experience of participating in the processes of community engagement and dialogue in relation to the Project will enhance communities’ competence in communicating their needs, grievances and expectations” (TotalEnergies et al., 2019, p.88). These arguments provide clear indication of the way that Total perceives local people: as not necessarily empowered or holding means to clearly communicate their needs. The claims are unreasonable and condescending, but Total goes even further in presenting grievance procedure among the processes that could lead to community empowerment.

Of course, the second sub discourse also promotes other direct and indirect impacts of Tilenga and ESIA projects such as “*improvement in nutritional status for those who benefit from increased household incomes*”, improvement in health seeking behaviour and “*regional health planning and service delivery*” (TotalEnergies et al., 2019, p.93). The improvement in infrastructure and road conditions and networks, are often cited in both ESIA’s, which in turn could lead to more opportunities in trade and increased productivity and the overall better accessibility in the project areas (TotalEnergies et al., 2019; Total East Africa Midstream BV, 2019). These projects are also interchangeably referred to as ‘development’ in Total’s documents. Because development implies a positive change, and prevailing discourses uphold a wide range of associated social benefits, what could be bad about these developments?

The Tilenga ESIA closes in a strong statement: “[o]verall, the Project needs to be viewed as a whole and be determined on the vast array of benefits that it will bring to the

Country, which will far outweigh any short term localised negative impacts” (emphasis added) (TotalEnergies et al., 2019, p.115). This quote summarizes the aim of this discourse, which has been to exaggerate benefits of oil extractivism as long-term benefits for the whole country and portray negative effects as local, insignificant, and short-term.

4.3.3. No Substantial Ecological Effects

Total’s documents also constitute a discourse of ‘no substantial ecological effects’ where the corporation reproduces and legitimates the extractivist mindset. Much of this discourse rests on similar pillars as the state’s discourse with a same name, namely, downplaying environmental impacts by promoting reductionist and simplistic ideas of nature.

Belittling ecological effects of oil extractivism in Uganda is perhaps most evident in how the ESIA’s for both Tilenga & EACOP have underestimated the GHG emissions that these projects generate. Total has not complied with its claim to transparency, because it has failed to provide calculations on how it arrived at these conclusions. (NCEA, 2018, 2019). The EACOP’s annual emission figures are claimed to be 11-18 kton CO₂, “*which represents around 0.014–0.029% of Uganda’s total greenhouse-gas emissions in 2030*” (Total East Africa Midstream BV, 2019, p.22). Total concluded that these low emissions “*will not affect Uganda’s ability to meet its emission reduction targets published as part of the [...] Climate Change’s Paris Agreement*” (ibid). The Environmental Law Alliance Worldwide (ELAW, as cited in AFIEGO et al., 2022, p.6) has estimated the emissions three times higher, however, stating that the additional carbon emissions expected to be produced by EACOP is at peak roughly 34 kton CO₂, even when the oil refined in the Uganda refinery is not accounted for. The Tilenga ESIA, then again, rated the impact significance of GHG emissions of the Tilenga project simply “*between Insignificant and Moderate Adverse*” (TotalEnergies et al., 2019, p.38) failing to provide any quantified calculations whatsoever.

Promoting underestimated calculations of CO₂ emissions at the time of climate crises is irresponsible to say the least, but the use of numerical quantification of ‘0.014-0.029%’ is a further rhetorical strategy, utilized to showcase the environmental impacts as insignificantly small. This strategy is linked to ‘scientific optimistic posture’ since such a precise calculation creates a perceived reality of a scientifically credible conclusion. Scientific optimistic posture works in favour of Total, because numbers create veracity, and technical language reaches only a few, making it hard to criticize arguments that it is built on. Similar quantification strategy is

used to legitimate drilling oil in a national park. Instead of stating that there are ten well locations in the Murchison Falls national park, Total states that “*Tilenga facilities inside the Park will cover less than 0.05% of the surface area*” and that the overall development accounts for “*less than 1% of park land*” (TotalEnergies, 2022a).

To make way for extractivism, reductionist ideas of nature are commonly showcased in this discourse. This trend leans strongly on anthropocentrism, that is, a theory in which human beings are superior to nature and other living beings. Just as the extractivist mindset, anthropocentrism realizes ecosystems and non-human animals as valuable, only when they bare some instrumental value for humans. (Thompson, 2017). Section 6.3.3. ‘Terrestrial Wildlife’ of the Tilenga ESIA report provides an example of such knowledge production. While assessing impacts of the oil project to wildlife in one of Africa’s most important areas for biodiversity, Total categorizes *some* animals as ‘priority species’, which are considered as receptors of the project. Thus, the impacts (including loss or fragmentation of species habitat) are only studied for the primary animals. What is problematic, is that the list does not sufficiently provide the scope of the study on this respect, because the number of primary (or ‘secondary’) animals is not reported. Moreover, being able to categorize animals as primary and secondary (implying rate of importance), can only take place under simplistic ideas of nature and reveals the anthropocentric superiority of humans over nature.

The general mitigation hierarchy by Total to ecological questions is to: ‘Avoid – minimize – restore – compensate’ (TotalEnergies, 2021a, p.1). The Tilenga ESIA is built by leaning on this approach: presenting the expected impacts of the oil projects to a specific group, presenting proposed mitigation measures, and rating the impacts as either insignificant, low, moderate, or high, after the identified mitigation measures. (Most impacts were rated as low adverse after the mitigation measures (TotalEnergies et al., 2019).) Whereas the ESIA’s (EACOP & Tilenga) of projects led by Total used expressions such as: predicting the impacts, reducing risks et cetera, it should be noted that knowledge of the complex systems and functions of ecosystems is still very narrow, especially when it comes to tropical environments in the global South. Consequently, changes in ecosystems cannot be as accurately forecasted as Total presents, neither can it be known whether the mitigation measures prove efficient (Loreau et al., 2001). This is why ESIA’s such as the ones analysed here, can put emphasis on secondary issues such as dust (TotalEnergies et al., 2019, p.38), because they are incompetent in addressing the permanent ecological destruction that extractivism brings on its wake (Gudynas, 2020).

Although strategies are used to belittle ecological impacts, Total is sure to present itself as a responsible actor that acknowledges and is “*fully aware of the project’s sensitive nature*” (TotalEnergies, 2021a, p.2). The Tilenga project is identified with a vision to “*leave the Murchison Falls National Park and, where feasible, its surrounding landscape in better ecological condition than if the Project had not taken place, by achieving a positive effect for biodiversity*” (TotalEnergies et al., 2019, p.113). However, this plan seems too ambitious and highly unachievable, and much of its implementation remains a question. How, for example, can Total restore the possible loss of animal species in the park?

4.4. Conclusion

The aim of this chapter has been to critically assess the discourses of the state of Uganda and TNC on how both actors justify oil extractivism in the Albertine region in Uganda. The state discourses could best be divided into five main discourses. The most common discourse of the state was that which comprised ‘economic arguments’, most of which could be found in the policy documents. Almost as prominent was the ‘no substantial ecological effects’ discourse, of which arguments were prominent in all data types of the state. Third, was the ‘stigmatizing critics’ discourse, which was only found in the newspaper and website articles analysed. Exactly that: stigmatizing critics, seemed to be the highest aim in all the articles analysed, although these arguments were often intertwined to other arguments such as ‘no substantial ecological effects’. Fourth most coded arguments of the state were those that comprised the ‘energy poverty, -security and just transition’ discourse. These arguments appeared both in articles and policy papers. Lastly, the state utilized the ‘employment and social argument’ discourse, to advertise the expected benefits of oil extractivism. Total’s discourses, on the other hand, could be divided into three main discourses in the following order: ‘self-regulation and best practice’, ‘social and developmental benefits’ and ‘no substantial ecological effects’ from the most to least prevalent.

The arguments that the state and the corporation utilize in reproducing the extractivist mindset do not function separately but are interconnected, overlapping and complement each other. For this reason, the separation of narratives and argumentation into distinct discourses was not always unequivocal. For example, the discourse of ‘no substantial ecological effects’ was overlapping with both ‘stigmatizing critics’ and ‘energy security and just transition’ discourses, and all these discourses had an element of discussing the contrast between the

global South and North. On the other hand, arguments for energy security overlap with the cause of the social dimension that promotes poverty alleviation, because energy security is part of addressing the energy poverty issue. Figures 4.4.1. and 4.4.2. aim to illustrate the overlapping nature of both state and Total's discourses.

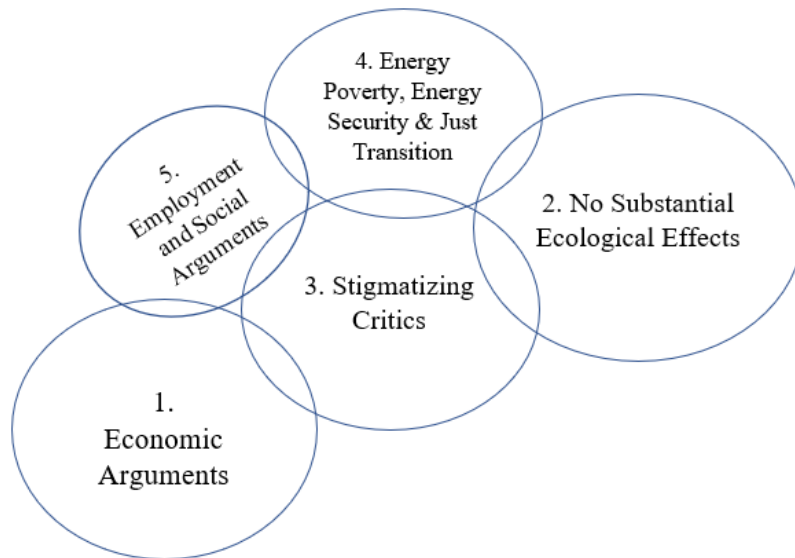


Figure 4.4.1. Overlapping discourses of the Ugandan state

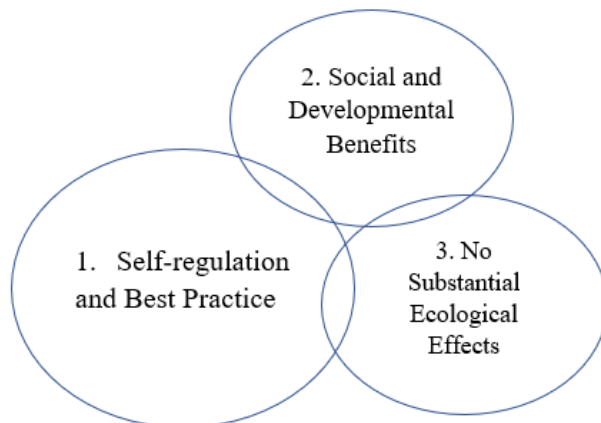


Figure 4.4.2. Overlapping discourses of Total

Manifest intertextuality³ between discourses of state and Total was most evident where state actors referred to Total's ESIA's and HRIAs, as means to build shared consensus on the safety and sustainability of these projects. References to Total's documents and studies were made

³ Manifest intertextuality is a form of intertextuality where texts rely explicitly on other texts (e.g., referencing them). (Fairclough, 1992b as cited in Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002, p.12)

specifically with regards to arguments on environmental safety, but also towards social practices such as compensation for PAPs. Similarities in both state's and Total's discourses were evident, since both drew their arguments from partly same discourses. Overlapping arguments were mostly found in discourses that relied on social, economic, and developmental benefits, as well as environmental statements. What was specific to the Ugandan state was to stigmatize critics by categorizing them as anti-developmentalists (although Total would also benefit from this narrative that aims to suppress criticism for their projects). Another discourse evident in state's arguments but less in Total's was the energy security discourse. Specific to Total was its 'self-regulation and best practice' discourse, as the state did not defend the corporation as such.

The discourses scrutinized in the previous sections are what compose extractivist narratives. They function by creating positive interpretations of extractivisms, while concealing any negative effects that the process entails. These narratives have the power of creating awareness and new understandings of the nature and its relations to humans "*through their corresponding institutions and power resources, which operate to sustain and legitimize them*" (Gudynas, 2020, p.57). The next chapter will consider the critique and address further implications of these discourses in relation to the Ugandan society and the world at large.

5. Discussion, Implications and Lessons for the Future

5.1. Critique Discussion and Implications of the Dominating Discourses of Oil Extractivism

The results of my analysis in chapter 4 warrant careful discussion. Placed within the context of the theories (chapter 2), the results (chapter 4), and the wider literature on extractivism (chapters 1 and 3) and resistance in Uganda and elsewhere in Africa or globally, both empirically and analytically, I argue that the discourses that reproduce the extractivist mindset do not function as separate instances from the wider world. Thus, the rest of the chapter is divided into six subsections that present a critique discussion and implications of the several legitimization discourses of the Ugandan state and TotalEnergies.

5.1.1. Implications of Economic Arguments

The state of Uganda uses economic arguments more prominently, but similar arguments for economic prosperity and accumulation are found in Total's documents as well. As Livingston states "*[e]conomic growth is a paradigm that has become so second nature that when people are thinking about a place in this world and how to improve it, immediately they/we assume that growth must be the basis of that effort. Without us really noticing it, growth has become this unmarked category granted magical powers*" (Livingston, 2019, p.4). For this reason, neither state nor Total need to defend the intrinsic value of economic growth or rise in the domestic revenue and GDP in their argumentation. They can simply assume that the reader knows.

The extractivist mindset is inseparable from and dependent on this paradigm of economic growth, because a direct (assumed) link has been established between the two. The deeply embedded ideology for the need for endless growth sees extractivism as imperative because the growth, after all, will lead societies to this powerful state of flourishing. Indeed, the belief of the need for growth has become so dynamic that it masks the destruction it portends (Livingston, 2019). Sometimes even when the social or environmental destruction is clearly visible (or predictable), as is the case in oil extractivism, economic arguments are still used as weighty enough to overcome the negative aspects.

To engage in capitalist critique and its blind obsession with economic growth is not to say that economic growth is the main problem as such. For example, for Uganda to reach a status of an upper middle-income country by 2040, it will need some economic growth. Likewise, to gain more economic independence through repaying loans could be better achieved by increased oil revenue. (NPA, 2020). However, there are a few interrelated problems that undermine the state and Total's argument of oil to unequivocally bring economic growth. Firstly, examples of several oil rich countries show that the link between this natural resource abundance and economic growth is not as simple or straightforward one as Total and the Ugandan state propose (see subsection 2.1.1. for economic resource curse).

The second problem arises when the state and oil corporations mostly evaluate benefits from extractivism in the economic realm but are careful to distort and avert such remarks on environmental and social costs. When the environmental costs such as biodiversity loss, pollution, and contamination as well as social costs like loss of livelihoods are excluded out of cost-benefit analyses, the calculations become distorted for the benefit of the shareholders of extractive projects. Emphasizing the economic realm and treating it as separate from social and ecological values creates a much-oversimplified picture of a complex setting in which extractivism is carried out. (Gudynas, 2020). This simplification is used as a legitimization method by the immediate beneficiaries of extractive projects.

5.1.2. Implications of Employment, Social and Developmental Arguments

Both Total and the Ugandan state rely highly on the arguments within the discourse that promotes social and developmental benefits of the Tilenga and EACOP projects. Many of the presented social benefits are shown to target individuals, specifically those residing in the oil rich areas that have commonly lived a traditional pastoral way of life. Monetary compensation and employment opportunities are among the most promoted benefits that, in turn, are promised to provide these individuals and communities a way towards a 'betterment of life'.

Compensation is one of the most emphasized elements to lead to this so-called better life for PAPs. Using compensatory arguments is common for a compensatory state which, rather than avoiding or addressing concerns brought up by affected communities and civil society, aims to deal with the most negative and contentious issues of extractivism by means of compensation (Gudynas, 2020). Serenkuma (2022) has studied the fates of people compensated in the Albertine region, many of which are not causes for celebration. The main

reason for the lack of success concerns the fact that none of the locals were willing sellers (Serenkuma, 2022). The issues of compensatory processes and their aftermath have also been covered in HRIAs, stating that women are in an increasingly vulnerable position since their husbands are commonly official owners of land and get compensated, leaving women without alternative sources of income. Other issues such as inadequate rate of compensation, lack of information of the compensation process, and coerced signing of compensation agreements were also among the issues reported PAPs. (FHRI and FIDH, 2020; Atine et al., 2020).

Additionally, arguments that name compensation as the almighty remedy for negative implications of extractivism fall short in recognizing local knowledges and traditional way of lifestyle. Compensation cannot effectively cover the loss of livelihoods, cultural practices nor the ecological damage that extractivist projects cause, because these matters are not material, and their value cannot be counted in monetary terms. The disregarding of local ways of life becomes evident not only by the loud absence of local people's voices in these discourses, but also by the way that the loss of cultural life and sacred sites of PAPs are not considered significant. Thus, scientific knowledge and its development are shown to exceed the importance of preserving local knowledges and religious practices. Undermining the importance of cultural and traditional values of local groups is not only problematic but leans on a neocolonial mindset as it can lead to cultural assimilation. Did the locals want to be relocated to modern houses or continue their cultural practices and livelihoods in their ancestral lands without being relocated of their family and neighbours?

Promises of employment opportunities present another way of using monetary compensation as an argument for extractivism, because employment also leads to financial profit. As Gudynas (2020) states, however, such promises for job creation are often overexaggerated, and neglect mentioning the limitation of jobs to the construction phase only. Thus, the employment opportunities do not provide a long-term solution for poverty and unemployment.

All in all, development, as within other state and Total's discourses, becomes understood as the betterment and modernisation of life, superior to that of traditional knowledge and lifestyle that are devalued by the extractivist mindset. The social and developmental arguments are highly interlinked to that of economic arguments because the compensatory arguments also lean on the capitalistic mindset that assumes monetary profit as

the highest possible virtue that has a power to fix the possible occurring negative side effects of extractive projects.

5.1.3. Implications of Environmental Arguments

The very definition of extractivism that I have opted as a premise for the analysis describes how violence and destruction tend to accompany extractivist oil development. Kröger et al. (2021) have further illustrated how sustainability can be understood as the antithesis of extractivism, because the mentality that extractivism entails does not aim for reciprocal nor equitable relationship between man and nature. Thus, it is controversial (although unsurprising) that the ‘no substantial ecological effects’ line of defence for oil extractivism was so prominent in both state and Total’s discourses.

As already disclosed in the sections that examine environmental arguments for extractivism (see, 4.2.3 and 4.3.3), these statements rely highly on the optimistic scientific posture, which simultaneously, strengthens the artificial disconnect between human and nature. Optimistic posture is evident in the way that numerical quantification is used to portray an event as accurately and as insignificant as possible. However, often these quantifications only present estimates of which reliability cannot be verified, even more so when taken into account the lack of transparency of Total on how the calculations have been arrived to (e.g., CO₂ emissions). Whereas the ESIA context imply that nature’s all complex ecosystems and reactions are calculable and thus could be mitigated, negative implications do often happen and are then framed as ‘accidents’. Take an example of oil spills: although depicted as rare and unfortunate events – they are in fact so frequent that they should be understood as logical and normal continuums of capitalist oil extractivism (Obeng-Odoom, 2018b).

Being able to legitimate destructive extractivist mode of production by using ‘there are no substantial ecological effects’ arguments, even when extractivism takes place in critical animal and biodiversity habitat such as natural parks and other protected areas, seems absurd. It raises a question of whether any environmental impact evaluation results in the cancellation of an extractivist project? This rarely happens, as is shown by the Chilean example. Between 2005-2012 of over 600 projects that were evaluated only 7 were rejected (Centro de Investigación Periodística, 2012 as cited in Gudynas, 2020, p.67). Moreover, the chief executive of AFIEGO Dickens Kamugisha explained that the ESIA of Total’s projects can be compared to a “*defendant presiding his own case*” and continued that findings have been made

favourable to their own wishes and needs, namely, most residual impacts are stated as low or insignificant (Roussi, 2022).

While the ESIA's serve as means of legitimating Total's projects, they also provide means for the state to cite the original documents for the same purpose to an even wider audience. The state utilizes exaggerated arguments, implying that too much resources have been put to these 'overstudied' assessments. Claims like this also reinforce the impression that human is separate from and superior to nature, a god like superior, who can oversee future ecological events. One further implication of the state discourse is that it reproduces extractivist mindset on a country wide level, specifically to urban areas that have no alternative understanding of the current situation on the 'field'. Being the current strict operational civic space that exists in Uganda, more holistic information of the situation in Albertine Graben is hardly accessible, whereas newspapers that disseminate positive extractivist narratives are widely accessible to the public. Thus, these discourses have long standing effects in promoting all the ongoing extractivist projects as ecologically sound.

5.1.4. Implications of Energy Sufficiency Related Arguments

The case for energy sufficiency is rather different. Although connected to the ecological arguments because exploiting oil and gas resources is introduced as a more sustainable and favourable option to that of charcoal and firewood, which a significant number of Ugandans now rely on, the need for energy sufficiency raises a distinct set of political-economic considerations. References were also made to energy self-sufficiency and how Uganda's oil resources could help other countries in the energy crises (e.g., '*Africa can help solve the energy crisis*', Museveni, 2022). However, the argument of oil extractivism to help raise people out of energy poverty in Uganda and in the region was most dominantly used.

All the issues raised are valid and securing access to energy is a highly respectable objective. However, the question of equal distribution of the benefits of the oil projects to all Ugandans remains. More specifically, how is the government assuring that it lifts people out of energy poverty, since as of now, many of those living in the rural oil rich areas in the Albertine Graben do not own vehicles that use gas (Albertine 2022, personal communication, 7 July)? Eleven civil society organisations that are signatories to an open letter they sent to President Museveni after he published his article in the *Telegraph*, estimate that over 90% of the oil of Lake Albert Project will be exported (Women for a Green Economy Movement et

al., 2022). How then, is this project any different from others relying on the neocolonial pattern that upholds unequal power relations between the global North and South. That is, resources are being extracted from Africa (now French and Chinese corporations) and thus, most benefits of this process will also be collected elsewhere.

The Ugandan state has raised concerns of neocolonialism, not towards foreign corporations but for activists, CSOs and now also the European Parliament, all of which have criticized Uganda for its new fossil fuel investments. Why should Uganda not extract its oil and follow the footsteps of others that have been able to translate resources into accelerated industrialization and modernization? The aim here is not to answer whether the Ugandan state should be among the first states to pave the way for a green transition. It can be asked, however, why are states around the world not focusing their investments on the vast available renewable energy sources?

Within a time of climate crises, it is dangerous that discourses exist where fossil fuel investments are still promoted as ‘sustainable’ development. Scientists have long warned about the intimate relationship between fossil fuels and climate change. According to a study by Reclaim Finance, Total is not on track with the Paris agreement but will exceed “*its share of the remaining carbon budget to limit global warming to 1.5°C as soon as 2035*” (Her and Delaporte, 2022, p.3). This will be the case, even if the company promotes its goal of reaching climate neutrality by 2050 (ibid.). Moreover, the trend in which governments are still taking on new oil and gas investments (oil and gas production levels have increased almost 17% since 2016 (Her and Delaporte, 2022)) is inconsistent with the temperature limits as set out in the Paris Agreement (United Nations Climate Change, 2021).

From a developmental perspective, the main question around just green transition should not only be ‘how to find **as much** alternative energy sources to replace dirty energy’. Ideological, behavioural, economic and policy changes are also needed in terms of regulating how much energy need be consumed, to bridge the gap between the parts of the world that consume beyond their needs and those who do not have enough to start with. There will come a time when development, as we understand it in linear terms, will not be able to continue as it has. Some would call this type of transition a slowdown or a failure in development. But the truth is: there can be no human development or advancement if there is no healthy earth on which to flourish. That inevitably shifts the discussion from just transition to just sustainability. The former is largely based on planting renewables and finding green

work for labour; while the latter is about changing the development paradigm holistically, emphasising land, labour, capital, and the state (Marais et.al., 2021). Commoning the land on which we live is an important aspiration. Removing ‘rent theft’ is a useful and concrete starting point. (Obeng-Odoom, 2021a, 2021b). Existing movements in Uganda that organise their resistance around this transformative alternative suggest that this strategy is not only probable but also possible as a counterpunch to mainstream discourses (Kalangi, 2022). All these changes shall take place from bottom-up, from grassroots movements and mobilizations to involve local people in all stages of these processes (Shiva and Mies, 2014).

5.1.5. Implications of Stigmatizing Critics

The stigmatizing critics discourse can be said to have the most direct, and dire effects on the (civil) society of Uganda. As was shown in section 4.2.5., the discourse upheld in newspapers aims to portray critics of oil extractivism as mal-intentioned or ignorant anti-developmentalists. By categorizing them as such, the state is contributing to the reproduction of extractivist common-sense according to which there is no development without extractivism (Gudynas, 2020). The patriotic discourse propounds that extractivism should not only be endured with but also desired and applauded among Ugandans, due to its suggested outcomes of economic and social development.

This discourse is directly contributing to the trend of shrinking civic space in Uganda. By negatively stigmatizing critics, environmentalists and activists, the state uses its power in excluding and delegitimizing the voices of groups which it does not want to contribute to any politically charged debates. Any resistance of extractivism may be perceived as political opposition by the state, which is unable to interpret that criticism may well be pointed towards the prevailing ideas of economic growth as development through exploitation of nature. (Gudynas, 2020). Indeed, Albertine’s (2022, personal communication, 7 July) view confirms this theory as he explains that the activists “*are not anti-development, not even anti-government, not even anti oil. They are pro development because they are contributing to development [...] by campaigning against project that harms environment*”.

The shrinking civic space functions as a vicious cycle: operational and legal civic space is limited so that participation becomes difficult. Moreover, those who try to get involved or raise their concerns on the extractivist processes in Uganda are punished, whereas the fear of sanctions and violence further limits and discourages civil society actors to take part. The

strong Western opposition in the form of #StopEACOP campaign has further diluted the civic space in Uganda. Albertine (2022, personal communication, 7 July) importantly talked on this issue, which deserves to be quoted at length:

Given the media reporting around the world, [...] it makes the government so afraid of local activists, because they see them as people sending information abroad. And this information is being used to attack shareholders to attack investors [...] some of them [which] are already pulling out their financial support to the EACOP. And that is dangerous, especially as the government shift narrative that activists are fighting development because when investors withdraw funding, because activists have sent letters to shareholders, then that justify the reason why they should do make the civic space so narrow, that nobody will work.

The glocal nature of critique for oil extractivism in Uganda extends yet to another problem, namely, a ‘disconnect’ between the efforts of organizations in the global North and locals who are active in raising issues around oil (Albertine 2022, personal communication, 7 July). According to Albertine (ibid.) the Northern NGOs are spreading a narrative in which they are stopping the EACOP project completely. This, in turn, is “*causing a very disturbing situation on the ground*” specifically to local activists who seek to demand the government and oil companies to respect the locals’ and environment’s rights while carrying out the projects, rather than resisting EACOP in its entirety (as this is deemed an impossible goal) (ibid.). This ‘disconnect’ has taken place because the extractivist critique coming from outside Uganda has not been in alignment with local activists in Albertine Graben. As Albertine (ibid.) has raised, this has led to a more dangerous operational environment for the local activists.

CSOs in Uganda have, however, continued to use different means of resistance to ensure the implementation of the local communities’ rights related to oil-related activities in the Albertine Graben. Passive resistance such as education as collective empowerment, community radio and awareness raising have been used to amplify the voices of local oil-affected-communities. Additionally, affected communities have mobilized in more direct ways to resist land grabbing and ensure their rights to adequate compensation. Locals have, for example, erected signposts declaring their demands for compensation and refused to leave their lands before compensation was granted. After four years of using such non-violent resistance methods, a majority of the PAPs were finally compensated. (Kalangi, 2022).

Although much of the ‘stigmatizing critics discourse’ targets critics abroad, the state uses this as an intentional strategy to shrink the civic space for local civil society. This vile discourse not only exists on pages of newspapers but reflects the difficult situation that is a reality for Ugandans. For example, on the 4th of October the Ugandan police arrested nine students for an allegedly illegal protest. The students who were part of the #StopEACOP campaign were charged of inciting violence. (Kirabo, 2022). To zoom out from the Ugandan context, it should be noted that resisting extractivist projects anywhere in the world is dangerous. According to Global Witness (2022), 200 environmental and land defenders were killed in 2021. The discourses that legitimate extractivism by stigmatizing whoever defends environmental and human rights within the process are part of the same problem. None of these extractivist projects can be truly ‘transparent’, ‘sustainable’, ‘fair’ or ‘just’ if they end up excluding specific knowledges and silencing anyone monitoring or criticizing them.

5.1.6. Implications of Total’s Self-Regulation and Best-Practice

Total’s most dominant discourse is composed of its claims for best practices in transparency, disseminating information and engaging with local communities. This line of defence is organized towards showcasing the business and its acts as responsible. However, a few indications show that there is a gap between the promotion and meaningful implementation of these efforts.

The right to access information is a human right that links together the three Total’s claims. For there to be effective engagement with PAPs and other local stakeholders, transparency, and fair and equal dissemination of information regarding the projects and their implementation are key. From a human rights perspective, access to information is of main importance because to be able to claim one’s rights, one must first know his rights.

Whereas Total has stated that it has disseminated information by sharing ESIA in some regional offices, full accessibility goes beyond receiving a printed copy and factors such as literacy and language skills should be considered. As Albertine (2022, personal communication, 7 July) importantly pointed out, *“they [Total] write over 700 pages⁴ of technical documents, which are not even translated in local language of which majority of*

⁴ Which is also the reason why I analyzed the non-technical summaries of the ESIA: ESIA EACOP (28 pages), and the Tilenga Project ESIA (121 pages).

people who are affected by the project don't understand those English [documents] and you find the [...] meaning of the documents have become so irrelevant and unimportant to local people". Albertine (ibid.) continued by stating that the documents are likely written by consultants copying the implementations of other countries' documents of similar extractive projects. He noted that when you ask the implementer about the content of the document "*they don't know that what you're asking is in their document that gives me an overview that they just write things or they pay people to write things which they themselves don't know*" (ibid.). This raises more questions, namely, whether these assessments and instruments are mostly for public relations and greenwashing exercises? Several scholars indeed contend this view. (see e.g., Gudynas, 2020; Toffel and Marquis, 2011; Alam and Islam, 2021).

The many cases brought against Total also present evidence on the lack of implementation of the promoted (inter)national best practices, and of its human rights obligations. Yet another way in which Total promotes its self-image is to refer to the many commitments it will undertake in the future. Whereas this of course helps to lengthen its good-looking list of commitments, these claims should not be mistaken for real responsibility before evidence is shown. By emphasizing its commitments and public relations practices Total aims to shift the discourse away from extractivism itself, thus, allowing it to circumvent providing evidence for the implementation of the regulations or discuss the irrevocable effects of extractivism. This discursive process feeds the extractivist mindset, which relies on artificial and shallow analyses. Here, Total's reductionist analyses try to show that oil extractivism causes no harm if it is done by a responsible actor.

5.2. Alternative Understandings of Extractivisms and the Fossil Fuels

The discourses that have been examined in this thesis provide insights into the prevailing understanding of extractivism as development. The underlying reason for this equation is the Western belief of progress as economic growth that extractivism is believed to entail. However, for the many negative implications of extractivism that this thesis has tried to shed light on, fossil fuels should not be understood as the equation of good life. One way of moving further from this dominant yet unsustainable paradigm of extractivism and the neoliberal thinking of development it leans on, is to promote inclusive development (Brand et al., 2017).

The concept of inclusive development is an organized dialogue between degrowth and post-extractivism which both critique the growth imperative of capitalist mode of production. Within the vision of inclusive development, a socio-ecological transformation is promoted to discard the current disposition of commodification of nature and social life. The current power relations within institutions of the economic and political realms would have to change from prioritizing profit-making to prioritizing well-being and prosperity. Resistance from social movements, grassroots movements, and locally led initiatives would be at the forefront of this transformation. Together with policy changes, and political frameworks that put TNC accountable, there is a need for changes on an individual behavioural level as well. (Brand et al., 2017). Just as extractivism entails an extractivist mindset and legitimating discourses such as the ones presented in this thesis, transition to post-extractivism and inclusive development depends on changing mindsets as well. One of such revolutionary shifts in a mindset is to believe that – in a world where extractivism remains so persistent – change to a post-extractivist world is indeed possible.

Efforts to understanding development not only in terms of extractivist and capitalist accumulation are becoming more visible. Policy changes for climate adaptation, transitions to circular and green economies are being drafted, although these policies alone are not enough to build more just futures or mitigate socio-ecological harm of extractivism (Obeng-Odoom, 2021b). Grassroots movements, local and indigenous peoples are defending the environment and their land. Most recently, after the analysis part of this thesis had already been done, the European Parliament passed a resolution in which it raises concerns of the human and environmental rights violations that have been associated with the Tilenga and EACOP projects. The resolution calls on the Ugandan and Tanzanian governments to initiate measures to ensure respect for human rights, and further calls on “*EU and the international community to exert maximum pressure on Ugandan and Tanzanian authorities, as well as the project promoters and stakeholders, to protect the environment and to put an end to the extractive activities in protected and sensitive ecosystems...*” (emphasis added) (European Parliament Resolution on violations of human rights in Uganda and Tanzania linked to investments in fossil fuels projects, 2022). Moreover, Total is urged to take one year before starting EACOP, for a possibility of considering an alternative route for the pipeline, and alternative projects based on renewable energy sources (ibid.).

In terms of recognition of the human and environmental rights violations and the critical nature of these projects, this resolution can be understood as a positive advancement. However,

such a strong geopolitical pressure by the European Parliament can be understood as a neocolonial attempt to try and impede in two sovereign states business. Indeed, the two governments have not taken this resolution lightly but Uganda specifically, has been vocal about the problematics of the resolution and said that the projects will continue as planned despite the action. (Odyek and Kahungu, 2022).

Whether the European Parliament's resolution is based entirely on a neocolonial mindset is not a black and white question but calls for more discussion and analysis. It is out of the scope of this thesis aim to answer questions on next steps towards a post-extractivist era, how to get there, or whether Uganda should be among the first nations to thrive this transition from fossil fuels to alternative 'green' or 'renewable' energies. Indeed, more research need to be done on the possibilities of a just sustainability for an inclusive development model. Both local and global democracy need to be at the forefront of these transitions, to ensure that similar power imbalances do not get recreated in these processes.

6. Overall Conclusion

Resource-based development is central to theories of development. Much scientific work on oil has been produced within the spectrum of resource blessing and resource curse. Thus, whether the recently discovered oil resources in Uganda will translate into the much discussed ‘development’ has not been the aim of this thesis. Even so, the question in the title of this thesis ‘*false promises of development?*’ is logical. It opens a more prosaic discussion on the various types of discourses that legitimate oil extractivism and the implications that these discourses have in reproducing the destructive act and the extractivist mindset on which it is based on.

I sought to answer two research questions. They are *what justification methods does the Ugandan state use to legitimate oil extractivism in the Lake Albertine region, and how does the oil corporation Total reproduce narratives of extractivist mindset in legitimizing its operations in the Albertine Graben?* Data were collected from policy documents, newspaper articles, and website material. Critical discourse analysis and content analysis was utilized to show that discourses that legitimate extractivism take many forms and exist in several types of material. The critical aspect of the analysis was complemented by utilizing the approaches of ‘extractivism’ and postcolonialism.

The discourses of the state of Uganda and Total were analysed independently. I find that the oil legitimating discourses of the Ugandan state and the MNC Total have similarities and are mutually complementing, although they mostly operate separately from each other. Both the state and Total use arguments that create ‘no substantial ecological effect’ discourses in which they either downplay ecological effects of extractivism or completely disregard the effects it has on nature. Scientific knowledge is contrasted to other types of knowledges, although lack of transparency on some of the utilized ‘scientific facts’ can be traced, specifically from Total’s documents. The state also utilized arguments referring to energy poverty and energy security, in which it contrasted the positions between the global North and South.

Economic arguments, used by both actors, reveal the capitalist obsession towards modernization and growth. Oil is perceived as the biggest single factor for transforming the Ugandan economy and fighting ‘underdevelopment’. Adding the social and employment arguments to this equation, oil is presented as a blessing, a panacea for an overall betterment of life for Ugandans. What is specific for the Ugandan state, is to use the ‘stigmatizing critics’

discourse, in which it portrays local and international activists and environmentalists as anti-developmentalists. This discourse has a patriotic element to it because the critics of extractivism are also presented as a minority, as opposed to the alleged majority that understands oil's worth to the nation. Total's most prominent legitimation discourse is one in which it promotes its self-regulation and best practices to present itself as a sustainable and liable actor. Total showcases that extractivism can be sustainable if backed by a reliable operator.

Acknowledging that these discourses do not exist separately from lived experiences, the analysis has also tried to shed light on the wider implications of these discourses. These include understanding development mainly in economic terms, shaping our relationship with nature, and shrinking the operational civic space. This case has shown that extractivism is not just a locally executed act of extracting from the earth, but one which relies on supporting discourses and produces many complex political, social, and ecological effects on even a global scale. The importance of these findings rests on at least two interlinked points. One, investigating the overly optimistic narratives of extractivism can help us recognize them better and thus, observe them more critically. Two, taking the extractivist promoting discourses seriously and recognizing their severe implications takes us one step closer to resisting these processes.

Never before has the ecological question been so existential. Extractivism cannot be promoted as the solution, but we are in desperate need for innovative alternatives that help us transition to an era of post-extractivism and more inclusive understandings of development. A holistic change must take place from our mindsets to materiality on all possible levels from the individual, local, institutional, national, regional, to international. Commoning the land on which we have live is a grassroots demand. It is also an analytical aspiration, as my approach suggests. Removing rent theft is a concrete step towards that goal. Only in this way can we realize a world in which development is not determined by the markets but by people and their well-being, and not by much we can extract and consume but by how sustainably we live a life that will sustain for generations to come. Demonstrating the details of this strategy is a question for another thesis but, for now, I have shown that the discourses about oil extractivism are false promises of development.

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