

[Mondiaal Nieuws](#)

The Yasuni territory in Ecuador is under pressure because of oil reserves found underneath the nature reserve. Here in Paris Yasunidos wages action during the climate summit. Their proposal gives a voice to the local population, protects the Yasuni territory and is an answer for the global challenge of climate change.

Ten of the Yasuni group are waiting for us, ready to bring their story and to come out with their grievances. Grievances that have inspired the creation of Yasunidos and that lives on until today with the Ecuadorian activists and their German and Mexican counterparts.

A false promise

For years the government of Ecuador, under the leadership of president Correa, has misled the population. In 2007 Correa promised to ban oil excavation from Yasuni park, because of the bio-diversity and the fourteen different tribes -each with their culture, language and knowledge – that reside here. Ecuador launched an innovative proposal. The loss of oil income for Ecuador would be compensated by the international community.

However this proposal failed. 'The support of countries like Germany, Italy, Norway and France was deterred because Correa himself did not fully back the proposal', says Antonella, who has been active for Yasunidos since the beginning. The guardian published documents that show how the president was negotiating a deal with China, selling the oil under Yasuni while the innovative proposal was officially still standing.

The insincerity of the Ecuadorian president propelled the activist. Yasunidos would not stand for this, and gathered more than enough signatures (755.000) to call for a referendum over Yasuni. But the government boycotted the initiative, using dark maneuvers, while it paved the way for oil extraction from the nature reserve.

Yasuni today

Today there is no major oil extraction going on in Yasuni. Investments are lacking because of low oil prices and the bad quality of oil in the territory. But the government is preparing for excavation by silencing public protest and building infrastructure. According to the Ecuadorian minister for environment oil will be flowing by 2016.

Antonella points out that different roads are already running through Yasuni. 'For some roads up to sixty meter wide corridors were cut through the Amazon. The army stops people who want to take picture or see what's going on. Luckily a group of Italian scientists analyzed satellite pictures of Yasuni, on these you can see the impact of the infrastructure. The president made a promise not to destroy more than 0,1% of the Yasuni and to only build ecological roads. But he cannot keep this promise. Everything in the Amazons is connected, you cannot destroy one part and keep another intact.'

'Today Yasunidos is a symbol for Ecuador', says Pato: 'It brings people together because it touches our imagination and hearts. It is more than Yasuni, the entire country is one fragile ecosystem, everything is connected. The Paramo (a neotropical ecosystem in the high Andes, redaction) keeps rivers flowing during periods of drought and the mangroves harbor a rich wildlife diversity. All of these are under threat because they contain valuable resources, just like the oil under Yasuni. But without these ecosystems life is impossible for animals, plants and man.'

Justicia Climatica desde el subsuelo

Climate justice from below

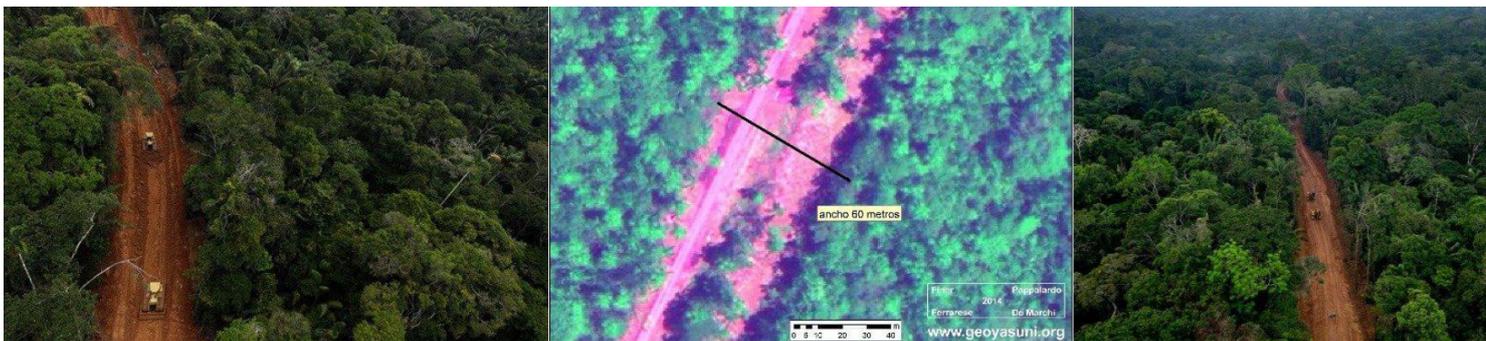
President Correa did himself injury. Yasunidos is leaving behind the government because of Correa's untenable promise of destroying only 0,1% of the Yasuni and his insincere backing of the international deal to keep the oil in the ground. 'Change must come from ourselves', that is the message of Yasunidos. Therefore they are rolling up their sleeves and activating civil society, desde el subsuelo, bottom-up.

Carolina emphasizes that indigenous rights are crucial. 'It is not only sustainable energy production or bio-diversity that is at stake. The people that live in Yasunidos are at the heart of the matter.' In fact, Yasunidos believes that local populations are best placed to preserve their own territory. And this goes for local communities in fragile places around the world.

Support in Paris?

'The solution we propose for Yasuni is a pilot project for carbon free communities around the globe', says Antonella. Here in Paris Yasunidos makes the move from local to global. They want to unite the voice of indigenous people from around the world. Next to the big institutionalised climate summit, COP21 Yasunidos holds lectures, debates and gathers supporters. To support local communities they need money, technical assistance and like-minded people.

Yasunidos is happy with the response from people here in Paris. 'We get a positive response, they see our proposal as a serious approach to mitigate climate change. They want to work with the proposal and spread the idea. But the bottom-up message is not well received by the media in Ecuador. In La Mentira de la semana, the weekly program of president Correa, political opponents get dragged through the mud and Yasunidos is a regular guest.



Roads in Yasuni up to 60 metres wide.

Oil interests and politics versus climate

PetroAmazonas, the national oil company promises to use modern extraction techniques in Yasuni, to minimize the impact. However, the company does not have a good reputation. Between 2000 and 2008 Amazon Watch witnessed 1415 oil leaks in the Ecuadorian rainforest while PetroAmazonas was working there. The clean-up has yet to begin and the consequences for nature and local populations are disastrous. Yasunidos is afraid the same consequences will be seen in Yasuni.

Eco-logical

In the long term, Correa's economic argument to exploit oil in Yasuni does not stand. Oil excavation seems to be profitable but the numbers prove the opposite. 'The oil could bring an export-revenue of \$18 billion for Ecuador. But because of demographic growth and a growing life standard. Most of the oil would be used for internal purposes by 2035. The oil will not be exported and it will not bring the expected revenue. From an economical point of view it is therefore logical to make the transition towards renewables and keep the oil under the ground', says Stefan, energy specialist of Yasunidos.

In 2014 Correa analyzed the support for Yasunidos. Young people between 15 and 25 seemed to be the driving force behind the Yasuni protection campaign. Therefore the president now aims to repress young people and influence them with the media.

Pato says Correa is right about youth. 'The most active people in Ecuador are young people. They are willing to get onto the streets and have their voices heard. Youngsters are valuable in the fight against climate change because they can be innovative, are not bound to interests and they bring alternatives into practice.'

Pato: 'We must think in the long term. The fight for Yasuni started twenty years ago. Today we see many wounds in the Amazon. But without the motivation and courage of Yasunidos and all those who have stood up, Yasuni would already have been gone.'