



Thinking and Working Politically on the Governance of Extractive Industries

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Acronyms

CCSI	Columbia Center on Sustainable Investment
EI	Extractive Industries
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
EITI	Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative
ES	Executive Session (on the Politics of Extractive Industries)
FOSTER	Facility for Oil Sector Transparency and Reform
FPIC	Free, Prior, and Informed Consent
GEI	Governance of Extractive Industries
IFI	International Financial Institution
NRGI	Natural Resource Governance Institution
OSF	Open Society Foundations
PEI	Politics of Extractive Industries
PFM	Public Financial Management
PWYP	Publish What You Pay
TPA	Transparency, Participation and Accountability
TWP	Thinking and Working Politically

Executive Summary

From 2017-2022, the [Columbia Center on Sustainable Investment \(CCSI\)](#) ran a project to support greater integration of a political lens into the work of a specific development subfield, those actors focused on improving the governance of extractive industries (hereafter, the GEI field). This brief set of reflections, from someone who helped develop and lead the project, shares why and how we went about trying to do this, where we have gotten to so far, and some lessons we have learned along the way. The hope is that these reflections on an attempt to broaden uptake of thinking and working politically (TWP) principles in the GEI field will hold useful insights for a wider audience seeking to expand adoption of TWP approaches.

The various economic, political, social and environmental challenges associated with natural resource extraction – from ‘blood diamonds’ to endemic corruption, Dutch disease to environmental disasters, land grabs to bad deals – are often rooted in governance dynamics. For decades, actors in the GEI field have worked to address different aspects of these challenges through two broad streams of activity. One has focused on an ‘open governance’ pathway, i.e. pursuing improved outcomes from extractive industries (EI) through the promotion of greater transparency and, later, accountability and participation mechanisms. Another has focused on developing technocratic guidance on ‘good practice’ across the EI value chain and providing support to implement such guidance. By the mid-2010s, with well over a decade of accumulated experience under their belts, there was widespread recognition among many in the field of the need to improve collective impact on major GEI problems.

In this context, in 2017, CCSI launched a project focused on a set of factors that have been important in shaping the effectiveness of efforts intended to improve GEI – namely, those related to political context. As EI are often prone to a range of power dynamics and incentives that work against improving governance and fostering sustainable development outcomes, few in the field would dispute that “politics matter” when it comes to GEI. However, there has been less clarity on the specifics of how politics matter, and what can be done in response. The aim of CCSI’s project on the [Politics of Extractive Industries](#) was, therefore, to support actors across the GEI field to deepen their understanding of how political realities affect their work and to equip them with ideas to address these considerations more systematically in practice.

The first phase of the project was anchored in a [multistakeholder group of global experts meeting approximately every six months for two years to grapple with defining ‘the politics of extractive industries’](#) and discuss innovative ideas for addressing specific political obstacles. The second phase involved thematic ‘deep dives’ on specific topics raised by the expert group through research and convenings led by CCSI in collaboration with various global and national partners. Over the course of the two phases of work, we learned a lot about trying to get

broader uptake of TWP ideas and principles. Some of these were *process* lessons about methodologies, framings and strategies that may be more or less conducive to: mapping the array of political dynamics confronting the work of a GEI field; developing fresh ideas and innovative thinking to address these effectively; unpacking and exploring specific themes and their practical implications; and leveraging all of these to bring about fieldwide change.

We also had the opportunity to consider how to tailor *outputs* to encourage changes in practice across the GEI field. Our initial theory of change relied heavily on experts producing written briefs, each focused on developing an innovative idea for tackling a specific political challenge facing those working on GEI. However, because we were seeking to expand the uptake of TWP principles to a wider range of actors, many of whom had not yet 'opted in' *per se*, we realised that we had to devote significant attention to making the case for why it is important to work in politically savvy ways in the first place, before offering specific ideas for doing so. Moreover, while our initial framing for the project emphasised innovation and new ideas, as we went along, we found that there were many existing ideas from the broader TWP community that were simply not making their way to the GEI field. Therefore, in addition to trying to infuse fresh thinking on politically informed ways of working on GEI, we came to appreciate the value of amplifying ideas that had already been set forth in other development fields and applying them to specific issues and dynamics of the GEI field.

When it came to the *outcomes* we were seeking to advance, namely the expansion of organisations in the GEI field actively integrating political factors into their work, we learned that such changes could not be achieved through the dissemination of written pieces alone. Ideas need to be actively socialised so that practitioners can engage with them in the context of their own work. It is a crucial step that, if overlooked, results in papers sitting on tabs or shelves, the good ideas within them failing to make their way into practice. This paper discusses some of the forms such socialisation can take, while it also describes the kind of sustained support that may well be required to effectively integrate political thinking and ways of working into the systems of individual programmes or organisations. Alongside socialisation, conducive organisational and donor incentives are key to supporting greater TWP in practice.

As climate change and pressures for just energy transitions make the issues covered by the GEI field ever more salient, there is an urgent need to maximise the impact of work in this field. Refining and operationalising ideas and approaches to effectively address the politics of extractive industries, and actively learning from these, should be at the centre of efforts to meet these demands.

1. Introduction

From 2017 to 2022, the [Columbia Center on Sustainable Investment \(CCSI\)](#) led a project to integrate a political lens into the work of international non-government organisations (NGOs), donors (public and private), international financial institutions (IFIs), multi-stakeholder initiatives (MSIs), think tanks and others focused on governance reform to improve outcomes from extractive industries (EI) for the citizens of resource-rich low- and middle-income countries. We refer to this area of work as the governance of extractive industries (GEI) field. By reflecting on why and how CCSI sought to embed ideas for thinking and working politically (TWP) into the work of the GEI field through our project on the [Politics of Extractive Industries](#), (PEI) and sharing some of the lessons that emerged along the way, the aim is to add to the growing set of insights on what it takes to put more politically informed work into practice, both in the extractives sector and beyond.¹ Rather than looking at specific ways of thinking and working politically (TWP), these reflections focus on our attempt to expand uptake of TWP principles and ways of working across a field of practitioners.

Beginning with some background, the first section of this piece provides a basic overview of the work of the GEI field when CCSI initiated this project. The second turns to a description of the different phases of the project and underlying rationale, while the third section shares some reflections on process, outputs and outcomes from our experiences, including some thoughts on what it might take to get from thinking politically to working politically. The final section highlights some of the next steps we think would be valuable in deepening engagement with TWP across the GEI field, which we hope will be of value to others in the broader TWP community.

2. Background: The Work of The GEI Field

For almost three decades, scholars and practitioners have grappled with the problem that, although natural resources hold the potential to be major sources of shared wealth and prosperity, the development of EI has often failed to live up to such expectations. In many instances, the extraction of natural resources is associated with a range of social, economic, environmental and political challenges for host countries. Indeed, EI are regarded by many as particularly fraught sectors with a wide range of governance and development challenges, as

¹ This paper presents the author's personal reflections as the Project Lead for all phases of CCSI's project on the Politics of Extractive Industries. While drawing on insights from colleagues at CCSI, the views represented here are the author's alone. Alongside evidence collected as part of the project's MEL processes, many of the observations in this account are based on direct experiences working closely with ES members, numerous partners who contributed to the project, and scores of individuals and organisations with whom the project has engaged over the years.

catalogued in the extensive ‘resource curse’ literature.² The problems associated with oil, gas and mining activities vary across contexts and sectors but can include all manner of [corruption](#), [state capture](#), [kleptocracy](#), [clientelism](#), persistent [poverty](#) and [inequality](#), the ‘Dutch disease’, macroeconomic instability due to price volatility, a range of [negative social and environmental outcomes](#) including [degradation of water, air, soil and vegetation](#), the bolstering of authoritarianism, and, potentially, more and longer violent conflicts.³

Since the late 1990s, actors in what has become the global GEI field have sought to address these challenges.⁴ The earliest work focused on what Global Witness referred to as [conflict minerals](#) and [precipitated the launch of the Kimberley Process Certification](#) scheme a few years later.⁵ Two other clusters of work emerged at around the same time and came to dominate activities in this subfield over subsequent decades. Building on [another Global Witness report](#), efforts such as calls from the [Publish What You Pay](#) (PWYP) coalition for companies to publish payments to governments, the launch of the multi-stakeholder [Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative](#) (EITI), and the creation of the Revenue Watch Institute (now, [Natural Resource Governance Institute](#) (NRGI)) by the [Open Society Foundations](#) (OSF) laid the groundwork for the GEI field’s long-standing focus on transparency as crucial to overcoming the historic opacity of EI and promoting accountable governance of the sector.^{6,7}

This work seems to have reflected a wider post-Cold War enthusiasm for and optimism regarding democracy and capitalist development – and a linking of the two. As a result, the

² For the origins of the term ‘resource curse’, which refers to the ‘adverse effects of a country’s natural resource wealth on its economic, social, or political well-being’, see Auty, R.M. (1993) *Sustaining Development in Mineral Economies: The Resource Curse Thesis*. London: Routledge (<https://www.taylorfrancis.com/books/mono/10.4324/9780203422595/sustaining-development-mineral-economies-richard-auty>). For a sample of other relatively early contributions to this literature, see Karl, T.L. (1997) *The Paradox of Plenty: Oil Booms and Petro-States*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press (<https://www.fulcrum.org/concern/monographs/f7623d00t>); Ross, M.L. (1999) ‘The political economy of the resource curse’. *World Politics*, 5(2): 297–322 (<http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/S0043887100008200>); Collier, P. and Hoeffler, A. (2000) ‘Greed and Grievance in Civil War.’ Policy Working Paper 2355. Washington, DC: World Bank (<https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/359271468739530199/pdf/multi-page.pdf>); and Humphreys, M, Sachs, J.D. and Stiglitz, J.E. (Eds.) (2007) *Escaping the Resource Curse*. New York: Columbia University Press (<http://cup.columbia.edu/book/escaping-the-resource-curse/9780231141963>).

³ For more on political aspects of the resource curse, such as the relationship between natural resources and democracy, the quality of government institutions and incidence of violent conflict, see Ross, M.L. (2015) ‘What have we learned about the resource curse?’ *Annual Review of Political Science*, 18: 239–259 (<https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-polisci-052213-040359>).

⁴ Unlike some other development subfields, private-sector actors have long been actively engaged in the GEI field through MSIs (e.g. EITI and the [Devonshire Initiative](#)) as well as through industry-centred groups, such as the [International Council on Mining and Minerals](#) (ICMM) and the [World Economic Forum’s Mining and Metals community](#).

⁵ For more on Global Witness’ subsequent work on conflict minerals, including the objections that led to its 2011 withdrawal from the Kimberley Process, see : <https://www.globalwitness.org/en/campaigns/conflict-minerals/>

⁶ For more details and evidence on the central role of transparency to the GEI field, see Sovacool, B.K., Walter, G., van de Graaf, T., and Andrews, N. (2016) *Energy Governance, Transnational Rules, and the Resource Curse: Exploring the Effectiveness of the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative* (EITI). *World Development*, 83. pp. 179-192.

⁷ While originally focused on company payments and government revenues, calls for EI transparency now stretch across the full length of the EI value chain and beyond, e.g. in relation to EI contracts, budgets, and, quite prominently of late, [beneficial ownership](#). This broader approach to transparency in GEI is apparent in the work of various actors and initiatives including multiple [revisions to the EITI Standard](#), the [Africa Mining Vision framework](#), much of the work of [ICMM](#), the [Open Contracting Partnership](#), the [IMF Topical Trust Fund on Managing Natural Resource Wealth](#), and the expanded mission of [PWYP](#).

open governance pillars of transparency, accountability and, later, participation were seen as keys to unlocking better social and economic outcomes from investments in EI. While rarely explicitly spelled out, this strand of GEI work seems to have been grounded in an implicit belief that more transparency would reveal various manifestations of problematic GEI practices by companies and governments. Such revelations, in turn, would either serve to deter such practices in the future (with the popular argument that “sunlight is the best disinfectant”) or lead citizens of host countries, government oversight bodies or other unspecified stakeholders to take some sort of action to hold these powerful actors to account. Ultimately, these actions would then precipitate responses resulting in improved governance and development decision-making and outcomes. Only quite recently has the need for far more specification of the details through which transparency, coupled with some form of participation, might contribute to greater accountability been widely acknowledged in the field. The matter of how accountability might contribute to better decision-making or otherwise lead to better development outcomes remains unresolved.

Alongside this work on EI transparency, the field has also undertaken extensive activities focused on mapping and generating guidance and standards on good practice to address challenges across the EI value chain.⁸ To implement this guidance, various actors supply technical assistance, capacity building and tools to host governments, and others, to implement this guidance. Strengthening the technical foundations of good GEI has tended to boil down to ensuring that actors and institutions, both within and outside government, have the requisite expertise, resources, and information to plan, implement, monitor and enforce ‘good’ policies, practices, laws and regulations effectively. In essence, actors focused on these activities have seen the main impediments to better GEI outcomes as being lack of knowledge and limited capacity.

By the mid 2010s, almost two decades after the field coalesced, actors working on GEI began to reflect on the track record of their efforts. In terms of fostering greater transparency, the cloak of confidentiality that had long shrouded the sector was being steadily lifted. Both voluntary initiatives like EITI and mandatory disclosure requirements in various jurisdictions had started to generate a wealth of data about the sector, including on payments and revenues, as well as more information about the contracting, ownership and operations of

⁸ Mayorga Alba, E. (2009) Extractive Industries Value Chain: A Comprehensive Integrated Approach to Developing Extractive Industries. *Extractive industries and development series*; no. 3. Africa working paper series no. 125. World Bank, Washington, DC. <http://hdl.handle.net/10986/18400> License: [CC BY 3.0 IGO](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0/). According to NRGI, a ‘value chain is a way of describing the stages by which the full value of a product is managed and ultimately realised. When applied to the extractive industries, the framework describes the steps from the extraction of natural resources, to their processing and sale, all the way through to the ultimate use of the revenues’ (<https://resourcegovernance.org/analysis-tools/publications/value-chain>). For examples of guidance on good GEI across the EI value chain, see the Natural Resource Charter: <https://www.resourcegovernance.org/analysis-tools/publications/primer-natural-resource-charter-decision-chain> or Cameron, P.D., Stanley, M.C. (2017) *Oil, Gas, and Mining: A Sourcebook for Understanding the Extractive Industries*. Washington, DC: World Bank. <http://hdl.handle.net/10986/26130>

extractive projects.⁹ However, when it came to using this data to advance broader goals related to GEI – reducing corruption, increasing public ability to hold companies and governments to account, or improving the use of information in development planning or implementation – evidence of impact was more limited.¹⁰ Some prominent actors in the field even [worried about the prospects of ‘zombie transparency’ taking hold](#). Similarly, a growing arsenal of guidance, tools, trainings and technical assistance – on contracting and licensing, managing and regulating environmental and social impacts, respecting land rights of Indigenous and tribal peoples, taxation/revenue collection, revenue management, fighting corruption, etc. – did not seem to be translating into a more consistent and systematic adoption of good GEI practice by host governments and companies, much less contributing to improved governance and development outcomes. It was at this moment of critical reflection that CCSI, alongside others in the GEI field, began to ask: What are we missing? How can we improve the impact of our work?

3. What we did, why and how: CCSI’s project on the politics of extractive industries

Funded originally by the Open Society Foundations (OSF), subsequently joined by the Hewlett Foundation, CCSI’s work on the [Politics of Extractive Industries](#) started with a series of discussions with key actors in the GEI field, including OSF. Through those conversations and other related research, we sought to develop and sharpen our understanding of the kinds of factors that might be limiting the potential impact of the GEI field. We used these insights to help define the substantive focus of our work and a methodology through which we might contribute to addressing these limitations.

3.1 Substantive focus: unpacking and dealing with ‘political will’

After interviewing numerous experts working on GEI, one challenge came up repeatedly: the ways in which powerful political and economic actors, and political processes like election

⁹ Mandatory disclosure requirements that followed from EITI included the US *Section 1504 of the Dodd-Frank Act* (2012), the EU’s *EI Amendments to the Transparency and Accounting Directives* (2013) and Canada’s *Extractive Sector Transparency Measures Act* (2014).

¹⁰ For a more in-depth discussion of the GEI field’s work on transparency and accountability, see CCSI’s discussion paper, Kazemi, L. and Jarvis, M. (2020) [Getting the most out of extractives transparency: How a more explicit treatment of political considerations could strengthen the impact of transparency efforts](#). New York: CCSI.

cycles, could undermine or disrupt attempts to reform GEI. This issue, often discussed in terms of the presence or absence of 'political will', was widely seen as a major impediment to the GEI field's ability to achieve greater impact. This is unsurprising given the array of powerful actors – multinational oil, gas, and mining companies, government leaders in host countries, influential government ministries (especially, finance and extractives ministries), wealthy home governments with a stake in EI companies and ensuring their access to oil, gas and minerals, large IFIs supporting extractives projects, etc. – with potentially significant interests in GEI outcomes.¹¹ When beneficiaries of the GEI status quo, such actors can use their significant influence to resist, directly or indirectly, GEI reforms which they perceive as being misaligned with their interests. These reforms might include everything from legislation to tackle EI corruption, to efforts to anticipate and address social or environmental risks related to extraction, or measures to improve long-term government savings of EI revenue.

While the political realities of EI have long been appreciated by those working in the field, these issues have tended to be treated as relatively fixed and exogenous. Historically, GEI practitioners have generally operated under the implicit assumption that when powerful actors are willing to go along with reforms, i.e. when political will is seen as present, then it is possible to achieve progress through existing strategies and approaches. When political will is lacking, change is unlikely and there is little that GEI practitioners can do to overcome this. However, rather than accept a vague, fixed and unactionable notion of political will, coupled with a fixed understanding of the field's strategies and approaches, we decided in the CCSI project to try to do a bit of unpacking on both fronts. We set out to move beyond "political will" to better understand how various power, interests and political systemic dynamics can affect GEI issues; and to think through how the field's strategies and approaches might address political challenges and opportunities more deliberately and systematically.

We were fortunate that in embarking on this process, we were able to take advantage of increasing attention to political considerations in the broader development community. Publications like the World Bank's *Rents to Riches: The Political Economy of Natural Resource-Led Development*,¹² 'Problem-Driven Political Economy Analysis',¹³ and the 2017 World

¹¹ Within each of these, there are also important political economy dynamics that tend to favour those who want to see extractives proceed with minimal "interference" in the form of many of the measures meant to advance GEI.

¹² Barma, N., Kaiser, K., Minh Le, T. and Vinuela, L. (2012) *Rents to Riches: The Political Economy of Natural Resource-Led Development*. Washington, D.C.: World Bank.
<https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/545221468150583397/pdf/659570PUB0EP110737B0Rents0to0Riches.pdf>

¹³ Fritz, V., Levy, B. and Ort, R. (2014) *Problem Driven Political Economy Analysis: The World Bank's Experience. Directions in Development*. Washington, DC: World Bank.
<https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/16389/9781464801211.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>

Development Report on Governance and the Law,¹⁴ as well as many of the essays using the political settlements framing published by [Effective States and Inclusive Development](#), provided valuable inputs as we began to grapple with political concerns in the GEI field.¹⁵ The UK-funded Facility for Oil Sector Transparency and Reform (FOSTER) in Nigeria provided a live case of, and eventual lessons from, TWP in practice in the GEI field.¹⁶ In addition, experts advocating for [Doing Development Differently](#), [Problem-Driven Iterative Adaptation approaches](#), and [Thinking and Working Politically](#) (TWP) provided us with a wealth of relevant insights, analysis, resources, and direct advice. This is how we found ourselves becoming a *de facto* experiment in thinking and working politically on GEI.

3.2 The methodology (Phase 1, *The Executive Session on the Politics of Extractive Industries, 2017–2019*)

So, how could our project try to unpack and address issues of political context shape the trajectories of efforts to improve GEI? OSF, the original donor, suggested the possibility of using a methodology that had been developed at the Harvard Kennedy School to tackle major public policy or social problems in the criminal justice field through collaborations between academics and practitioners. The [Executive Sessions](#) model is anchored in a standing group of academic and practitioner experts who act as a ‘board of directors for the field’ on a major problem¹⁷ that is recognised as an important challenge to progress by actors across the field.¹⁸ Participants apply their respective experiences and expertise to understanding and mapping out the problem – a problem for which ‘solutions’ are elusive and no single organisation can address alone – and considering feasible steps to address it.¹⁹ In facing these daunting tasks,

¹⁴ World Bank (2017) *World Development Report 2017: Governance and the Law*. Washington, DC: World Bank. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/publication/wdr2017>

¹⁵ Another important resource published after our work had begun was Bebbington, A., Abdul-Gafaru, A., Humphreys Bebbington, D., Hinfelaar, M. and Sanbourn, C. (2018) *Governing Extractive Industries: Politics, Histories, Ideas*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. <https://academic.oup.com/book/34807>

¹⁶ For an analysis of this project, see Lopez Lucia, E. Buckley, J., Marquette, H. and McCulloch, N. (2017) *Thinking and working politically: Lessons from FOSTER in Nigeria*. Birmingham and Melbourne: Development Leadership Program. <https://www.dlprog.org/publications/research-papers/thinking-and-working-politically-lessons-from-foster-in-nigeria>

¹⁷ These problems were described by the original convenors as ‘large issues that are troubling to those who feel accountable for dealing with them precisely because there is not an obvious answer’. Moore, M.H. and Hartmann, F. X. (1999) ‘On the theory and practice of “Executive Sessions”’. https://www.hks.harvard.edu/sites/default/files/centers/wiener/programs/pci/files/exec_sessions_theory.pdf

¹⁸ According to the convenors of the original Executive Sessions, the ‘process is likely to produce the largest effects in situations where the practice field has been facing some problems and is already in motion in search of the solutions’. Ibid.

¹⁹ The authors of the model noted, ‘in an Executive Session the assumption is that neither academics nor practitioners have the knowledge needed to solve the problem at hand. They are both uncertain. They may be uncertain about the shape of the problem, or the best way to frame the problem, as well as uncertain about the best feasible solution. The challenge facing the members of the Executive Session, then, is to work together to find the best possible way to describe and act on the problem’. Ibid.

the expert group is intended to meet on a regular and ongoing basis to promote continuity and the accumulation of insights over time.²⁰ According to the model, members of a particular Executive Sessions group are responsible for directing the substantive focus of the project and for producing written outputs capturing their insights and recommendations. Between meetings, a host organisation (in this case, CCSI) supports the group's activities and momentum by providing research, guidance and logistical support, disseminating outputs and taking other steps to amplify its impact. This approach seemed like a good methodological fit when we set out to grapple with the important, but in many ways amorphous and messy, problem of understanding how political realities affect GEI and what practitioners in the field might do about this.

In preparing to convene the [Executive Sessions on the Politics of Extractive Industries](#) (henceforth, 'ES'), CCSI prioritised assembling a diverse group of experts representing the wide range of stakeholders,²¹ geographies,²² and areas of specialisation in the sector in hopes of bringing a breadth of perspectives and experiences to the table.²³ We also initially imagined the project functioning as a 'policy innovation lab' with the group focused on producing major new ideas and fresh thinking for encouraging more politically aware ways of thinking and working in the field. The project's theory of change (ToC) (see Annex A) was in part derived from the original ES model developed for the criminal justice sector, but adapted to the specific characteristics of the substantive issues we were planning to explore within the GEI field. This meant that we had to adjust the model to address a broader set of challenges (related to the work of an entire field across numerous issues rather than one specific policy issue) and geographies (global rather than confined to the US). From the outset, our formulation of this project emphasised working towards tangible practical changes that could be undertaken by a variety of actors in the GEI field to help improve their impact, reflecting the demands of those in the broader field that had identified the issue of the politics of EI as the key concern during our earlier interviews.

²⁰ The same group would aim to meet for two or three days roughly every six months over multiple years so that their progress on tackling the major problem at hand might be cumulative.

²¹ By including experts drawn from civil society, government, foundations, the private sector, international organisations and academia (at times further specialised by sector on oil, gas or mining) we would seek to learn from/about a range of key actors shaping and hoping to reshape GEI outcomes.

²² Our experts were either based in or had extensive experience in China and the broader East Asia and Pacific region, Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, the Middle East and North Africa, North America, and sub-Saharan Africa.

²³ Rather than focusing on, for instance, those working specifically on EI transparency and accountability, environmental and social impacts of oil sector corruption, EI revenue management or local content, we cast a wider net to try to cover a range of issues with which actors in the global field seek to grapple.

3.3 The methodology (Phase 2, *Thematic and Regional/Country Level Work, 2019–2022*)

For reasons discussed below, during the second phase of the project, CCSI decided to pause ES meetings and to focus on exploring specific GEI thematic topics raised by the ES members and to undertake some work in specific countries or regions where members were active. As part of this shift in emphasis, CCSI would play a more active role in developing and supporting various activities and outputs. Our thinking was that narrowing in our focus on specific topics would allow for more grounded discussions of practical implications, and, in turn, improve the likelihood that actors in the field would take up some of the TWP ideas we were offering. The thematic topics we explored and on which we provided guidance included:

- [*Politics of Transparency and Accountability*](#)
- [*Politics of Free, Prior and Informed Consent \(FPIC\)*](#)
- [*Politics of Environmental Impact Assessments \(EIA\)*](#)
- [*Politically Informed Approaches to EI Anti-corruption*](#)
- [*Empowering and Incentivizing Reformers*](#)
- [*Working in Politically Hostile Settings*](#)

For each of these, we tried to tease out some of the more topic-specific political dynamics that can affect interventions intended to advance GEI reforms and provide some practical ideas, and where possible concrete examples, for addressing such dynamics more effectively. With the exception of the research on Free Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC), which received additional dedicated support from the Ford Foundation, most of the written outputs were discussion papers, think pieces, briefs or blogs based on the knowledge of ES members and other authors, 'light-touch' research by CCSI, expert interviews, and/or expert convenings. CCSI actively disseminated project outputs, which were intended to serve as 'conversation starters' and not as traditional research papers or specific roadmaps for practice. A synthesis of the main substantive takeaways from these pieces is forthcoming.

Our regional and country level activities (see Annex B) during this period were intended to focus on more specific political contexts and the actors working within these. As part of this work, CCSI supported two country-level applications of the project led by partner organisations in Colombia and Ghana. With each, the objective was to create opportunities for local actors working on particular GEI issues to come together, discuss some of the main political challenges and opportunities in their contexts, and explore ways to address these in their own work. In addition to those collaborations, our FPIC report focused on Latin America with local researchers contributing case studies from Brazil, Colombia and Peru; while our meeting on 'politically hostile settings' explored empirical examples from countries in sub-Saharan Africa with experts from the region.

4. Monitoring, evaluating, learning and adjusting

Since our project was predicated on the need for the GEI field to work in ways that will achieve greater impact, it was clear that impact needed to be a central concern in our own work as well. For our formal monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) activities, we developed various process, output and outcome indicators. Our *process* indicators focused on the input side of our theory of change – the composition of the ES group, frequency of meetings, attendance numbers, group member turnover, contributions of advisory board members, and provision of CCSI support through specific types of meeting inputs and actions between ES meetings. In terms of *outputs*, we tracked progress both on whether ES members produced written outputs that developed innovative ideas for changing practice and on efforts to disseminate these.²⁴ Finally, in assessing *outcomes*, our focus was on the number of actors integrating TWP ideas from the project into their work. In accordance with our ToC, we imagined this taking place among three sets of actors: (a) ES members (to be assessed through member surveys); (b) advisors, partners and other target audiences brought in through networks of CCSI and ES members (to be assessed through interviews); and, over time, (c) stakeholders across the wider field (to be assessed as far as possible through ES member and CCSI conversations with key actors in the field).

In accordance with various reporting requirements, we collected formal data on these indicators, counting up things like meetings held, ideas fielded, partners engaged and papers produced. To ensure that we were working as effectively as possible towards achieving an impact, we were also more or less continuously informally tracking progress and learning by routinely asking ourselves questions like: Are our methodologies working as intended? Are we making tangible strides toward promoting the integration of political considerations in the work of actors in the GEI field? Are there ways that we can adjust our methodologies to try to improve our performance on the latter? Is there anything we need to address that we had not originally anticipated?

The following reflections are based on a combination of our formal MEL tracking and our informal thoughts on such questions.

²⁴ According to the original model, ES group participants would take the lead and most of the responsibility for producing written outputs, which would then be actively disseminated by ES members, CCSI and others supporting the project (including our formal advisors).

4.1 Process lessons and responses

As with all well-meaning forays into complex social terrain, it was hard for us to foresee how the processes to implement our methodology would work in practice. Such is the nature of experimentation. We were embarking on a collective journey with ES members into unfamiliar methodological and challenging substantive territories. To keep the project moving towards the ultimate goals we had set out, we monitored our progress and made adjustments based on practical developments and lessons that emerged along the way.

Hard problems benefit from iterated engagement. One of the most important elements of the ES model was a commitment to iterated discussions to grapple with understanding the nature of the problem and only then turning to ideas for addressing it. It is almost impossible to imagine making much progress on ‘unpacking political will’ and defining this critical set of political issues affecting the work of everyone in the GEI field without ongoing, cumulative discussions. The fact that we were able to convene the same core group of people for the first four meetings of the project was crucial to our ability to move towards a clearer definition of what we mean by the ‘politics of extractive industries’, in order to identify key ways in which these issues affect specific areas of work in the GEI field, and to get foundational thinking on these issues to a point where we could more easily engage a wider audience to contribute to discussions of how to better address the politics of EI.

The trade-offs between breadth and diversity: What happens when you try to do everything, everywhere (with everyone) all at once. Although our TWP undertaking focused on a specific sector, the framing was still quite broad, potentially covering a wide range of issues including the politics of everything from public financial management (PFM) and local content policies to indigenous/community consultation EIA, from various forms of corruption across the EI value chain to the operations of state-owned enterprises.²⁵ Further complicating matters, each of these issues and the political dynamics accompanying them can vary considerably across oil, gas and mining sectors, geographies and institutions working in the GEI field. There was a lot on the table, so we intentionally brought in a correspondingly diverse ES group – drawn from international NGOs, academia, the private sector, IFIs, host governments and public and private donor organisations with expertise across varied GEI issues, industries, and geographies. Exploring a vast topic with such a diverse set of experts proved more conducive to some types of progress and less so to others.

²⁵ Because our starting point was trying to ‘unpack political will’ and think through practical implications for the broader GEI field, we simply lacked sufficient clarity and detail to narrow our focus further at the beginning of the project.

On the one hand, the breadth of the topic and diversity of the ES participants allowed us to take some crucial steps towards mapping and understanding the politics of EI in order to engage the broader GEI field in thinking and working more politically. The time the group spent grappling with thorny issues – thinking through questions such as what we mean by ‘politics’ or ‘political economy’, what are we trying to achieve and for whom, and whose practice are ‘we’ trying to change, why and how – from very different perspectives proved enormously helpful in terms of sharpening our focus and anticipating what it would take to try to introduce TWP ideas to the broader community of actors in the field.²⁶ The varied expertise among ES members allowed us to map the wide range of ways in which political dynamics shape GEI (and GEI reform efforts) across different geographies and issues. It also helped us to shed light on the different perspectives, interests, priorities, constraints and motivations of key GEI stakeholders (typically understood to be host governments, civil society/communities, companies, donors and IFIs) and to consider how these vary across oil, gas and mining projects – a difference that is increasingly important to the energy transition. The ES group undertook preliminary explorations of numerous definitional and thematic issues at their regular meetings, unpacking key political challenges and fielding initial ideas for GEI practitioners to address these more deliberately and effectively. In some cases, these ideas were developed into written outputs (see Annex B for details).

On the other hand, the vast topic framing and diversity of perspectives among ES members sometimes made it difficult to build consensus on what should be the purpose, priorities and goals of the group and to produce the anticipated outputs. This held valuable lessons not only for our own processes but also for multi-stakeholder or coalition-building work more broadly.²⁷ In addition, and unsurprisingly with hindsight, our application of the ES model was a classic example of the trade-offs between breadth and depth. The diversity of participants was enormously valuable for high-level mapping and recommendations but not as conducive to exploring specific issues in depth. This was because there was rarely a critical mass of participants with the necessary levels of shared interest and expertise on a specific topic to enable a major collective push. Moreover, we realised that our assumption in the original ToC that ES members would be able to take responsibility for researching and writing all project-

²⁶ To help us grapple with such issues, we invited core members of the TWP CoP to join us for the second, third and fourth meetings of the ES to share insights and perspectives on TWP from within but mostly beyond the EI field.

²⁷ Building consensus among academics, civil society actors, IFI experts, government officials, private-sector actors, etc. on what good GEI should entail, who should be responsible for contributing to this, and how to work towards achieving this would be a daunting task under the best of circumstances. Add to that a complex predetermined topic (rather than a group organically coalescing around a strong shared interest in a given topic) and an unfamiliar methodology, and things were bound to be challenging. We originally thought the process of getting everyone on the same page would require only one meeting but found in practice this took two or three.

related outputs – in addition to attending two multi-day meetings a year – was unrealistic for many of our experts who face extensive demands on their time.

With these process lessons in mind, and to do justice to the work the ES group had started, we decided to pause ES meetings after the fourth meeting in April 2019, and to begin what ended up being the second phase of the project: a series of in-depth thematic explorations on topics raised by the ES group and country-level or region-specific applications where ES members were active and CCSI had relationships.²⁸ These activities would be led by CCSI alongside specific ES members who were interested in working on a particular issue. The narrower thematic and regional focus areas allowed us to draw on (and draw in) a wider pool of issue-specific experts and practitioners. Fortunately, our donors provided the flexibility and support (and invaluable advice) needed for CCSI to be impact driven and adapt our methodology and processes to fit the demands of our project in these ways as it unfolded. We had originally intended to reconvene the ES group for an additional meeting once we had been able to make some progress on our in-depth thematic and country-level work, but the pandemic precluded this possibility during the remainder of the project funding period. As a result, the outputs of the thematic explorations remained the focus of our work for the duration of the project.

Engaging actors for innovation vs. impact. Another key feature of our application of the ES model was a focus on trying to be innovative and ‘shake up the field’, encouraged by one of our donors and actively adopted by CCSI. In order to do this, in assembling our ES group, we explicitly sought to avoid the so-called ‘usual suspects’, i.e. the heads of major global organisations in the GEI field. Instead, we sought out other individuals with deep expertise, experience and credentials in GEI, as well as reputations for ‘thinking outside the box’. We asked them to participate in their individual rather than their institutional capacity, in hopes of unleashing the creative powers of a group of actors free from their organisational priorities and from assumptions about ‘how things are done’ in the GEI field. This was a major shift from the original applications of the Executive Session model whose participants were selected on the basis of their influence over the outcomes in question.

Since we were ultimately trying to change the behaviour of GEI actors beyond the ES group of experts – specifically, key figures within the major organisations operating in the GEI field – prioritising innovation meant that we needed to develop additional steps in order to achieve

²⁸ The geographic evolution of the project came about for two reasons: first, because some ES members had underscored that it would be valuable to move beyond broad, high-level analyses and recommendations arising from our global work and to explore the politics of GEI in particular regional, country and project contexts; and second, because one of our donors was eager to support more locally led and owned activities within this project in the hope of fostering more general movement in this direction. We are grateful for both as the project benefited greatly from the activities that followed.

our intended impact on the field. To do this, ES members and CCSI created ad hoc opportunities to hear the needs, views and interests of those with the power to implement the changes we were hoping to see and to bring them along throughout the project's journey. For example, even before the first ES meeting, we identified and engaged key individuals within the organisations whose practices we hoped to shift to discuss the project, get their input, and understand their concerns and interests regarding the issues at hand. We later invited some to join our Board of Advisors and others to attend specific ES meetings as guest participants. When we shifted to more thematic work, we invited many of these actors to specific meetings and/or involved them in developing outputs, both to benefit from their expertise and to facilitate the uptake of the ideas arising from the project.

4.2 Output lessons and responses

Central to our ToC was the act of putting ideas and insights on the politics of extractive industries into the hands and minds of as many key actors in the GEI field as possible. This originally meant producing a series of written briefs that we would disseminate widely. To date, in terms of our formal MEL tracking, the project has published one research paper, six discussion papers, three briefs, 11 blogs, and two written interviews, collectively involving over a dozen authors including eight ES members, four CCSI staff, and 12 from the broader GEI field. In addition, we and our partners have produced several unpublished background briefs for specific meetings and audiences. Over the course of the project, CCSI hosted four ES meetings and co-convened eight additional meetings (six thematic and two country-level) with nine partner organisations (see Annex B for details).

Evangelising is not the same as preaching to the choir and requires different tactics. Unlike the self-selecting members of the TWP community who opt in because they already believe in the value of politically informed work, we were targeting an audience with much more varied levels of awareness and inclination towards the goals of our project. While actors across the field acknowledged the importance of political context in shaping the trajectories of their work, there was far less consistency in terms of willingness to take concerted action in response and interpretations of how much practical change this would entail. Some organisations, or individuals within them, were already working in politically savvy ways, albeit often on an ad hoc basis. Others were willing to dip their toes in TWP waters but were unclear about how to go about this. Yet others were wedded to more traditional technocratic and normative approaches. We realised early on that our goal of getting organisations across the GEI field to devote the time, energy, and resources to deliberately and systematically integrate a political lens into their work would require not only guidance for changing practice but also a healthy

dose of convincing. We needed to show it was both important and worthwhile, but also feasible, to think and work politically. Therefore, our outputs (and related dissemination activities) needed both to persuade actors across the field of the importance of the politics of extractive industries, and to provide resources and ideas to enable them to integrate a political lens into GEI work.

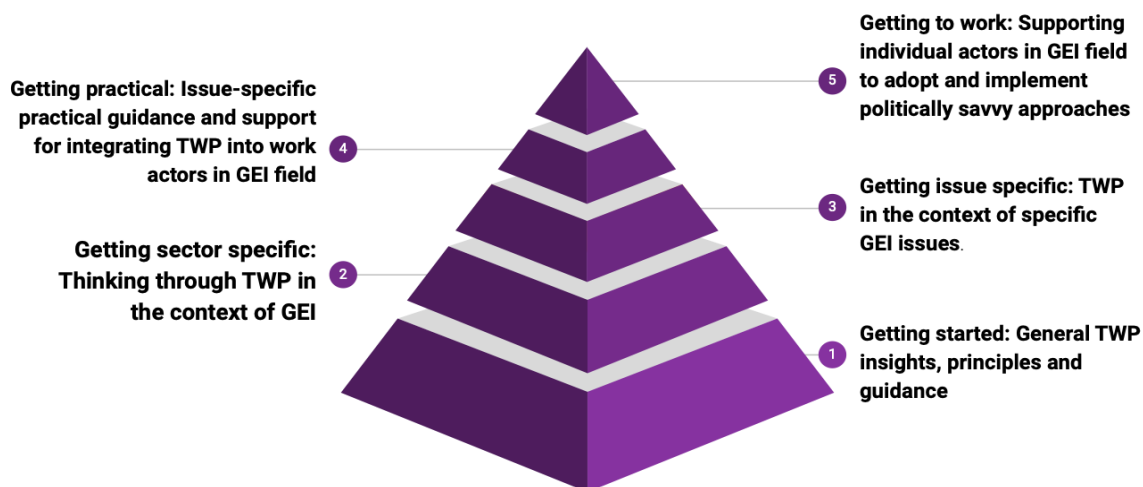
The drive for innovation should not ignore existing good ideas. In the first year or two of the project, in discussion with our donors, we decided to support ES members in operating as a 'policy innovation lab', looking for 'outside-the-box', even 'moonshot', ideas to try to address some of the major political challenges impeding greater progress in the GEI field.²⁹ These ideas were then intended to inspire fresh thinking and potentially to be piloted for learning from practical application. Ultimately, this focus on innovation was somewhat de-emphasised for a few reasons. The first is the sheer difficulty of dreaming up a truly innovative 'solution' to some of the trickiest dynamics in the social world, much less several such solutions across a diverse range of issues, geographies and institutions. Moreover, the more discussions we had with those individuals and organisations whose behaviour we were hoping to change, the more it became apparent that what many wanted was a set of specific ideas, tools and resources for integrating a political lens into their day-to-day work, and most were unaware of ideas emerging from the TWP community. Therefore, while we continued to search for innovative ideas and approaches for integrating political considerations more firmly across the work of actors in the GEI field, we also sought to amplify and get greater uptake of existing ideas coming from the broader TWP community.

4.3 Outcome lessons and suggestions

Ultimately, our PEI project has been working towards changing the way actors in the GEI field work, namely to make their strategies and approaches more politically sensitive and responsive. To do this, we applied some general TWP lessons and principles to the EI sector at a broad global level, mapping some of the ways that political dynamics shape myriad GEI problems and the fate of interventions to address these. We then focused on exploring the politics of specific thematic issues with GEI and offered a range of strategies and approaches for addressing these in practice. The final step, around which our various outcome indicators are constructed, is getting individual actors and organisations to adopt and implement politically savvy approaches to their work. This is still very much work in progress and one we imagine will require ongoing attention over the years to come.

²⁹ The [Mo Ibrahim Prize for Achievement in African Leadership](#) was raised as an example for inspiration.

Figure 1. Getting to TWP in Practice



Where are we in terms of thinking and working politically on GEI? How have we been doing so far? Progress on mainstreaming politically informed approaches across the GEI field would be evidenced through the uptake and implementation of TWP ideas. Unfortunately, across most outcome indicators, we have insufficient data³⁰ to draw firm conclusions about whether various actors have or have not more firmly integrated political considerations into their work. Nor can we know whether any changes that have taken place are attributable to CCSI's activities (directly or indirectly) or simply other factors that might have sparked evolutions in thinking. However, based on information we have collected through occasional surveys, our knowledge of who had been involved in or following our discussions and activities over the years, and our ongoing relationships with actors in the field, it appears that there is movement in the right direction in terms of thinking politically and, more slowly, working politically.

As a reminder, we set out to change the behaviour of ES participants, then expand to their networks of key targeted actors in the GEI field, and then, hopefully, see increasing uptake across the wider field. At this point, it would be too soon to expect much evidence of the broader cascade across the GEI field overall. In terms of **ES members**, because the work of the

³⁰ The absence of data on impact is due in part to insufficient resources to carry out some of the follow-up activities that would be needed to rigorously assess this.

group as a whole ended up being cut short, and our funding and staff time for follow-up were limited by COVID-19 during the last stretch of the project, there was no additional effort to track changes in practice among ES members beyond some early surveys.³¹ As the other focal point of the project, **CCSI itself** has been increasingly integrating political considerations into its own work including and beyond GEI-related activities. The Center has convened multiple internal meetings on working politically.³² Lessons gleaned from a CCSI project pursuing politically informed approaches to technical assistance are being written up to share with collaborators and, potentially, more widely. CCSI staff also routinely seek out support from experts in political economy to integrate political considerations into emerging and existing projects. Finally, in the hope of reaching a wider group of practitioners worldwide, CCSI has added a dedicated interactive session on political economy/TWP to its [Executive Training on Extractive Industries and Sustainable Development](#) as well as its [Executive Training on Sustainable Investments in Agriculture](#).

As for getting more uptake and implementation of TWP ideas among **actors in the networks of ES members and CCSI**, we have not attempted to systematically track this, largely due to the lack of staff time and resources since the project's funding ended in 2021. We have on various occasions been asked to contribute to efforts of specific organisations to integrate TWP principles into their practice as well as being told directly that we influenced one or another project or area of work. We have also seen our outputs referenced in the publications and presentations of other relevant actors. Beyond that, anecdotally, since 2017, we have observed notable increase in the prominence of language on 'political context', 'shifting power' and 'interests and incentives' geared towards 'improving impact' in project descriptions, organisational strategies, and a range of outputs across actors working on GEI.³³ Discussion of such issues is now also commonplace in meetings across the GEI field. Obviously, CCSI's work on PEI is not solely responsible for this movement towards thinking more politically across the field. The efforts of individual organisations to deepen their engagement with the politics of EI, as well as the growing prominence of the broader TWP community, have likely played an important role as well. We are, however, confident that through our publications, collaborations, meetings, presentations, direct persuasion activities, active connecting of actors

³¹ We know that the project succeeded in yielding collaborations among members on relevant issues within and beyond the formal ES context.

³² These meetings have covered a range of issues, some more focused on training, others asking each workstream to present their plans to broaden, deepen, and strengthen the ways in which they work politically and yet others for sharing lessons from experiences of trying to put those plans in action.

³³ For a sample of examples of political issues creeping into the thinking of organisations across the field, see for instance: Publish What You Pay's [Vision 2025](#) strategy, or the [previewing of 'politically astute approaches' to be adopted by NREGA, LTRC's strategic commitment](#) to '[e]xplicitly tackle in our research and policy debates the centrality of politics, power dynamics, and state capture in overcoming corruption risks' or the political factors highlighted across a [recent EITI evaluation](#).

in the GEI field with members of the TWP community, and relentless insistence at meetings and events across the field that political considerations be taken more seriously, we have certainly contributed to moving things in the right direction both within the GEI field, and occasionally beyond.

With all that said, as in the wider TWP community, there appears to be unevenness across, and even within, organisations in terms of translating a general acknowledgement of the importance of PEI into changes in actual practice. Again, this is to be expected. Working in politically informed ways can be complex, time- and resource-intensive, and entail major changes from existing ways of working. However, we are optimistic that with the right combination of support and continued socialisation of practical ideas, the momentum that has been building behind more politically informed work on GEI can be translated into further action.

Passive guidance and publications are not enough to change practice – we need a lot more socialisation. Written outputs provide a valuable starting point for capturing and sharing ideas. Strategic communications and raising PEI issues in various forums in which we participate can help get more eyes (and ears) on those ideas.³⁴ These all broaden exposure, pique interest and ‘get people thinking’. For many in the knowledge-production game, things have often stopped there – analyses are written, published, flagged on social media, perhaps presented or blogged about, and then it’s off to the next topic. However, through work on this project, it has become apparent that getting papers off shelves or tabs and ideas off pages – especially ideas that involve significant departures from ‘business as usual’ approaches to working among actors with varying levels of buy-in – requires more than one-way transmission of information.³⁵ Getting specific actors to change the way they work requires persistence in creating opportunities to socialise these ways of working, i.e. for individual actors to actively (even interactively) grapple with ideas in the context of their own work and priorities. Therefore, to try to promote greater uptake of TWP principles in the GEI field, we undertook various activities to engage specific actors, formally and informally, in ways as tailored and direct as possible. In all these cases, we tried to frame discussions to encourage participants to consider how specific ideas might apply to their own organisations or projects. Our strategies for ‘socialising change’ among target audiences included:

³⁴ Participating in panels, conferences, webinars, etc. has been an important means for us to try to persistently draw attention to the importance of political factors in shaping GEI work and to try to establish norms around TWP principles to lay the groundwork for wider uptake in the future.

³⁵ Special thanks to our ‘Politics of EI anti-corruption’ collaborators at Global Integrity for really pushing us on this.

a. Integrating target audiences early and often. Over the course of the project, we have consistently sought to advance the TWP cause through informal interactions with colleagues, partners, and actors across the GEI field (and beyond). These calls, coffees, and email exchanges have been great opportunities to: learn informally from others; float ideas about ways in which projects might integrate political thinking; and directly connect those in our GEI networks with experts in the TWP community who might support their efforts to work politically. We have also sought more formal input from diverse voices in the field into the design of the project and into specific publications. This has allowed us to hear and integrate their perspectives and concerns into our work and hopefully secure greater interest and buy-in as a result. In some instances, individuals from key organisations have partnered with us or contributed their own outputs to the project, e.g. by writing blogs or co-convening meetings. Such direct engagements have given those with TWP experience an opportunity to share lessons; and those at earlier stages of grappling with these issues a chance to highlight some of the political dynamics and questions they care most about.

b. Thematic meetings. Once we began to dig into thematic topics, we had the opportunity to engage subgroups of individuals and organisations in the GEI field on specific issues of priority to them, such as the politics of EITI data use, ways in which IFIs might work more politically on EI PFM, politically informed approaches to EI anti-corruption, how to support good GEI in the most politically challenging settings, or how to better identify and support GEI reformers in government. The meetings were kept small enough to ensure that everyone could participate actively and the use of the Chatham House Rule enabled frank discussions. Agendas were structured to devote a significant amount of time to participants considering specific TWP issues and approaches in the context of their own work. Again, it was hoped that participants would leave the meetings feeling inspired and armed with greater clarity to begin to think and work more politically once back at their desks.³⁶

c. Targeted small group discussions. Narrowing even further than the thematic meetings, we found that very small, informal, practically oriented discussions among a handful of actors from a specific stakeholder group or with a strong interest in a particular issue or particular country, could be another way of enabling intended audiences to directly engage with specific ideas coming out of the project.³⁷ By inviting only a small number of individuals we knew would have

³⁶ We believe this worked to some extent. One of our partners administered a survey at the end of one such meeting and the responses suggested that the vast majority of participants anticipated they would be making some sort of adjustments in how they approach their work as a result of the day's discussions. We informally received similar feedback on other meetings, particularly those that were at least a full day in length.

³⁷ For instance, one brought together GEI practitioners at development banks, international NGOs and MSIs all of whom work with governments to discuss the prospects of targeting their activities on incentivising and empowering reformers in government. Driving the discussion were a handful of former government officials who saw themselves as reformers while in

a strong interest in the narrowly framed topic, and keeping time commitments to less than two hours, we tried to create conditions conducive to invitees being able to attend and to actively participate in deeper discussions than might be the case with larger, longer and more formal sessions.

d. Tailored interactive presentations. At the request of various actors in the field, we have given presentations of our work tailored to the priorities and interests of a specific initiative, organisation or project. To make these experiences more interactive, we tried to emphasise discussion/input from participants in hopes of getting them to react to ideas, share their own TWP experiences and raise questions and concerns.

Looking for ways to directly engage target audiences on ideas in the context of their own work, through whatever means, is crucial to socialising uptake and implementation of the substantive ideas. None of these are revolutionary tactics. Indeed, most are quite common. However, the value comes from thinking about how to deliberately and actively frame and deploy them to help ideas that would otherwise potentially languish on a screen or page make their way into practice.

Hand-holding and specialised capacity support can be crucial to effective attempts to work more politically. Even those who are 'sold' on the value of TWP and have some general sense of what this might entail have often lamented that they get stuck on the specifics of attempting to work politically. This makes a lot of sense given that there is no one way to work politically and, therefore, TWP guidance and resources tend to be fairly high-level. Even our narrower thematic work on GEI still leaves a lot for individual organisations to work out on their own if they want to adopt a specific idea. Some have staff and institutional incentives well suited to doing this, but many need more support to put TWP ideas in practice. Therefore, more specific guidance and access to experts with relevant knowledge and experience – to act as sounding boards, provide regular or ad hoc advice and walk actors through various process steps as they attempt to operationalise politically savvy approaches to their work – especially in the early stages, seems invaluable. This only becomes more pressing as organisations attempt to undertake some of the other pieces of the puzzle to unlocking impact that have been identified in recent years, i.e. access to support can be a decisive factor in how far organisations can practically go in embedding political analysis but also systems thinking and related understandings of behavioural change, rigorous MEL processes, etc. in their work. Country-

office and who shared their insights on the risks they faced and the types of support they would have found useful (and whose input informed [CCSI's think piece on the subject of supporting GEI reformers](#)). Another discussion convened representatives of organisations working across a range of countries to discuss the implications of the rise of authoritarian behaviour during the early COVID-19 period for their GEI work and to share ideas and resources to inform their respective responses.

level, issue-specific collaboration might be a way for different actors to pool resources or share relevant capacity on some aspects of these processes.

Getting the enabling conditions right matters a lot when it comes to changing practice. TWP approaches can involve more experimentation, risk-taking, uncertainty, and greater investments of time and resources up front than traditional top-down, boiler-plate approaches to GEI. Two sets of concerns have come up repeatedly in our discussions with actors in the GEI field on factors enabling these approaches: one has to do with internal political economy dynamics within organisations and the other, most relevant to NGOs and think tanks, has to do with the role of donors in supporting and incentivising politically informed ways of working.

a. Conducive organisational incentives. An implicit assumption underlying CCSI's theory of change for this project, and much of the work in the TWP community, is that actors working on governance and development issues are primarily driven by the desire to maximise impact – once armed with the knowledge of how to do so, they will spring into action. Yet, this overlooks how organisational power dynamics, incentives and interests can result in guidance on good practice sometimes failing to translate into changes in actual practice. As someone working at an IFI on GEI anti-corruption projects pointed out at one of our meetings, impact is typically not the primary goal driving this work. On a day-to-day basis, individuals' choices and actions are driven by other pressures, for example, to 'get money out the door', raise funds, meet grant commitments, demonstrate progress to superiors, get projects executed with minimal cost and delay ('not be the one slowing things down'), or get uptake of specific guidance/frameworks/models associated with a given organisation or initiative. In many instances, these pressures are now immediately compatible with implementing TWP principles. Therefore, given that the case for TWP fundamentally rests on giving priority to impact, efforts to expand politically informed ways of working need to address how to better incentivise, reward and support mindsets that emphasise this.

b. Conducive donor incentives. For international NGOs in particular, a decisive factor in determining how far they can go in thinking and working politically seems to be the understanding and willingness – both perceived and real – of their donors to enable this. Based on our experience, some ways that donors can proactively incentivise politically savvy ways of working would be by:³⁸

- **creating space for honest reflections on past approaches** – awarding grants to organisations whose proposals for more politically informed, impact-oriented work include acknowledgement of the limits of past approaches (i.e. making it clear that

³⁸ Similar principles could apply in IFIs' and development agencies' budgeting and planning processes.

those who recognise the limitations of past approaches and want to do better will not be penalised for honesty about these limits and perhaps donors could even convene discussions among grantees to discuss these collectively);

- **signalling tolerance of the risks of experimentation** – letting grantees know that the risks of strategies and approaches that are experimental (meaning they may well fail some or even much of the time) are acceptable provided that they are grounded in specific goals and driven by compelling ToCs, and allowing them to be sufficiently flexible and adaptive to adjust in pursuit of achieving greater impact, based on learning along the way;
- **valuing ‘supportive/enabling’ roles over top-down, hands-on approaches** – recognising the value of (international) NGOs playing more supportive and enabling roles in locally driven approaches to GEI reform (i.e. supporting those who recognise the value of what may seem like more ‘back-seat’ roles when their being locally driven is aimed at enhancing the prospects for real and durable change);
- **allocating time and resources needed for effective implementation** – understanding that politically informed ways of working may at times create more demands on staff and longer timelines, allowing for realistic timeframes and the resources to develop, strategise, monitor, learn, and potentially adjust and pivot projects based on on-going political economy analyses and ongoing assessments of the performance of specific activities.

Again, bringing this about will require deliberate persuasion and socialisation of relevant donors. Some of whom are already working in these ways but could perhaps do more in terms of communicating such commitments, while others are not yet doing so.³⁹

5. Looking ahead

As governments across the world begin to act on energy transitions, the salience of the work of the GEI field has never been greater and the need for its efforts to be impactful never more urgent. In pursuing ‘just energy transitions’ – phasing out fossil fuels, scaling up renewables, and meeting the increasing demand for critical minerals at the heart of these transitions in

³⁹ It is worth noting that the donors to CCSI’s work on the Politics of Extractive Industries exemplified many of the practices detailed above in support of our pursuit of impact. They created comfortable spaces for critical reflection, making adjustments based on learning to try to maximise the impact of the project, and provided additional time and capacity support to help move things in the right direction, including their enormously helpful technical assistance on multiple iterations of our ToC development. They also prompted and supported us to undertake more locally embedded, but also locally led, applications of our project.

ways that reflect the voice and enhance the welfare of citizens of resource-rich countries – practitioners will need to confront many of the governance challenges that the GEI field has been working on for decades. Given ever-increasing evidence of intensifying climate crises, the need to tackle these issues efficiently and effectively is crucial and pressing. After more than five years working to advance more politically informed approaches to GEI, we believe that being more specific on how to work in politically informed ways and operationalising efforts to do so will be critical to achieving this.

CCSI's work on the Politics of Extractive Industries has provided high-level frameworks, analyses and ideas to help empower actors in the GEI field to address political considerations more deliberately and systematically in their work. We have mapped and analysed key political factors that can shape efforts to improve GEI and have proposed general ideas to capitalise on political opportunities and mitigate political obstacles. Our intention with all this has been to provide actors in the GEI field, and beyond, with a strong case for thinking and working more politically and a foundation for doing so. The next phase of activity needs to focus squarely on getting ideas into practice. At a general level, this means **supporting individual organisations or programmes in efforts to integrate political considerations into their work more consistently and systematically**. This will likely require continued socialisation efforts as well as steps to actively address the types of capacity and incentive requirements needed to enable these ways of working.

Beyond supporting individual actors on their TWP journeys, it would be valuable to **operationalise some of the specific ideas for integrating TWP into efforts to support better GEI coming out of the work of CCSI and others**. Doing so will involve elaborating and refining strategies around the politics of a given GEI problem – e.g., oil sector corruption, environmental impacts of specific mining projects, lack of community voice in the fate of EI projects, governments getting a “bad deal”, etc. – with particular actors working on these issues within specific contexts, piloting these strategies, and capturing and sharing process and outcome lessons with the broader field. Some examples of ideas that seem ripe for action include:

- Experimenting with specific ways that international actors in the GEI field *can enable or support strategic coalitions (horizontal, vertical and global) on GEI reforms in different contexts more effectively*, building on the work done, for instance, by [The Asia Foundation on Coalitions for Change](#).
- Refining, elaborating and piloting ideas for supporting *GEI reforms tailored to the particular circumstances of more politically hostile settings*, which is particularly urgent

in light of the resurgence of authoritarian practices worldwide, including in various resource-rich countries.

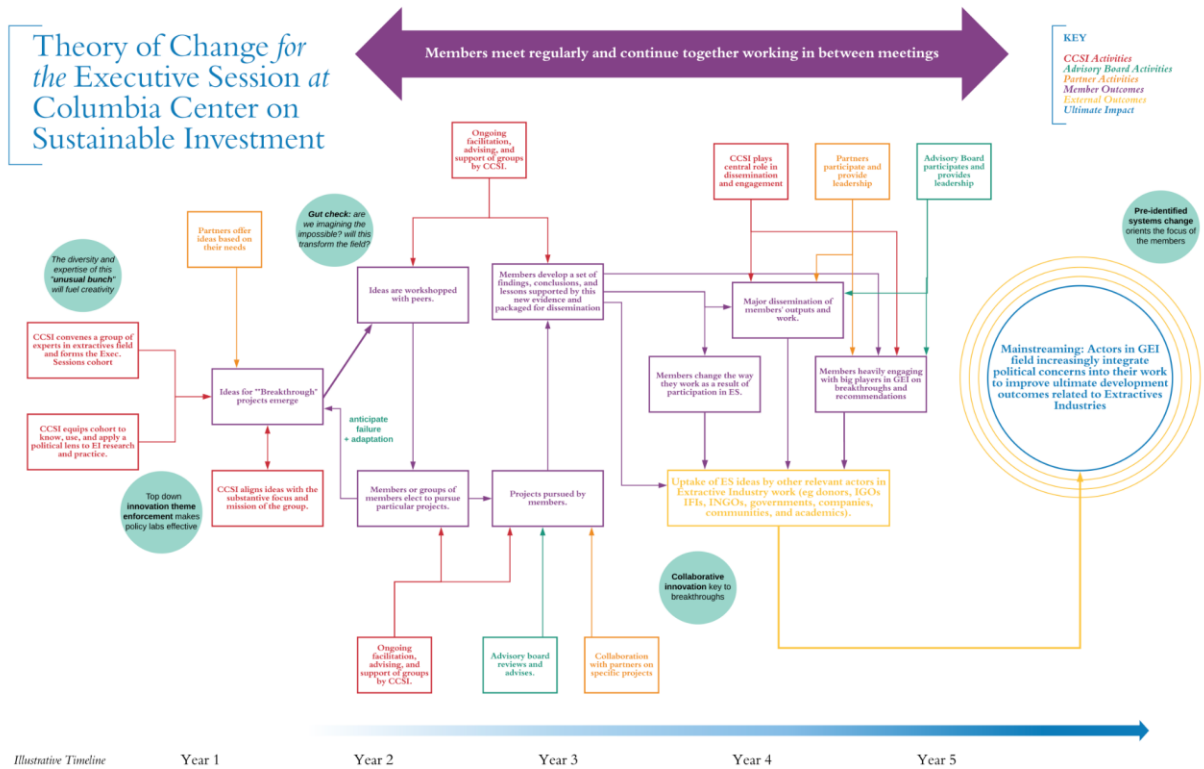
- Developing and deploying *strategic narrative framings* activities to try to align specific reforms with the interests of particular groups in ways that help mobilise or widen support behind the reform agenda, or deliberately neutralise or avoid opposition to it.
- Applying and testing the usefulness of the shifting power map outlined in [Who influences oil sector governance outcomes? It depends on when you ask. Understanding the shifting power dynamics across companies, communities and host governments over project lifecycles and their implications](#) to strategise around the timing of specific GEI reform efforts;
- Creating *mechanisms to connect transnational networks of government reformers* working on specific GEI issues to share experiences, knowledge, and strategies;
- Piloting *mechanisms to reduce conflicts of interest that routinely undermine GEI*, e.g., using [basket funds](#) to pay EIA consultants rather than standard models in which companies hire and pay these consultants to assess their prospective projects;
- Piloting *alternatives or complements to TPA-focused approaches to EI anti-corruption*, e.g. by applying ideas from a [functional approach](#) to understanding and addressing corruption, SOAS' beneficiaries-mapping approach, or the [Curbing Corruption](#) approach;
- Conducting *political economy analyses of major EI companies to allow for more strategic engagement with the private sector* on issues where the interests that drive company decisions and actions are more likely to align with a specific area of GEI reform – e.g., anti-corruption or community engagement – in a given context;
- Identifying communities or host government officials that might benefit from [more objectively produced company performance data](#) as an input into community prior consultation/consent processes or, in the case of government actors, investment approval or negotiation processes (and assessing the value of this tool intended to help level the informational playing field between multinational EI companies and governments and communities potentially on the receiving end of their investments).

Operationalising such ideas will enable us to actively test specific politically informed strategies and approaches to addressing problems of GEI and learn from these. On the basis of this learning, we can then assess their potential for contributing to better governance and development outcomes and understand the circumstances under which they might be more and less effective. To get the most out of any pilots or other attempts to work in more politically informed ways, efforts to capture and share experiences with the GEI and broader development fields should become standard practice. While requiring time and effort, this type

of knowledge sharing can be invaluable in providing others with specific practical ideas, general inspiration, cautionary tales, and empirical evidence to inform their own TWP efforts.

Annex A – Theory of Change: Executive Session on the Politics of Extractive Industries

Figure A1. CSSI's Theory of Change



The theory of change for the project, captured in Figure A1, boiled down to this:

Problem: The ultimate problem we set out to unpack and address was the ways in which political realities were limiting the impact of efforts being made by the GEI field to improve outcomes for populations of resource-rich countries from the development of their extractive industries. Based on our preliminary research, we believed that an important contributory factor was that the GEI field as a whole was not systematically accounting for and addressing political factors in its largely technocratic and normative approaches to promoting governance change.

Desired outcome: We defined the goal of our project as 'Mainstreaming: Actors in the GEI field increasingly integrate political concerns into their work to improve ultimate development outcomes related to extractive industries'. In essence, we defined success as an increasing

number of actors in the GEI field thinking and working politically, with the aim of improving the performance of their efforts in doing so.

How we imagined getting there (the short version): CCSI would convene, equip and support (including through an Advisory Board and other informal advisors) a diverse group of experts (not the 'usual suspects' who might have incentives to defend and continue on existing paths) to come up with innovative ideas to address major political impediments to achieving more progress on improving GEI. Their insights, findings and ideas would be captured in relatively brief, practically oriented written outputs and disseminated through various channels. These were then intended to help shape the work of the broader field via three levels of influence:

- **Members of ES** would change the way they work as a result of participation in the ES
- **Networks of ES participants** would change the way they work as a result of seeing the work of members, through targeted and active dissemination of ES outputs, and via direct engagement on recommendations by ES participants
- **Mainstreaming across actors in the wider field** would take place as a result of an increasing number and range of actors (e.g. donors, intergovernmental organisations (IGOs), IFIs, (international) NGOs, government officials, companies, CSOs, community groups and academics) becoming aware of, and being supported to engage with, the ideas coming out of the group

Assumptions and environmental conditions: While we implicitly made a wide range of assumptions (*what we believe, with good reason, to be true*) and could have stipulated an equal number of environmental conditions (*what we know to be true, universally held, widely documented*), the formal environmental conditions and assumptions we set out were:

- **Environmental Conditions**
 - Political work is complex and requires flexibility and adaptation; donors must allow for this.
 - Relevant research is already happening, i.e. EGAP, TWP, ESID, DDD, and World Bank.
- **Assumptions**
 - There is some existing knowledge from other sectors on which we can draw and add to, including by adding practical evidence.
 - Researcher and practitioner interactions in the ES will help move from evidence (improved understanding to PEI) to practice.
 - Political factors have a significant impact on outcomes of EI development and from governance initiatives meant to improve these.

- Designing approaches that are more politically sensitive will improve performance of GEI interventions and ultimate outcomes of EI.
- Most organisations working in this field, while being aware of the importance of the influence of political factors, lack tools to adequately address political issues in practice.
- The global field of actors working on GEI – IGOs, donors, IFIs, MSIs, and (I)NGOs – are or have the potential to be major influencers of governance and behaviour of key stakeholders in the extractives industries.

Annex B – CCSI’s Politics of Extractive Industries Activities and Outputs

Executive Session (2017–2019)

- Four two-day meetings of the ES group held at Columbia University in September 2017, March 2018, October 2018 and April 2019, during which [the group laid the foundations for the project](#)
- ES members’ publications outside thematic contributions
 - [Why Politics Matter for Technical Assistance, in Guyana and Beyond](#) by Michael Jarvis, September 2018
 - [The Challenges to Extractive Investment in Latin America: A South – South Conversation](#) by Cynthia Sanborn & Weijun Xie, March 2019
 - [Political Will: What It Is, Why It Matters for Extractives and How on Earth Do You Find It?](#) by Heather Marquette, February 2020
 - [Who influences oil sector governance outcomes? It depends on when you ask. Understanding the shifting power dynamics across companies, communities and host governments over project lifecycles and their implications](#) by Tom Mitro, February 2021

Thematic and Regional Work (2019–2022)

- [Politics of Transparency and Accountability](#)
 - discussion paper (summarised in [this brief](#)), [Getting the most out of extractive industries transparency: How a more explicit treatment of political considerations could strengthen the impact of transparency efforts](#), co-authored with ES member, Michael Jarvis;
 - [blog series](#) building on the discussion paper, bringing in key experts from the GEI field and beyond to reflect on the politics of transparency and accountability from the perspective of their own work;
 - side meeting convened by CCSI at the [2019 EITI Global Conference](#) to discuss the politics of EITI data use and a formal presentation on the role of political economy in shaping the impact of GEI efforts, including the work of EITI;
 - an idea for a practical tool, developed in [Overcoming a key barrier to stakeholder empowerment in the extractive industries](#), for enabling host governments and communities to benefit from a more thorough understanding of the extractives companies with whom they are interacting, developed by ES members, Tom Mitro, with Cielo Magno and Jeremy Weate;

- brief memo for small group of donors and local stakeholders on the politics of royalty data use in Colombia to complement a [major IFC research project on natural resource data](#) in Colombia (and three other countries).
- [Politics of Free, Prior and Informed Consent](#) (Latin America)
 - research paper, funded by the Ford Foundation, [Free, Prior and Informed Consent: Addressing Political Realities to Improve Impact](#), focused on case studies from Brazil, Colombia and Peru;
 - related [set of interviews and cross-publications between CCSI and Akubadaura](#), an NGO working on prior consultation and broader human rights issues in Colombia, on challenges facing prior consultation processes in the country;
 - collaboration to explore the **politics of citizen participation in the extractive industries in Colombia** led by two national NGOs, [Dejusticia](#) and [Foro Nacional por Colombia](#) (Foro), supported by CCSI with funding from the Hewlett Foundation; [research was undertaken by Foro](#) and two subsequent discussions on how to address key obstacles raised in this research were convened by Dejusticia via a public [webinar](#) and a two-day meeting/training of actors working directly on these issues at the national and community levels in 2021.
- [Politics of EIA processes](#)
 - chapter contributed by CCSI to a forthcoming publication by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) on environmental impact assessment (EIA) and [development corridors](#), *Tackling the EIA Impact Gap: Addressing Political Economy Realities to Bring Actual Practice Closer to Best Practice* (forthcoming 2023), building on work by ODI and others to try to engage actors working in the GEI field on these issues more directly;
 - brief based on that chapter, [Tackling the EIA Impact Gap](#);
 - related blog, [Politics Are Key: Unlocking the Unrealized Potential of Environmental Impact Assessment Processes](#).
- [Politically Informed Approaches to EI Anti-Corruption](#)
 - co-convenings with the Anti-Corruption Evidence programmes hosted by Global Integrity ([GI-ACE](#)) and the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London ([SOAS-ACE](#))
 - 'Advancing Anti-Corruption in EI through a Political Economy Lens', in Washington DC, 5 December 2019, in collaboration with GI-ACE;

