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**WHO SPEAKS FOR THE BEACH?:  
INVESTMENT, EXTRACTION AND COMMUNITY IN “LOCAL HERO”**

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The predicament of communities situated in proximity to natural resources, particularly oil and gas, desired by international investors, has received a great deal of attention in the past decade; and the discourse (and sometimes also the practice) of ‘social license’, ‘community benefit agreements’ and ‘corporate social responsibility’ have all emerged to smooth the rough edges of what has become one of the most highly fraught areas of international economic law. And while the discourse is relatively new, it is useful to observe that the problem it is designed to ameliorate is not. One might even suggest that facilitating a just distribution of the social, environmental and economic benefits of extraction is one of the enduring and most complex dilemmas of economic development. Some of the complexities arise from the challenges of assessing the costs and benefits of a given project, including the determination of who the affected parties are, who might represent them, and how to quantify the costs and benefits. Each of these issues are well represented in the 1983 romantic comedy “Local Hero” set in a coastal village in the northwest of Scotland. Through a close reading of that film, which both evokes and undermines a nostalgia for the ‘local’ that continues to infuse popular and scholarly debates in this field, this paper will aim to expose and consider the conceptual frames through which extractivism and development have been envisioned.

At the same time, through both its modes of engagement and its sources, the paper will also make an argument for methodological innovation in the field of international economic law. Recent engagements with film and other visual media in other fields of international law have not yet extended to IEL. The paper will argue that expanding the archive of IEL to include the cinematic

will facilitate a critical mode of analysis that is attentive to the ways in which legal regimes constitute certain subjects and enact particular ways of seeing. In alliance with other critical work in international economic law, then, this research approaches international law as not only a legitimating or justificatory normative regime, but rather as an array of contexts, techniques, and projects deeply entangled with practices of 'world-making.'