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Chapter 1: key players and conflicting goals summary/review

Ecuador's Environmental Revolutions

Before diving into Tammy Lewis’ book, “Ecuador's Environmental Revolutions” I had no idea that Ecuador was such an important player in moving forward with environmental regulations and ways of running things in order to work with the environment. I knew next to nothing about the country but, I was and still am eager to learn all that I can about Ecuador and sustainability.

Chapter one begins with “keeping the oil in the soil” and explains how Ecuador in 2007 proposed a plan in which they would keep their vast and valuable amounts of oil in the ground as a way to prevent climate change and, in return, other countries would contribute money that Ecuador could make off of the oil reserves that they have. The idea of the initiative was to create a “paradigm shift” that would move away from using fossil fuels and toward healthier alternatives such as solar power and other renewable energy resources. The fact that Ecuador has such high biodiversity both makes it an amazing place to study environmental issues but also the biodiversity and uniqueness can be used as a tool to push for environmental protection. This is where the Yasuni ITT Initiative came into play. This was an initiative that proposed that “the Yasuni-ITT initiative opens alternatives towards sustainable development in the country, allowing a transition towards a post-petroleum society, and promoting ways towards human development within the limits of biodiversity conservation.” (Larrea, Warnars, 2009). The country is able to protect these amazing pieces of land and animals and in return, supporting countries give Ecuador at least half of what would be earned through drilling for oil. Unfortunately, the Yasuni-ITT Initiative was ended in 2013 because there were not enough global supporters. I cannot say with 100% certainty that I would have supported this initiative as an Ecuadorian. Of course, I would want to protect my beautiful country, but on the other hand if I was a poor citizen I would perhaps want to work for an oil company to make money. It is easy for me as an outsider to say that I would absolutely support the Yasuni-ITT but things may be different if I were not an outsider looking in. In addition to the Yasuni-ITT the Nation para el Buen Vivir was created (National Plan for Good Living). This was another initiative based on throwing out the ideas of traditional development and implementing goals of “good living” which was defined as “covering needs, achieving a dignified quality of life and death; loving and being-loved; the healthy flourishing of all individuals in peace and harmony with nature…”. This definition resounded with me pretty deeply. I would absolutely support this goal and think it is great that there is a country that is reaching for this goal of not only being a country that can support itself financially but to make it a place where it’s citizens can be happy and live with nature rather than against it. The ideas of Sumak Kawsay and Buen Vivir sum this idea up very well. They are ideas focused on development of the country not only based on sustainability but also on the quality of life for everyone who lives there. This idea is where I believe the rest of the world should be moving towards as well. I believe that we all need to find a way to live with nature in a sustainable way and to also improve the quality of life for everyone along the way.

So, Ecuador is striving to become a country that develops on a sustainable way while improving quality of life. How is this done? What is the trajectory of development? This is where the treadmill of production is discussed (TOP). There are three players in the treadmill of production. Corporations, state, and citizen workers. Corporations in the treadmill obviously favor economic growth because they gain profit. Often times corporations will not favor environmental protection because they will not usually make money from that. The next key player is the state. The state also supports economic growth because the state can collect taxes and create jobs for citizens. The state also has a role in environmental protection as well because the state should have its citizens wellbeing in mind as well. The third key player is citizen workers who also have interests in both economic growth and environmental protections. Citizens want jobs and money to live comfortably with material things. But, they also want to live comfortably by have a healthy environment to live in. Citizens need clean air to breath, clean water to drink, and healthy living conditions. It is here where citizen workers may have the most power in being the cause for change and to push for environmental protection and sustainability.

NGO’s and SMA’s (nongovernmental organizations and social movement actors) play an additional role for citizen workers. NGO’s are nonprofits usually recognized by the state while SMA’s are typically not recognized by the state and seen as “radical”. Both NGO’s and SMA’s play important roles in the TOP theory because they help push for a certain goal. In this case they would push for environmental protection. They offer up a lot of outside pressure on the state on the citizens behalf to make changes in policy and the environmental regulations. The NGO’s and SMA’s are essentially groups that are voicing the opinions of the citizen workers in the TOP theory to gain traction and push for environmental quality.

Ultimately the goal of this book is to analyze the TOP theory and to look at where Ecuador’s development with the environment will go. Ecuador is an amazing place to study environmental issues because of its vast biodiversity in a relatively small area and where it is in the development as a country. Ecuador has choices to make and now is great time to analyze the options and study the outcomes that hopefully lead toward a more ecological synthesis society.

# Works Cited

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