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Chapter 4: Origins; 1978-1987

Summary: Naturally, with this chapter discussing the origin of environmentalism in Ecuador, we learn of Fundacion Natura. This group began by airing nature documentaries which became very popular and well like by those who viewed them in Ecuador. Natura had the main goal of working with our current systems and working conservation around how we do things currently as a society. This group looked to work with businesses and industries. They viewed the issue as the industries and corporations not knowing any better. That companies did not go well with sustainability because of a lack of education. Natura grew drastically when they received a grant from USAID. This gave them notoriety and the funds to introduce many more and extensive projects. Shorty after Natura was founded in Quito in 1978, a group called Accion Ecologica who had a different view of environmentalism than Natura. While Natura represented an Ecodependant organization with a neoliberal outlook, Accion Ecologica represented an Ecoresistant group. Accion Ecologica sought to show people that there is a bigger issue. That the way our system works does not allow for sustainability. They supported the idea that in order for us to achieve a society that can live harmoniously with the environment, we must change the way things function in a drastic way. A group called CEDEMA was created who seems to take the middle ground between the two groups. This group was necessary in leveling the two groups.

Debt for nature swaps first began in 1987. Ecuador’s debt was paid in part by the Nature Conservancy, among other groups (usually from the Global North) and the recipient of the money was given to Natura to work on conservation projects. These debt for nature swaps generated millions of dollars all going toward NGO’s to move forward with conservation efforts. Ecuador was a good candidate for these swaps because they were deeply in debt internationally, political pressure, and having unique and abundant biodiversity. All of this environmental awareness being brought about and debt-for-nature swaps put Ecuador on the map worldwide. Significant funding began to flow into the country which led way to the environmental boom from 1987 to 2000.

Reflection: I imagine that had I been alive in this time period and had I still had the drive to protect the environment that I do have, it would have been an exciting time. To see people caring and wanting to help the environment would have felt amazing. Reading this chapter, I almost see the same things happening around me today. Environmental awareness seems to be on the rise more and more. Activists are protesting, bills are being passed, and trends are started based upon the idea of being “green”. Obviously, this idea of living sustainably has been around for quite some time since the origin of environmentalism in Ecuador began in the 70s but it has taken a long time for change to come. It is now over 40 years since the movement began in Ecuador, and here in the U.S. we have not moved far. Had I lived in Ecuador at that time I believe I would have supported the Accion Ecologica movement to radically change the way society operates. It is a radical viewpoint, but I believe that we are now running out of time in 2019 and that perhaps radical changes need to be made in order for our futures to be secure. It is described by Mark Sagoff that “A significant number of environmentalists, especially in academia, lent credibility to this conservative analysis by calling explicitly for a paradigm shift away from what social scientist James Swan called "the basic values which have built our society" and that lie "at the root of the ecological crisis." (Sagoff, 1992). This is stating that the whole foundation of ow our society functions is the issue at hand that is causing drastic environmental impacts. It was not achieved in the origin era in Ecuador, but I think it needs to be achieved worldwide is the Ecological Synthesis theory. In order for us to continue to live happily and healthy we must achieve ecological synthesis. I know that this is easier said than done but I hope that we can achieve that way of living someday. Overall, Ecuador made great strides to improve the environment. They went from Environmentalism being isolated groups people, to it being a topic heavily discussed within politics and the government. Hopefully they will be leaders of the environmental movement that the rest of the world can follow.

# Works Cited

Sagoff, M. (1992). *The Great Environmental Awakenning*. Retrieved from The Americann Prospect: https://prospect.org/article/great-environmental-awakening