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Chapter 7 summary

Chapter seven begins when president Rafael Correa takes control and brings Ecuador out of it’s weakened state and into a powerful and functioning government. When Correa was elected, he aimed to create more of a socialist government. One that helped bring people out of poverty and focus on social issues that existed in the country. Not only this, but he wanted to focus on the environmental issues as a part of social changes. Correa also put into motion a more democratic government, meaning that issues that were voted upon increased and incentives for citizens to come out and vote increased. This made him a very popular president because he was allowing the voice of the citizens of Ecuador to be heard. People of Ecuador were disappointed by one thing that Correa did. He allowed Ecuador to remain an extractive state and even though the money from these exports were being distributed to the people of Ecuador, it was not a win for those who aimed to protect the environment.

In 2008 the constitution of Ecuador was re-written, and in my mind, this was a big deal because rights for nature were included. It seems to me that it is not often that you see this. In fact, this was the very first time that nature had its own rights in ant constitution. It stated “Nature, or Pacha Mama, where life is reproduced and occurs, has the right to integral respect for its existence and for the maintenance and regeneration of its life cycles, structure, functions and evolutionary process.” This huge step towards a new future was one that not only incorporates the well being of people, but with nature together.

In 2007, Correa attempted to go through with the Yasuni Initiative to ban any extraction from the Yasuni national park. This was a very positive sign for environmentalists around the country and globe. Unfortunately, the idea did not receive enough financial support and oil extraction was permitted in 2013. At the time Lewis’s book was written, activist group YASunidos had taken their case of fighting against oil extraction and saving the Yasuni park to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights and had not reached a conclusion. At this time, it seemed clear to some of the people of Ecuador and environmentalists that Correa was turning them down and no longer a proponent of working to protect the environment. This period of time in the history of Ecuador has been summed up as “The government dedicated a little more to exploit more resources because it needs money to stay in power…”. I believe that some people probably saw that it seemed as though the government fooled environmentalists into thinking they wanted to help, when in reality they just needed more people in support of them so that they could continue to make money and remain a more powerful and functioning government. But, to look back on this era one can see that there were many large and important moves toward becoming an environmentally friendly country, such as introducing rights for nature. I believe that although this era was not entirely successful in reaching and ecological synthesis, it was yet another step in the right direction, having come much farther that where things had started.

Perhaps in the next era there will be steps taken that finally set the stage for what the future will look like. Perhaps there will be societies that live harmoniously with nature and people live happily. This of course is an idealistic view of what the world could possibly be like one day, but I believe that we can at least come close. As long as we continue to push and strive for environmental change it is only a matter of time that we will be living in that paradigm shift.