Reflection on Tammy Lewis’ “Ecuador’s Environmental Revolutions”

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 Abstract

This chapter discusses and examines the major changes the Neoliberal Boom had on Ecuador from 1987 – 2000. It also discusses the international and national forces that shaped Ecuador’s environmentalism during the height of the Neoliberal Boom. As mentioned in Chapter 2, the Neoliberal Boom was a period of time marked by the influx of transnational funds that was set off by the debt-for-nature swaps (mentioned in Chapter 4). Globally, this era was known for many countries’ extreme environmental awareness and consciousness. As stated by Paulina M., “Environmental awareness means being aware of the natural environment and making choices that benefit the earth, rather than hurt it.” During this time, most of the transnational funding went to private actors, like nongovernmental organizations. As a result, the number of NGOs rose dramatically. NIMBY (“Not in My Backyard”) types and localized/place-based forms of environmentalism were also rising based on concrete grievances, such as health concerns based on oil contamination. During this time, was also the “Class Action” law suit that five indigenous Ecuadorian groups went to court for in New York City, USA, to fight against Texaco for destroying their lands. The most known event of the Neoliberal Boom era was in 1992. A conference was held where many world leaders came together to sign an agreement in which they would act on more sustainable practices that would benefit the environment. This conference was named, “The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development. To many people, this conference was perceived as a strong possibility of positive changes for the future.”

*Keywords: Neoliberal Boom, NGO Increase, UN Conference*

If I learned anything from this book, it would be that Ecuadorian people are pretty mighty and fierce. They are bold and fight fearlessly. I really respect them. For the most part, my values align with the majority of the people of Ecuador, especially, with the indigenous groups who not only want to protect their own land, but the environment as well. Anywhere.com states, “Ecuador has a wealth of endemic natural resources, not the least of which is its ancient lineage of natives who know how to make the most of its rich forests and fertile land.” Being an environmental major, it is very hard for me to sympathize with extraction industries who take away land and resources that can’t be restored from a beautiful planet that gives so much and asks for so little back. When I say fight fearlessly, an example of this is when five different Ecuadorian indigenous groups went to New York City to file a law suit against Texaco for drilling and destroying their land. The most fearless act in this situation is finding a country in its home base where they have the advantage. I would have many fears and it might even stop me but the fact that they were so passionate about fighting for what they loved and what was theirs inspired me to face my fears and made me realize how strong Ecuadorian people truly are.

*Keywords: Mighty, Fierce, Fearless*

 The most mentioned ideal type in this chapter and era is the ecoimperialist type. Ecoimperialist organizations used their transnational funding to grow ecodependent organizations, which altered their structures to become more professional, and conserved important habitats. Some of the many organizations included, Fundación Maquipucuna, EcoCiencia, Fundación Jatun Sacha, Fundación Ecológica Arcoiris, Fundación Ecologica Mazán, and Fundación Futuro. The negative impact of the ecoimperialist funding was that the local ecodependent organizations’ agendas were channeled by “so-called exotic, alien, nonnative” forces, and competition among Ecuadorian groups for funding weakened solidarity within the national movement, preventing a collective approach that would be critical of the extractive development trajectory. Ecoimperialists and ecodependents forged an alliance to fill the void left by the weak state, which was further weakened by its policy decisions to privatize and decentralize. The government’s decisions were largely dictated by international economic actors. Adam McBeth concludes, “international economic actors can and should be considered to operate within a holistic system of international law, including human rights obligations, but that changes in the operations and the accountability mechanisms for each actor are necessary for the practical implementation of that approach.”

*Keywords: Ecoimperialist, Ecodependent, Alliance*

Citations

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