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Chapter 3: *Ideal Types of Environmentalism*

The author, Tammy Lewis, describes ideal types of environmentalism as not simplifications or replications of concrete reality but rather, that they exemplify typical features of a subject of study that logically fit together. There are four ideal types: ecoimperialists, ecodependents, ecoresisters, and ecoentrepreneur organizations. The second level of sorting focuses on their level of organization (transnational, national, regional, or local) their main agenda, types of projects, relationship to the state, public's view of them, and their position on the trajectory of development.

The first ideal type of environmental organizations is *ecoimperialist*, which are organizations that fund the Ecuadorian environmental organizations from abroad. Some examples of ecoimperialists are the Nature Conservatory, World Conservation Society, and USAID. Their primary agenda was comprised of biodiversity conservation and sustainable development. Some outspoken national leaders view them as foreign intruders imposing their will on the people, policies, and the land of Ecuador; in other words, gringos (a derogatory term for North Americans) meddling in domestic policies and development agendas. Ecoimperialists created a program called Parks in Peril (PiP), which worked with NGOs rather than the government when the state was weak to improve park management and expand the national park system. Parks that were parts of this program included Machalilla National Park on the coast and Podocarpus National Park in the southern region. Even though the derogatory stamp of ecoimperialists is used for such groups, Ecuadorian environmentalists note that the transnational funding was critical in the consolidation and expansion of the protected area system. There were four main criticisms of ecoimperialists: the organizations impose their agendas, they bypass Ecuadorian organizations, indigenous groups and ecoresistant organizations believe that foreign organizations are trying to purchase land as a means of controlling water resources and to create private reserves, and cooperating with pulling multinational corporations.

The next ideal type of environmental organizations is *ecodependents*, which are national-level organizations that rely on international funding. Some examples of ecodependents are Fundación Natura, EcoCiencia, and Fundación Maquipucuna. During the Neoliberal period, these organizations proliferated and diversified in terms of their regional focus, issue area, and specialization. Ecoimperialists and ecodependents are tied to each other by funding relationships – the initial connections were made during the Origins Era and the relationship played out extensively during the Neoliberal Boom Era. Due to their relationship with transnational donors and their relative success in carrying out the goals of ecoimperialists, some Ecuadorians view them with envy and skepticism, calling them part of the “nonprofit mafia.” Three main issues that the public had with the ecoimperialist-ecodependent relationship were the inconsistency in funding, the organizations lack of goal-setting autonomy, and that ecodependent organizations had to compete for funds.

The third ideal type of environmental organizations is *ecoresisters*, which are national, regional, or local-level actors that receive little to no resources from abroad. This is in contrast to ecodependents whose paid staff members respond to requests for proposals put out by the

ecoimperialists. Examples of ecoresistent groups include Acción Ecológica, DECOIN, C-CONDEM, and FUNDECOL. They have a volunteer labor force, they create their agenda – funders do not – and they address problems that do not have sponsors. Through workshops, they teach communities how to monitor environment, grab media attention, and pressure the government. Their primary goal is to resist the forces “development” – particularly resources extraction. Ecoresisters deal with the “environment versus development” debate on the ground. Ecoresisters sometimes see “brother against brother” when one is working for ecotourism and the other is hoping for employment in the mine. They are less visible than the ecodependent groups because they are not always registered with the state, and often they are community-based or social groups rather than “environmental” per se. In Ecuador, ecoresistant groups have existed since the Origins Era and have arguably been strongest in the Neoliberal Bust Era

The four and final ideal type of environmental organizations is *ecoentrepreneur*, which are also national, regional, or local-level groups that receive little to no environmental resources from abroad and are distinctive for their innovative approaches to obtaining resources. For example, they protect the watershed that the water company relies on in exchange for a fee. Ecoentrepreneurs then collect the funds from the users and water company and distributes those funds to other organizations that protect the watershed. Because Ecuadorians either pay directly for these services or receive some payment for contributing to these services, there is a higher level of awareness regarding these activities and a generally more positive outlook. Ecoentrepreneurs are characterized by their pragmatic and innovative approaches to gaining resources and their agendas tend to be more anthropocentric and biocentric. Some examples of ecoentrepreneur organizations are Vida para Quito and FONAG. Ecoentrepreneur organizations are part of the most recent wave of strategies to protect the environment.

Reflection

Another common way to classify types of environmental organizations is by what their overarching beliefs are. For example, Lorraine Elliott writes that there is apocalyptic (or survivalist) environmentalism which “encouraged reluctant calls from some environmentalists for increasing the powers of centralized governments over human activities deemed environmentally harmful” (Elliott, 2017). She cites many works of literature, such as Rachel Carson’s *Silent Spring* (1962), Garrett Hardin’s “The Tragedy of the Commons” (1968), Paul Ehrlich’s *The Population Bomb* (1968), Donella H. Meadows’ *The Limits to Growth* (1972), and Edward Goldsmith’s *Blueprint for Survival* (1972) and several other as evidence to the classification of apocalyptic environmentalism (Elliott, 2017).

Elliott gives evidence that there is a contrasting type of environmentalism to the apocalyptic classification - emancipatory environmentalism. She states that emancipatory environmentalism is more positive and has a more practical approach, “one aspect of which is the effort to promote an ecological consciousness and an ethic of ‘stewardship’ of the environment” (Elliott, 2017). Organizations that fit within this category are most likely to “encouraged the use of organic and renewable resources rather than synthetic products (e.g., plastics and chemical fertilizers), and advocated renewable and small-scale energy resources (e.g., wind and solar power) and government policies that supported effective public transportation and energy efficiency” (Elliott, 2017).

Elliott also suggests that there is a social ecology approach. Organizations that are considered to be in the social ecology environmentalism category are known for tracing back the causes of environmental destruction to the existence of unjust hierarchical relationships in human society (2017). Another classification for environmental organizations that Elliott states is an animal rights approach in which their ideology goes beyond a concern with ill-treatment and cruelty to animals, but also considers “an end to all forms of animal exploitation, including the use of animals in scientific and medical experiments and as sources of entertainment (e.g., in circuses, rodeos, and races) and food (2017). The final type of environmentalism that Elliott writes about is ecofeminism. Organizations that fall under this classification feel there is a connection between the degradation “of nature by humans and the oppression of women by men that arises from political theories and social practices in which both women and nature are treated as objects to be owned or controlled” (Elliott, 2017).

There are several other methods to classifying types of environmentalism. For example, Mark Dowie used size, power, and resources as dimensions that can be used for classification. Joan Martinez-Allier categorized environmentalism of the poor (found in the Global South) and environmentalism of affluence. Environmental movements from the Global North and the Global South have been compared and contrasted in terms of their patterns of beliefs, interests, and strategies. Overall, the main issue areas are biodiversity conservation and sustainable development, including environmental education, water pollution, and deforestation. However, the text focused on ecoimperialists, ecodependents, ecoresisters, and ecoentrepreneur organizations which I agree are good classifications for Ecuador.

While some organizations may not fit perfectly into one of the four categories, the ideal types are useful in easily identifying patterns, trends, and relationships within the organizations. I like the classifications present by Lewis because when examining the environmental history of Ecuador, it is clear to see not only which organizations had the most influence and why but also how this changed over time. I believe, after reading the text, that it does matter whether Ecuador had a strong or weak state. Depending on if the state was strong or weak allowed for different types of organizations or the Ecuadorian government to step in and prioritize their own personal agenda. For example, when the state was weak during the neoliberal boom, two actors were to take charge, thus further decreasing the state’s role in the environment: ecoimperialists and ecodependents. Ecoimperialists – the international forces – had a strong hand in shaping Ecuador’s private, not for profit environment sector (NGOs). Those national NGOs – ecodependents – which were well funded by the ecoimperialists, would fill the gap left by the state. However, when the state was strong, particularly under President Correa, transnational corporations, bilateral donors and international nonprofit funders reluctant to continue investing in Ecuador following several state actions. This then allowed the ecoresisters, in conjunctions with indigenous groups, to develop alternative practices and alternative visions that have been incorporated into the nation’s constitution and development planning.

Bibliography:

Elliott, L. (2017, June 09). Environmentalism. Retrieved September 12, 2017, from <https://www.britannica.com/topic/environmentalism#toc224631>