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Chapter 8: Hypothesis for Ecuador

The final chapter begins with a summary of the previous chapters. Lewis states that the book's thematic focus was on the role that the transnational funding played in the Ecuadorian environmental movement, how the movement changed over time and the consequences the movement had on the state's development trajectory.

The first era that was discussed was the Origins Era which was from 1978 to 1987. Economically in this era, Ecuador was already tied to global structures through its natural resources and eventually its debt relationship. There were exports of oil, bananas, and shrimp. While transnational environmentalists influenced Ecuador's environmental movement, they did not create the movement. Extractive oil development was largely unregulated and symbolized an economic synthesis – unresponsive to environmental concerns.

The next era was the Neoliberal Boom from 1987 to 2000. Foreign influence was heightened by the UN Earth Summit in 1992 that focused attention on environment and development. There were two distinct types of environmentalists that grew during this period in Ecuador: the *ambientalists* – who took a path of compromise – and the *ecologists* – who took a path of resistance. The strong transnational actor/weak national state combination supported organizations that were project-based and dependent on foreign funds. *Ecoresisters* did not rely on foreign funds. *Ecodependents* chased the funds of transnational donors. *Ecoimperialists* focused on conservation and protected areas, and they improved the way the state dealt with those concerns. Some novel organizations experiments (*ecoentrepreneurs*) were also created at this time to deal with persistent problems.

The third era was the Neoliberal Bust from 2000 to 2006. During this era, *ecodependents* lost a symbolic fight against the construction of the OCP pipeline through fragile environment. The power of *ecoresisters* was independent from foreign influence and they could maintain themselves. C-CONDEM fought industrial shrimp farming on the coast, while DECOIN battled against foreign copper mining corporations in the Andes. The relative power of environmentalism during this time shifted to the *ecoresisters*. The *ecoresisters* organized and dominated the National Environmental Assembly (ANA) to create international change through the Yasuní-ITT Initiative.

The final era discussed in the book was the Citizen's Revolution from 2006 to 2015. With President Correa's election and his subsequent re-elections, Ecuador enjoyed a period of political stability. Coinciding with Correa's election, a global recession caused transnational funders to restrict funding for the environment, thus further limited the influence of *codependent* organizations. The state demonstrated contradictory tendencies: one to protect the environment and the other to drill for oil and extract minerals as its social-economic needs demanded. The advantage of socialism for Ecuador was in the economic pillar – public sector spending rose, while rates of poverty and extreme poverty declined.

Lewis then asked and answered three questions. The first was, what role has transnational funding played for Ecuador's environmental movement? The answer was that transnational funding had an enormous influence. Next, she questioned how did the movement change over

time? The explanation was that the movement goals shifted with changes in funding. Finally, how had the environmental movement's relationship to transnational funders ultimately affect the state's environment and development policies? Lewis' answer was that when the state was weak, the *ecodependents* positioned themselves to establish internationally normed laws and institutions. Under a stronger state and weaker international influence, the *ecoresisters* in conjunctions with indigenous groups developed alternative practices and alternative visions that have been incorporated into the nation's constitution and development planning.

In this chapter, neoliberalism was contrasted to the Bolivarian Revolution. Neoliberalism perpetuated extractive development/economic synthesis but mixed with a global ideology of "sustainable development," shifted Ecuador toward managed scarcity. When Ecuador retreated from global hegemony of neoliberalism, the alternative ideologies of *buen vivir/sumak kawsay*/ecological synthesis came to the fore – this is the closest Ecuador, or perhaps any state for that matter, had come to an ecological synthesis.

Ecodependent environmentalists are captured by the international funding structure because they are dependent on it. "Radical," "social" *ecoresisters* environmentalists that are independent from the constraints of the financial lure of the Global North are the potential sources of resistance to an extractivists model and can be the proponent of alternatives. More global financial transactions (economic globalization) create more homogeneity and more resource extraction. Less economic globalization leads to more difference and makes alternatives to development possible.

Finally, Lewis questioned if another Ecuador possible? Schnaiberg outlines seven policies that include incentives and taxes to encourage "the *disaccumulation* of physical capital that is committed today to high-energy, low-labor production." Transnational social movements are considered an important element of movements toward an ecological synthesis. Movements that are tied by resources may actually impede progress toward ecological synthesis, while movements tied by information-sharing may help. *Defeating* the treadmill may be more difficult than establishing its *alternatives*, but that alternatives are readily available substantially lowers the social costs and risks associated with its dismantling.

Also mentioned in chapter eight was that in 2000, there were massive protests in Latin America against the Free Trade area of the Americas (FTAA), which would have extended the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) to the Americas. FTAA was opposed because at the time, South America was looking for unity and independence from the United States (Amadeo, 2016). The major pro of FTAA would have been that it would have generated \$25.4 trillion in GDP and would have given the Americas a competitive edge against the European Union when trading globally (Amadeo, 2016). However, a con would have been that, especially for South American farmers, they could not compete with the cheap inflow of agricultural crops from North America (Amadeo, 2016). Thus, the local farmers would be forced to either grow illegal crops (such as marijuana or poppies) or sell their land to work in the US factories that have moved to their countries (Amadeo, 2016). As a result of the opposition, the FTAA negotiations were abandoned in November 2004 (Amadeo, 2016).

The efforts by ECOIN and C-CONDEM to create real alternatives to extractive development are examples of efforts occurring in other regions. The Landless Peasant Movement (MST) communities in Brazil are beginning to think about wind-powered settlements, training

young people across Latin America in agroecology and alternative forms of medicine. Venezuela did not promise the protection of nature in conjunction with improving the lot of its people. Bolivia is more like Ecuador on this count. Bolivia was the second nation, after Ecuador, to give constitutional rights to nature in 2009.

Without a deep analysis of the fundamental contradictions of economic growth – the central driving logic of the treadmill of production – in both capitalist and socialist economies, globalization of economies does more to speed the treadmill. Not just in Ecuador but around the world, individuals, communities, and governing bodies need to figure out how much we can take from the earth, and at what point we can be satisfied if we want nature and humanity to coexist.

Reflection:

Lewis discussed transnational environmentalism beyond Ecuador. She said that it is likely that other nations in these circumstances that engage with transnational environmental funding have or will experience similar processes with their environmental movement. Under these conditions transnational actors wield considerable power. Lewis gave the following hypotheses that apply to similar nations:

1. Transnational environmental funders (*ecoimperialists*) will target environmental movement organizations (*ecodependents*) rather than states to meet the transnational funder's goals
2. Environmental movement organizations (*ecodependents*) will affect laws in weak states
3. Weak states will not have the capacity to effectively implement laws
4. Environmental movement organizations (*ecodependents*) will managed public environments with transnational (*ecoimperialist*) funding
5. Environmental movement organizations (*ecodependents*) will compete with each other over funding, thus weakening the movement
6. Funded (*ecodependents*) and unfunded (*ecoresisters*) environmental organizations will diverge on goals and tactics
7. The dominant goals of the environmental movement will vary with transnational funding; when transnational funding is high, the goals of *ecoimperialists* will dominate, and when the transnational funding is low, the goals of *ecoresisters* will dominate
8. The development trajectory will remain unchanged as long as transnational funders (*ecoimperialists*) are engaged in the movement

It is hard to choose just one important hypothesis from this section considering that all of them are very really possibilities for other countries. However, I think a key hypothesis is that the dominant goals of the environmental movement will vary with transnational funding; when transnational funding is high, the goals of *ecoimperialists* will dominate, and when the transnational funding is low, the goals of *ecoresisters* will dominate. This hypothesis not only looks at who will dominate and why (due to low or high transnational funding), but it also expresses what type of projects will be done in that period. For example, we know *ecoimperialists* were focused on conservation and protecting fragile areas and often helped that state deal with these problems – so when funding is high, one can expect to see more of a focus on the actual “natural” environment. On the other side, we know that *ecoresisters* were more radical, social and focused on the human aspect of the environment – so when funding is low,

one can expect to see more of a focus on “brown” or social problems associated with the environment.

In the most recent era of this history, Ecuador is an example of a nation taking a turn to the left, with an emphasis on populism and socialist redistribution. In this configuration, power is focused in the state and in such circumstances, Lewis gave the following hypotheses that apply:

1. Strong socialist/populist states will increase resource extraction to fund socioeconomic goals
2. The moment of radical transition will create an opening for *ecoresisters*' ideas to be incorporated into the new state ideology
3. Increased resource extraction will lead to increased environmental disruptions
4. Increased environmental disruptions will lead to increased environmental movement resistance by *ecoresisters*
5. The state will limit environmental movement activity of both *ecodependents* and *ecoresisters*
6. The state will make it more difficult for transnational funders (*ecoimperialists*) to affect the environmental movement and the state
7. *Ecoresisters* will seek transnational networks, not for funding per se but for information sharing and to shine a light on the state's repressive actions
8. *Ecoresisters* have the protentional to shift the state toward an alternative trajectory, but the possibility depends on the degree to which the state limits or empowers them. Without limits, they have the greatest likelihood of alternatives being expressed and enacted

Of these eight hypotheses, I believe the more important one here is that increased resource extraction will lead to increased environmental disruptions. I chose this hypothesis because while it may seem simple to me, to other people not in an environmental field, resource extraction may seem like a perfectly fine thing to do. However, simply knowing that resource extraction will lead to increased environmental disruptions, it is clear to see the domino effect that it will cause – as exemplified by the following hypotheses.

Lewis finally brought up whether there could be a transnational movement beyond environmentalism. “Economic” is added to the social movement concept of political opportunity structure in view of the fact that international *economic* conditions contribute to create political openings. Regarding other transnational social movement funders and policy, in general, the following hypotheses can be assessed, according to Lewis:

1. Transnational movement funders (movement imperialists) influence policy in weak states by working through national social movement actors (dependents), thus having their goals enacted at the state level
2. Transnational funders (movement imperialists) bifurcate national social movements and empower the side of the movement that most shares its goals (dependents), while marginalizing the more radical group goals (resisters)
3. Transnational funders (movement imperialists) create tensions and competition among national groups (dependents) that otherwise might form a more coherent and successful movement

4. Transnational funders (movement imperialists) are most powerful in nations with weak states
5. Strong states will limit transnational funders' (movement imperialists) influence
6. Transnational funders (movement imperialists) are agents of global hegemony and perpetuate the status quo

Of these six hypotheses, I believe the most important one here is transnational funders (movement imperialists) create tensions and competition among national groups (dependents) that otherwise might form a more coherent and successful movement. The six hypotheses presented here are all relatively similar and connected but I believe this is an important one to understand because it shows how even groups with fundamentally the same ideas are torn apart due to funding. The competition that is formed among groups, holds them back from uniting and creating a successful movement. This is not the fault of the national organizations however, but rather a problem in the overall set up of current economy and the ideals held by the transnational funders.

Overall, I thought the book was interesting. I do feel like I learned a lot, however, I wish the author did go into more details on some of the issues she brought up. For example, more information on the OCP pipeline and its subsequent spills or more information on FTAA and why it was opposed. I do feel like Lewis spent a good portion of the book focusing on the different types of environmentalism and describing them in great detail. This for me, detracted from the main issues that she was trying to get across and at times it got quite repetitive. The book was interesting in it followed the funding into the country and was not sequential most of the time.

Bibliography:

Amadeo, K. (2016, August 17). The World's Largest Trade Zone That Never Happened. Retrieved September 28, 2017, from <https://www.thebalance.com/ftaa-agreement-member-countries-pros-and-cons-3305577>