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Chapter 1

Chapter one of the book *Ecuador's Environmental Revolutions* by Tammy L. Lewis focuses on giving the reader a basic understanding of the state of Ecuador as a nation, ecosystem, and how they got to that point. Ecuador is one of the most biologically diverse countries in the world, the country is home to over 20,000 plants with a fifth of those plants being endemic. Ecuador is also home to the Galapagos Islands which are known for the high level of biodiversity as cited by Charles Darwin's expedition and subsequent book *On the Origin of Species*. With Ecuador being as environmentally abundant as it is, ideally the country would like to do the best that they can to preserve the area. One of the biggest issues that the country faces is just that. Ecuador is extremely rich in oil that can be drilled, extracted, and exported for a very good amount of money. However extraction methods are very harmful to the surrounding environment and pose a risk for disaster. Economically the country is very poor, about a third of the population lives below the poverty line, government infrastructure has not been reliable and plagued by corruption, and education has not lived up to good standards with a large amount of the population being illiterate. Ideally with the amount of oil available to the country they should be able to bring enough money in through exports to put back into the country's infrastructure to make it a better place of its citizens to live in. In 2007 Ecuador inaugurated Rafael Correa who promised a "citizens revolution" which includes state funded healthcare and education and various other social and economic benefits. One of Correa's missions was to complete this goal without exporting oil in order to preserve the precious environment. To do this Correa introduced the Yasuni-ITT Initiative. The plan of this initiative was for the international community to fund Ecuador with 50% or projected potential revenues from exporting oil for 20 years. The initiative had trouble gaining traction and in August of 2013 Correa put an end to the initiative. At the time, the initiative was shut down 13 million out of the 3.6 billion expected was received from the global community.

The chapter then moves over into explaining the treadmill of production (TOP) which is a theory that explains reasons why corporations and major social actors favor economic growth and production even if it includes environmental destruction. Within the TOP there are three roles, corporations, who will resist a sort of regulations that may have an effect on the company's profitability. The state, who also seeks economic growth in order to provide jobs but also protects citizens in various ways ie safe drinking water. Lastly the Citizen worker, who hold the opportunity to become the change makers that force certain regulations upon the state in order to slow down the TOP. The citizen worker has a certain level of control in the sense that if the TOP is not favorable they can apply pressure to potentially force a separate outcome. Three actors that can assist the citizen worker in slowing down the TOP are nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and social movement actors (SMAs) and Transnational Funder. Over time various influential thinker had various takes on the TOP such a Schnaiberg's and his syntheses theory. Schnaiberg outlined three various types of syntheses, economic synthesis, managed scarcity, and ecological synthesis. Throughout the book depending on the role and actions of the major actor within the state the country operates based on or working towards one of these goals or syntheses. The first being Economic synthesis in which there are barely any state impediments to accessing the environment, which means there is a very low amount of regulation into terms of production which then causes problems within the overall environment. The second synthesis being managed scarcity, which involves which is when the state imposes and enforces regulations for the overall betterment and protection of the impact on the environment. Lastly is ecological synthesis which is when the state may limit activities or development based on concrete scientific evidence that determines what is

environmentally sustainable. The author uses these syntheses to describe the state of the government and the role that they play throughout the book.

The complexity, abundance, and diversity of the Ecuadorian ecosystem is what makes it so alluring and beautiful. Known as a megadiverse country with over 20,000 plants featured throughout the country in various regions, each with differing characteristics. East of the Andes Mountain is home to the majority of Ecuador's petroleum deposits. Much of this land has been made protected land under Correa's administration and has been only made accessible for drilling for state use under certain circumstances. The Ecuadorian infrastructure and standard of living is not as alluring as its environment. A government historically ridden with corruption struggles to find a solution to pulling the country up off the ground without destroying their most prized possession. Correa has made significant efforts to limit petroleum exporting in order to do his part to preserve the environment as a whole. The Yasuni-ITT Initiative has been the most substantial push made by Ecuador to significantly limit petroleum exports. Yasuni is a biodiversity hotspot located at the northwestern edge of the Ecuadorian Amazon. This part of the Amazon is home to two of the last two indigenous communities that live in voluntary isolation. Within Yasuni is the ITT oil reserve zone, within this zone there are 850,000,000 barrels of crude oil available for extraction. The initiative was triggered by the previous consequences and effects of Chevron Texaco's drilling expeditions in the Northern Amazonian Provinces. "In response to this case and others, in the Southern Amazon, activists, researchers, and scholars began calling for a moratorium on oil drilling in this region [already] in the mid-1990s" (Sussex) Correa and many within his cabinet were in support of the southern Amazonian activist. July 2007 President Correa officially announced the plan for the initiative which would require international leaders to come together and fund the country so in return they can keep the oil in the ground which reduces possible carbon emissions from the burning of the fuel as well as keeping the sensitive biologically diverse environment in tact. The alternative of drilling was available if the international community could not fulfill its end of the deal of providing Ecuador with the monetary support that is needed to grow as a country and to progress past the history of instability and unreliability. (<https://youtu.be/IOX9rGaNpec>). Initially the plan seemed like an innovative and promising proposal, however it may have been a bit ambitious. In order to create a positive aura surrounding the initiative Amazon watch sponsored a high publicity event that brought various Hollywood figures to the area to promote their overall support of the initiative. This created a good buzz surrounding the idea, the initiative perpetuates the traditional Ecuadorian saying *Buen vivir* meaning "a life in harmony with nature". As a citizen of the country there was no reason not to support the initiative and be proud, hopeful, and optimistic for what the future may hold if everything worked out as planned. It gave the population something to look forward to and hope for a better tomorrow. Internationally, Spain and Germany pledged their support to the country.

This chapter formally introduces the key actors within the country during the time period analyzed throughout the book. The main actors are, the state, NGOs, SMAs, and Transnational organizations. The state in the beginning of the time period examined is a transitional government that is in the midst of a military operation of government that is planning to switch over to a democracy. The state is weak and easily influence by outside organizations that have access to large sums of funds and have a prior set agenda. Because Ecuador is such a biologically diverse and environmentally rich area many activist and outside organizations are attracted to the area with the goal to preserve and save the land from further development and destruction. The major players that have the most say after the state is the transnational organizations. At some points, it can be argued that these organizations almost have more of a say than the government itself does. Transnational organizations are internationally based funders and activist that have the ultimate goal of conservation of land and environmental policy. They have a large portion of funds available and like to come into struggling countries like Ecuador to use those funds to support national level organizations that can carry out the operational goals and

objectives set by them. The organizations that receive the funding are the NGOs these NGOs are organizations of people that are focused on environmental issues and taking action to better them and make an overall difference. However, their main issue is that they normally do not have sufficient funds to carry out large scale conservation projects. Transnational funders NGOs and SMAs all work together hand in hand and at some points against each other, with the same common goal of making an impact positive impact on the environment.

Works cited:

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