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Reflection Chapter 3

Within this chapter of Ecuador's Environmental Revolutions, the Author classifies environmentalism through organizations into four "ideal types". The types being ecoimperialists, ecodependants, ecoresisters, and ecoentrepreneurs. Before explaining each of the "ideal types" in depth the author touches upon the classifications of Environmentalism other than the "ideal types" that he had mentioned. For example, the author highlights Mark Dowie's book *Losing ground* in which Dowie describes the "Group of 10" US environmental groups and goes on to explain how size, power, and resources are dimensions that can be used for classification. The author also highlights Joan Martinez-Alier's book *Environmentalism of the Poor* which defines two key types of environmentalism, one being environmentalism of the poor which can be found in the Global South and the other being environmentalism of affluence which can be found in the Global North. Moving on through the chapter the author outlines and explains each ideal type and how they are related and/or interconnected as well as how they differ in terms of agenda, source of funding, level of organization, and several other aspects. Each type explained thoroughly in terms of which organizations fall under each categorization, what their overall goals are, an example of a project that that kind of organization may conduct and what each types relationship with the state and with the public is overall.

The first type of environmentalism that the author decided to highlight was the Ecoimperialist Organizations. These types of organizations have a strong focus on biodiversity conservation as well as sustainable development, however they do not have a good aura surrounding them in the eyes of the public because of their perceived invasive and intruding way of conducting and carrying out internal operations. A few examples of these kinds of organizations are, Nature Conservancy, World Conservation Society, and USAID. The public does not have a very good perception of these kinds of organizations because they come into the country with their own funding and they run on their own agenda. Often times they are able to influence the state to essentially assist them in successfully achieving what was expected from their agenda and this does not sit well with many Ecuadorians. An Example of one of the projects that was carried out by one of these organizations is the Parks in Peril (PiP) program. The goal of this program was to save and preserve 50 million acres of land in central and South America and the Caribbean. The joint venture between the Nature Conservancy and USAID worked with various NGOs in Ecuador such as, Fundacion Natura, EcoCiencia, and others to improve and expand the overall national park system. At the time that this program was started in 1990 the organizations decided to work with NGOs instead of the State due to the state being weak. The program was an overall success, bringing in over \$62 million into important protected areas throughout the region in its first 12 years. It is estimated that there were 45 areas protected and conserved almost 45 million acres. The program made a direct impact within the communities of Quito as seen in a statement made by the Nature Conservancy on their website, "As a great result, PiP has supported the consolidation of the Condor Bioserve, a massive area that integrates several protected public areas and private lands that protects the impressive biodiversity of the Andean region and provides freshwater to 1.5 million people in Quito." (The Nature Conservancy). As a citizen of Ecuador purely based on outcome and results I would find it hard to be adversary toward these organizations. Based on the example given above, which was highlighted in the book, I feel that conserving 45 million acres of land, especially in the area focused on, is phenomenal. Central and south America are so abundant in terms of biodiversity, the world needs that, so being able to save it and ensure that that land will not be touched is a true accomplishment. And of course, the money is a positive aspect as well. However, it is

mostly the way in which these companies operate that attract criticisms. It is said that these organizations “force their will” they come into the country with their own agenda of conserving land along with a very good amount of funding and they place their goals and agenda about the countries goals and agenda and they bypass Ecuadorian organizations. Lastly another criticism that is drawn from these types of organizations is that they are using money and resources to purchase land as a means of controlling it to make future reserves such as water and privatizing them in order to make a profit. Overall when you take everything into account these organization may do good on the surface but overall do not have the best intentions.

The second type of environmentalism that was highlighted within the chapter was the Ecodependent organizations. These organizations are national level organizations that share many of the same agenda topics as the ecoimperialists due to the large amount of funding that the ecoimperialists provide to them. More than half of these organization’s operating budget is funded by international actors. Comparatively the budgets of these organizations are much higher than any other Ecuadorian organization while being able to maintain a full-time staff. However, depending on the donors that are funding these organizations dictates the budget, this figure varies from year to year as new projects arise and new donors emerge as some disappear. As the book states, the work of these Ecodependent organizations “danc(es) to the rhythm of the donor”. The overall perception of these kind of organizations is on the fence, in terms of the state, ecodependents tend to cooperate well with the state while using the system to achieve their own personal agenda. This tactic can be seen as effective but personally I find it to be taking advantage of the state in certain situations (i.e. perceived weaknesses). In terms of the public many people “view them with envy and skepticism, calling them part of the “nonprofit mafia””. The main Ecodependent organization in Ecuador is, Natura, who has partnered up with various other transnational organizations (ecoimperialists) in order to successfully carry out a given project. An example of a project carried out by a Ecodependent and ecoimperialist joint venture is Natura and the WWF’s debt-for-nature swap. Natura was the one who handled the swap in order to manage eight protected areas. They also managed a second swap in 1990 with some help from the state, Nature was a key contributor in getting the swap done. This swap was used to maintain newly protected areas and to obtain physical data for conservation information. While these organizations have the potential to do a lot of good for the country there are some pitfalls that prove that these organizations may not be as sound or stable as is apparent to the naked eye. Due to these organizations, mostly being funded by varying transnational organizations the budgets are very inconsistent. When the budget is low it is hard for these organizations to staff a sufficient amount of people, which creates variable outcomes to conducted projects. There have also been times where these organizations initiated large scale conservation efforts and shortly then after ended them. Overall there is a large amount of uncertainty and inconsistency within these organization, but they have the potential to do a lot of good for the world.

The third kind of environmentalist organization that is highlighted in the book is the ecoresisters. This is the most adversarial group. They do not cooperate with the state and are strongly against oil extraction and various other harmful methods of obtaining resources. Ecoresisters will not receive any funding from the ecoimperialist but when they do receive funding it is for a project that they developed and are planning to carry out locally. The staff primarily volunteer based, because of this they have the opportunity to formulate their own agenda. Ecoresisters tend to stay in local or regional communities to guide and educate the local population on various way to monitor the environment and pressure the government to be those change makers mentioned earlier in the book, additionally they will act in response to a certain event. For example, if an oil company came in and said that they were going to start drilling in the forests east of the Andes for oil the ecoresisters would be right there making sure that that company can not achieve their ultimate goal of oil extraction and exportation by setting

up workshops in the community that may be directly affected by the drilling educating the population on the effects of oil extraction and what it could mean for them and how it will impact their lives, which in turn gives those people a better understanding of what is happening ultimately creating a platform and a base for these people to apply pressure to the government/cooperation to force an overall change. For the most part ecoresisters can be a major actor in creating a platform/ opportunity for the citizen worker to disrupt the TOP by educating and informing people about certain issue which empowers those people to go take action for what they feel is right. For example, an Ecuadorian ecoresisters organization, DECOIN was founded to prevent copper mining in the Intag Valley. With the help of the community DECOIN was successful in stopping two mining companies from coming in and extracting a large amount of copper from that area. The only downside of these organizations is that they eventually have to face the reality that people need to make money to support families and if making that money comes from working for the state and extracting oil or doing something that is against the agenda of these organizations then that is what needs to be done. Especially in a country like Ecuador which struggles financially. Personally, I find that the ecoresisters have the highest potential to influence and cause a disruption in the TOP which can be seen as a very positive outcome. These are people working for the people which creates a special kind of aura around them.

Lastly the book highlights the Ecoentrepreneur Organizations who are primarily funded through service fees. Basically, what these organizations do is they obtain a resource and maintain it and keep it healthy and well but then will change service fees to use it. For example, they will come in and maintain the watershed that the water company relies on to provide safe clean drinking water to the local communities in exchange for a fee. This fee is then paid though usage fee from the customers of the water company. These organizations have a big focus on quality of life issues and factors/ problems that directly affect humans rather than the goal of conservation that the last three types of organizations shared. Recently these types of organizations have been very popular when it comes to protecting the environment in new innovative ways. An example of an ecoentrepreneurs organization is FONAG. They collect money from customers in the form of water bills and then redistribute that money to other organizations to manage the watersheds to keep them safe. On the other hand, other ecoentrepreneurs organizations in low income areas may provide financial incentives to protect the environment. For example, REDD pays people that live in a forested region not to cut down trees and to keep the area as forested as possible. Ecoentrepreneur organizations have the best rapport with the community for this reason. Overall these kinds of organizations in my opinion can be good or bad depending on the integrity of the company. I feel that it could be very easy for an organization to take control of let's say a watershed to ensure safe drinking water, and then charge the surrounding community a certain price and skimming money off the top. But on the other hand, not all organizations are like that and there are even some that end up paying you to do what they want.

In conclusion, this chapter gave a comprehensive overview of the various types of environmentalist organizations and what each type entails and how they operate to achieve their overall goals.

Works Cited:

The Nature Conservancy. (2006, April 6). Parks in Peril. Retrieved September 28, 2017, from <http://expomaquinarias.com/wherewework/southamerica/ecuador/>