

Kevin Risch

## Chapter 6 Reflection

In this chapter, the Author focuses on the Organizational Bust period from 2000 to 2006. This period was highlighted by the disappearance of transnational funding by the ecoimperialist organizations which ultimately lead to the crash of the ecodependents, which then created the opportunity for the rise of the ecoresister organizations to the forefront of the environmental movement in Ecuador. The ecoresister organizations had more of a humanitarian view on environmental development and policies. The viewpoints that are held by these individuals focus on ecological synthesis and further perpetuate the saying “buen vivir/sumac kawsay”. These groups feel that within organizational independence more ideas are brought to the table and more options are thought over as a result of not having the constraint of only carrying out projects that the funders support and feel are important issues to address. Instead the volunteer work force can collaborate and use personal experience/ accounts to address the immediate more important issues that directly affect how people live their lives, which may include issues that would not have been considered to be funded by an ecoimperialist organization. When you look at these ecoresister organizations in this light I can find a way to get behind them and work with them to achieve an overall goal. These are people of the people, most ecoresister organizations have little to no budget which means that almost all workers are volunteer which eliminates the concern of the organization performing a project with a monetary bias or not performing a project due to a monetary bias.

The year 2000 began the decline of funding by the transnational ecoimperialist funders which had an immediate effect on the ecodependent community. The decline in funding was a result of multiple factors. First being the financial crisis of 200, Ecuador carried out Dollarization in which they used USD as their currency. This created a sense of overall uncertainty from the funders, the economic state of the country was not stable, which enabled funders to hold off on supplying money to organizations. Everything became more expensive which ultimately led to the fall of close to 300 environmental groups.

This is where the issue of ecodependent and ecoimperialist organizations come into play. It's all about the money, and without the money none of the work is even thought of let alone gets done. So as a result of a shortage of money and a weak state (which honestly has been around for a bit in Ecuador) efforts to conserve biodiversity and widespread projects to save the environment in Ecuador, something that these organizations apparently hold so dearly, is put to a halt just like that because of the absence of money. Whereas the ecoresister organizations find ways to operate on a very small budget and still make an impact in the community and also the country. Over the course of reading this book I have slowly switched my outlook on these organizations and admire the values and ways of operation of the ecoresister groups better than the ecodependents. While the ecodependents carry out more large-scale efforts and projects they are unstable and unreliable whereas the ecoresisters have HEART they will keep fighting for a cause and education for a cause until that cause is addressed or even resolved as a whole.

The second reason for the decline of transnational funding was the terrorist attacks of September 11<sup>th</sup> in the United States. Funds were then diverted to funding the military and

counterterrorism efforts within the Middle East. Again another reason why ecodespendent organizations are unstable and unreliable because of just that, they are dependent. The world changes on a day to day basis and at any moment crisis can happen and change the agenda of any entity, this is exactly what happened to the United States, one of Ecuador's leading funders of ecodespendent organizations, as a result of this crisis funds were no longer available as \$600 billion dollars were being pumped into efforts in the middle east to ensure overall homeland security and the safety of the countries citizens in a time of panic. Whereas again the ecoresister organizations are unaffected by such events and can still carry out and conduct operations as normal.

Lastly the third cause that stopped funds from being provided was the end of two major programs that were enacted by these transnational funders which created an abundance of environmental funds that boosted multiple organizations through the 1990s. One of the projects was USAID's SUBIR projects and the other was a Dutch project in Loja called Programa Podocarpus.

While funding declined ecodespendents had to look for other strategies/new approaches to stay in operation. The first coping strategy to funding declining was an overall shut down. As stated before the ecodespendent organizations are not very susceptible to change and do not cope well with big monetary changes. Because of this dependency on funding during periods of large funding (last chapter) the number of ecodespendent organizations grow and the market becomes saturated and funds become scarce. During the bust the already scarce funds among a large amount of organizations essentially disappears and the newer lower end organizations that got little funding in the first place have nothing to do but shut down while the more prominent organizations have other options.

One of the options that the remaining organizations have is to shift their overall agenda to suit something that is more in the realm of their current capabilities. Prior to this these organizations were used to conforming to the needs and desires of the funder, which now many be out of reach. These organizations now gain operational independence it is now up to them what they do with it.

An additional strategy taken on by some ecodespendent organizations is projectismo. Projectismo is when an organization is lacking backing and/or funds and decide to respond to "request for proposals" (RPFs) in which an ecoimperialist organization would list projects that they want completed and organizations can complete the projects based on the goals and guidelines given by the ecoimperialist.

The final strategy used by the ecodespendent organizations is to generate a regular income. What organizations would do is contract out with various cities or communities to manage a facet of the community in exchange for a service fee paid by the consumer. For example, Natura branched off into Fundacion Natura, Inc. and contracted with the city of Quito to manage the city's municipal waste, which in turn provided the organization with a steady source of income.

Around the same time of the loss of funding to the ecodespendent organizations the beginning phases of constructing the OCP Pipeline which was a crude oil pipeline that was set to run from the Amazon town of Lago Agrio to Esmeraldas which is a coastal port city on the pacific. The project had a strong heading, backed by the German government, the Ecuadorian government, the International Monetary Fund, as well as multiple multinational oil companies. As expected most ecoresister organizations are much too small and do not have the funds to bring enough action towards the project to halt it, the only option was to hold protest against the construction of the pipeline, but nothing was

done about it, “In spite of the locals' strong opposition and a global campaigning, the OCP is operating since 2003, causing numerous oil spills along its way” (Environmental Justice Atlas). This is when people really started to criticize the remaining ecodependent organizations for not taking a firm stance on the situation with remaining funds and new operational strategies. The construction of the pipeline would disturb ecosystems effecting biodiversity as well as cultural and habitual disruption for indigenous Amazonian people, additionally, the risk for contamination due to oil spills is extremely high.

Through this boom phase the environmental movement goes through a major shift and enters a bit of a tough spot to a point where many people lose hope in the overall movement as a whole. However, there are organizations and groups of people that still deeply care and wish to make a difference. These people have gone out of their way to figure out innovative ways to integrate environmentalist ideals into their lifestyles and livelihoods. People realize that projects such as the OCP have real effects on real people and something needs to be done about it. The people of Mindo do everything they can to work with their community to not only educate and discuss the issues but to take action where action is needed such as when they prevented the OCP people from coming through their community by tying themselves to the pipelines and other tactics. The environmental movements at the time started to become more effective on the local level rather than the national level as it used to be in the boom era. Many of these localized efforts were conducted by ecoresister organizations who's goal was to prevent economically driven resource extraction. Such as mining or petroleum drilling.

For example, in 1992 the Ecuadorian government granted access to a Japanese company, Bishi Metals to explore for resources in the Intag valley. The Intag valley is known for its beauty and biologically diverse ecosystem. Along with the uniqueness of the area in terms of biodiversity the valley is also home to various communities. The Japanese company entered the region and began their search without notifying anyone in the area other than the Ecuadorian government. As the search went on locals started getting word and became skeptical. Bishi Metals ended up identifying a large copper deposit and send the deposit data back to headquarters to determine an EIS. The EIS stated that in order for proper extraction of the resources it predicted that there would have to be a relocation of four communities, widespread deforestation that would dry up the cloud forest, disruption and distress of various birds and animals, as well as the contamination of water with heavy metals. Once locals got word of the EIS there was a large educational program that was launched and in 1997 Bishi Metals camp was burnt down.

With a boom always comes a bust, however with a bust always comes a rebuilt and rise from the bottom. Various grass rooted movements and organizations showed a glimmer of hope for the future of the environmental and humanitarian sector of the Ecuadorian society.

#### Works Cited:

Environmental Justice Atlas. (n.d.). OCP-Heavy Crude Oil Pipeline, Ecuador | EJAtlas. Retrieved September 28, 2017, from <https://ejatlas.org/conflict/ocp-heavy-crude-oil-pipeline-ecuador>