

The financial crisis of the early 2000s had motivated the citizens of Ecuador to be vocal about their questioning of the neoliberal policies that were in place. Around the same time that Ecuador was coming out of this financial crisis, the state was experiencing an increased capacity as well as more access to resources. This then caused the different environmental leaders to move into the government rather than stay in their private, non-profit sectors. When Rafeal Correa was elected as the President of Ecuador in 2006, he was really impactful to the different environmental organizations.

President Correa in his inauguration speech had mentioned that both Ecuador and Latin America are not going through an epoch, but that they were going through a “genuine change of epoch.” Latin America in general was going through many changes. For example, President Hugo Chavez of Venezuela decided to shift the economy from the laissez faire state to neoliberalism. Many of the Latin American states were changing in the sense that they had increased social spending while also creating and implementing policies that would provide the public with some very important things. Among these very valuable things offered by the new states are: free education, health programs, subsidized food, cash transfer programs, and many of these countries had now offered titled lands to the indigenous groups.

In this chapter, the author, Tammy L. Lewis, discusses a set of data that was collected from the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean. This data was interpreted that the increases in funding for social welfare programs had benefited some of the poorest individuals and communities in Latin America. In Latin America in 2002, over 221 million individuals were recorded as being poor, which had decreased to 180 million eight years later in 2010. During the same time, the amount of individuals who lived in extreme poverty reduced from 97 million to 72 million. In Ecuador specifically, President Correa had worked to implement redistributive policies. One of the major policies were to double the cash payments to the poor as well as subsidizing electricity. A study conducted by the Gini Index from the year 2006 to 2011, showed that the new income redistribution policies had begun to create more equality. Some analysts had analyzed the different policies that Venezuela, Bolivia, and Ecuador were implementing, and had argued that they were demonstrating more radical democracy practices. Continuing on with the radical changes, Lewis explains that President Correa had created an elected constituent assembly in order to rewrite their constitution. There were things that were changed in the constitution, but the most significant change would be that the state provides rights to nature.

President Correa had made transnational corporations bilateral which made it difficult for international non profit funders to continue to invest in Ecuador. Since President Correa had implemented a handful of very effective policies, the state had become more effective with its increase in power and strength. One of the decisions that the president made was to raise the budget for the Ministry of Environment as well as providing more funds for the protected areas in Ecuador. Since the state was becoming so strong, this shifted the social structure in the sense that it weakened international influence which debilitated national eco-dependent NGOs.

Not only was the state responsible for protecting its citizens, but also protecting the natural environment as well as accumulating resources in order to perform these protective details. Since Ecuador is offering many assistances with its citizens, the government needs to generate funds to supplement these programs. In addition, in order to protect the environment, the government needs to money from the same environment that they are meant to be protecting. To combat this issue, the government can decide to take more of the resources than it is allowed

to take and alter the percentages of revenue that they can make from this resource extraction. In addition to this, once the occidental petroleum's contract had expired, Ecuador took ownership of the oil fields again in order to use its resources. Although the first strategy to combat the lack of revenues was met without resistance, the second strategy that focused on extracting more resources was by the citizens of Ecuador.

In the year 2008, the Constituent Assembly of Ecuador was able to rewrite their constitution. There were some major changes to their constitution, including granting rights to every individual, community, and nature. On top of this, the constitution also protecting water rights and prohibited the use of genetically modified organisms as well as promoted common indigenous beliefs such as *buen vivir* and *sumak kawsay*. I found it interesting that the constitution was written in Spanish and Kichwa which is the language of some indigenous peoples of Ecuador and Colombia. The constitution also invoked "pacha mama" which was another indigenous concept that considers humans part of the earth and nature, giving nature intrinsic rights. In the literature piece, "Living the good life? An Analysis of Ecuador's Plan Nacional Para El Buen Vivir Development Model as an Alternative to a Neoliberal Global Framework," the author explains the meaning and importance of *pachamama*, or "mother earth." This concept was based off of the indigenous groups' understanding of how the natural world works in comparison to the occidental world. The thought of the origin of this concept comes with the story of two Gods, one male and one female, gave birth to *pachamama* which brought everything into existence. The concept as of today addresses Ecuador's focus on sustainability with the goal of constantly improving the quality of the natural world.

Tammy L. Lewis brings up the Yasuni ITT initiative in this chapter of her book. This initiative was raised by the eco-resisters, more specifically *accion ecologica* and *oil watch*. President Correa was eventually the one to stop this initiative which allowed Ecuador to extract more oil. In response to this, the youth of this country formed the YAS-unidos in order to save Yasuni and to keep the initiative alive.

To describe the public opinion on President Correa, the majority of citizens were pleased with his performance in office. On the other hand, citizens argued that Correa had limited the public when he mocked and repressed his citizens as well as changing the legal system to benefit himself. President Correa was known for mocking those who disagreed with his plans, especially those who were vocal about their anti-mining ideas, calling them "nobodies." He also often repressed citizens by subduing activists. The state had begun to criminalize protests during his rule, and the protestors would be subjecting themselves to harassment, imprisonment, or death if they had continued to be so vocal about their disapproval of Correa's decisions. In 2013, he even enacted key legislation that would severely limit civil society organizations. This then put environmentalists in a defensive position while eco-resisters believed that it was their responsibility to speak out.

The author also discusses the concept of "civil society" which in Ecuador is in the form of environmental NGOs who were known to promote foreigner's concerns with the environment. In the form of grassroot communities, civil societies promote the interests of smaller communities rather than with the concerns of foreign entities. In the article, "Who and what is 'civil society?'" the author quotes the World Bank on their definition of civil society when saying "Civil society ... refers to a wide array of organizations: community groups, non-governmental organizations [NGOs], labour unions, indigenous groups, charitable organizations, faith-based organizations, professional associations, and foundations." In the 1980s, the term "civil society"

became more of a talked about topic in political and economic world, especially when it started to be identified with different non-state movements which were meant to defy authoritarian regimes. Also called the “third sector,” this group has the influential power to sway the actions and decisions of elected policy-makers as well as businesses. It is noted by Klaus Schwab, the founder and executive chairman of the World Economic Forum that the roles of civil societies have shifted over time, so that more recently, civil society has become more focused on the contributions that they are making as well as implementing a resilient global system to work alongside the government and businesses.

Also in this chapter of the book, Tammy L. Lewis discusses some of the government’s decisions. Since the people of Ecuador kept reelecting Correa to be president, the government had decided to prioritize the broad distribution of economic gains, regardless of what impact that it could potentially have on the environment. The government chose to put more emphasis on *buen vivir* and *sumak kawsay* and chose to put more effort into improving the road structures, schools and education, health care, and tried to increase talk about the environment. This means that instead of focusing on all sides of sustainability, Ecuador is choosing to only focus on the economic and social aspects rather than on the environmental one as well.

Lewis also mentions that CONAIE led multiple uprisings in the August of 2015. These protests argues state policies such as extractivism, and aligned these protests with labor strikes. These actions would show opposition to government policy as well as demonstrate that they are capable of demonstrating that civil society continues to advocate for those who are unable to be heard. The article, “The Ecuadorian Indigenous People's Movement: Autonomy and the Environment,” had provided information about CONAIE by explaining the history as well as present story of this group. The article first introduces the fact that Ecuador’s population consists of 25% of indigenous individuals. Indigenous groups are known to face problems with outside governing entities, and this is no different in Ecuador. One of the main issues that the indigenous groups faced was the 1964 Agrarian reform as well as a specific top-down project that was geared at integrating the indigenous individuals into the rest of Ecuadorian society. It was in 1980 when the Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of the Ecuadorian Amazon, or CONFENIAE, was brought into existence with the purpose of representing the indigenous communities as well as pursuing unity while simultaneously respecting the diversity of the communities. A few years prior in the highlands, the Catholic church was able to bring the Confederation of Quichua Communities in Ecuador (ECUARUNARI) into existence in 1974. Six years after its founding, this group had begun to put more emphasis on political engagement of the indigenous groups. In 1986, CONAIE was founded with the main objective of gathering together the indigenous communities. Since there were different groups of indigenous groups, this made the groups divided and uninformed about one another. This would then allow for the indigenous communities to be better heard due to their larger numbers. It is claimed that the most notable achievement of CONAIE was that they had a successful campaign to adopt the recognition of Ecuador as a state with many cultures and ethnicities which could be found in the first article of the 1998 constitution.

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