

The Treadmill of Production

By:

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OUTLINE:

- ❖ **What is the treadmill of production theory?**
- ❖ **What are its origins?**
- ❖ **Who are the key players involved?**
- ❖ **Why is it important to understand their relationship?**
- ❖ **How does this relate to Ecuador's history?**
- ❖ **How can this be used to improve Ecuador's future?**

What is Treadmill of Production (TOP)?

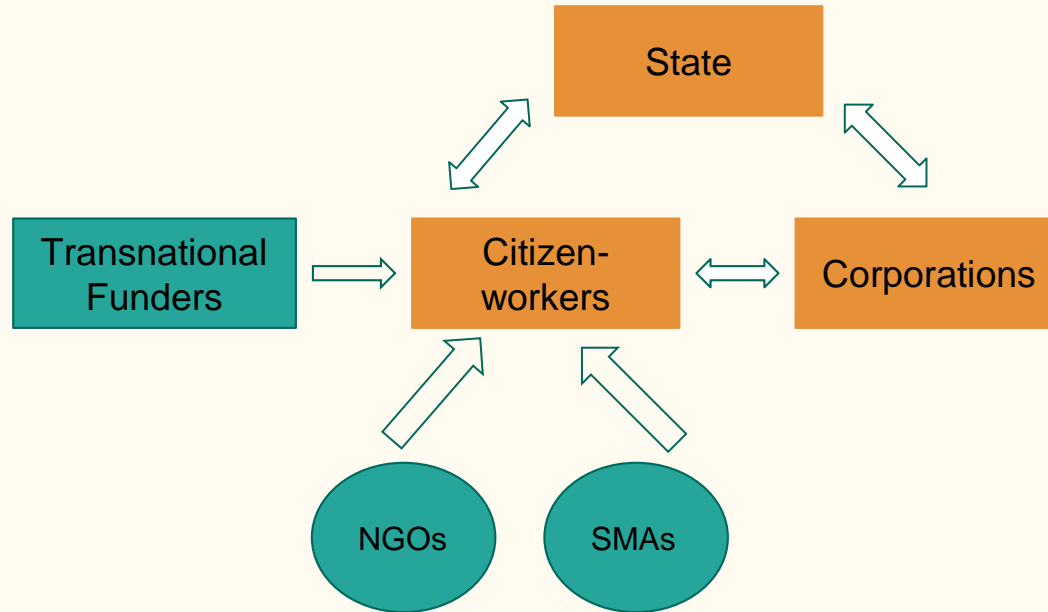
The TOP is a theory which describes relationships between social actors and their cumulative influence on sustainability

Three pillars: the economy, society, and environment

Key actors: the corporation, the citizen-worker, and the state.



What are the three members and how do they interact?



The Corporation

Main goal:

To increase profit

Accomplished by:

Increase in Energy/ Technology
(exploiting resources)

Decrease in Human-Labor Costs



The State



<https://globaledge.msu.edu/countries/ecuador/government>

Main Goal::

To Increase “Base of Power”

Other Goals::

To provide jobs and ensure citizen safety

Accomplished by::

Collecting taxes from corporations

The Citizen Worker

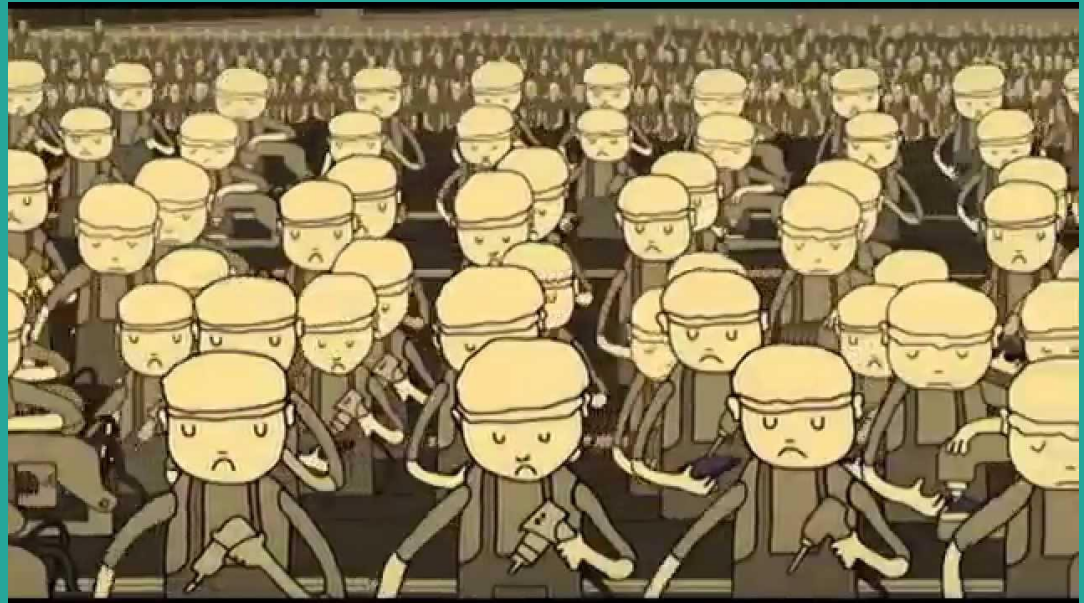
Main Goal:

To prevent environmental degradation
and social dislocation

Accomplished By:

Putting pressure on the State

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sFbjHgfrALo>



Types of Treadmills

The Ecological Treadmill

Natural Resource Extraction



The Social Treadmill

Workers and new technology



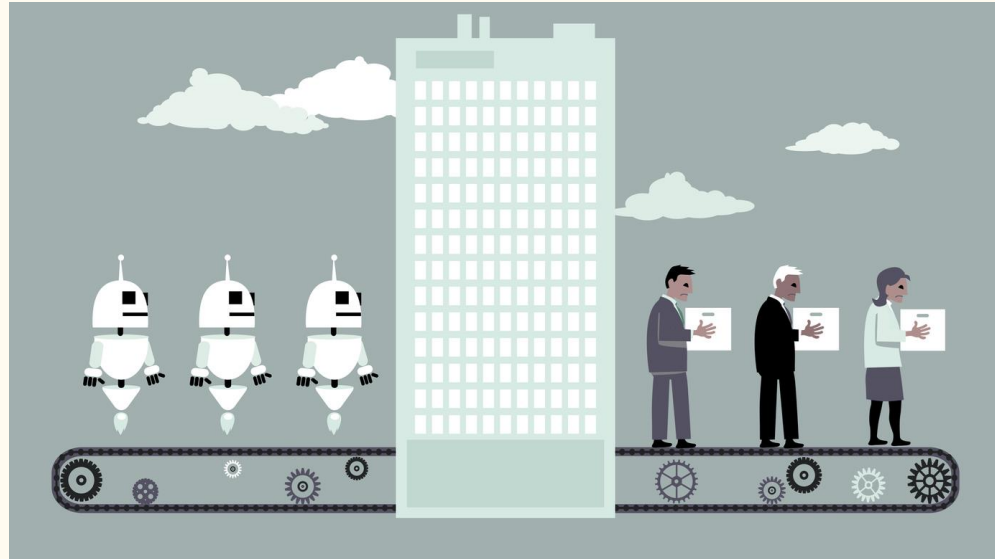
Natural Resources



- Energy is needed to extract raw materials
- Raw materials are withdrawn
- Toxic chemicals are added to the materials to produce new technology
- Waste from extractions enters the environment

Social Implications

- Workers generate profit
- Firms able to invest in labor- saving technology
- Equipment takes over simple labor tasks
- Human labor positions in that field are no longer available



<http://www.ibtimes.co.uk/japanese-insurance-claim-agents-are-now-being-replaced-by-robot-ibm-watson-supercomputer-1599078>

The Story of Stuff:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9GorqroigqM&t=286s>

Start at
2:37

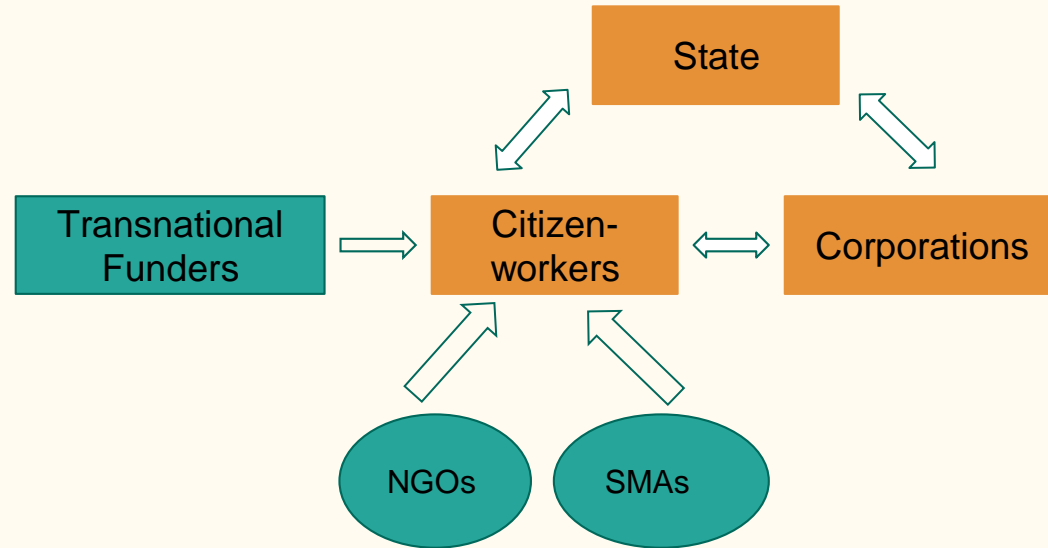
Stop at
5:26

The Treadmill of Production

and its relationship to
Ecuador's History

Key Actors of the TOP theory:

- **State:** increasing base of power
- **Corporations:** increasing profit
- **Citizen-workers:** improve/maintain social welfare
 - NGOs
 - SMAs
 - Transnational Funders



The Citizen-Worker, in Ecuador:

use transnational funding, NGOs, and SMAs for sustainable goals

These are the people who **organize** in order to avoid exploitation.



- Voted to influence the state
- Limited in influence to corp
 - Immediately affected by decisions of the corporation
- ★ Concerned with social and this includes environmental welfare due to Ecuador's unique envl

How did Ecuadorian Citizen-Workers Pressure the State?

NGOs- Non Governmental Organizations

- Private
- Officially Recognized by the state
 - Non- profit Organizations
- Professional with paid Staff
- Reform Oriented to promote change



<http://naturapanama.org/>

SMAs- Social Movement Actors

- Individuals or Groups of actors
 - Bounded together for common end
- Local Challenges
- Volunteer Workers
- Usually not recognised by the State



<http://www.condem.org.ec/temporal.php?C=76>

Pre-Neoliberal Boom

Limits on the state: stability and money (spoiler alert: this never changes in Ecuador)

Advantage for the corporation: able to push its agenda

DISadvantage for the citizen worker: unable to protect

Pre-Neoliberal Boom

Attempts from the Citizen-Workers:

Fundacion Natura (FN) :

- to improve conservation efforts by raising awareness of Ecuador's true value and beauty.

Accion Ecologica (AE) :

- social and environmental goals, morally opposed to the priority of economic goals.

Attempt from the State:

1987, saw the first “debt-for nature” swap proposal: attempts to sacrifice money for social goals

Neoliberal Boom (1987- 2000)

*United Nations Conference on Environment
and Development (1992)*



Sparked international interest in
Ecuador's environmental value

*Convention on Biological Diversity
and the Climate Convention*



Official commitments to nature to
preserve environmental capital

State's fiscal restrictions



Opportunity for transnational
assistance

*Sustainable Uses of Biological Resources
(US Proposal)*



Six areas of effort

Ambitious and Impractical

Major influence on Citizen-Workers:

Transnational Funders

Work on specific tasks and provide funds

Influence which groups (NGOs/ SMAs) exist and thrive

Distribution of Material resources from outside of a country into a country



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

<https://twitter.com/usaid>

Complexities of international funding

- Misidentify the local needs
- Always impose their own agenda somehow
- Help with local funding shortages (example, United States in USAID)
- New NGOs were taking off due to increased public interest and funds

Helped groups specialize, narrow, and focus, and professionalize

USAID Video Example:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RDrR9d6CYzQ>

The Corporation, in Ecuador: powerful and interested in exploiting the abundant natural resources, such as oil



Ultimately, its own economic growth was prioritized over social and ecological safety.

**Chevron and Texaco
were focused on
profit and increased
production.**



The *employer* of citizen-workers.

Must *comply/cooperate* with the state.

The State's role regarding Oil Corporations

- Majority shareholders
- *Increasing base of power* by prioritizing economic gains
- Common goals with corporations
- Sacrificing welfare and relationships of/with the citizen workers

Can Citizen-Workers pressure Corporations when the state is weak?

Lawsuits (do not always remediate the social and environmental damages) *ex. Chevron*

Social Activism (can be an effective means to avoid future damage) *ex. shrimp boycott*



<http://chevrontoxico.com/about/rainforest-chernobyl/>

The State, in Ecuador: *generally unstable and limited in economic ability to execute socially and environmentally responsible goals*



****Heavily internationally indebted**

****Aware of its high environmental capital and low social welfare**

****Restricted in capacity to respond to local needs**

****ALSO HAS ECONOMIC GOALS**

Neoliberal Bust (2000-2006)

- **Distractions in the international community Reduced funding**
- **Ecodependents shut down or change agenda**
- **Ecoimperialists increased competition**
- **Caused divisiveness within the movement**

Less international, more local

- Ecoresisters- concerned with ecological value, partake in social action
- Ecoentrepreneurs- similarly value the local community members and attempt to stimulate local economic development
- Promotion of localized and regional efforts- failed ecodependent members returned to their communities and kept working towards common goal

Citizens' Revolution (2006-2015)

President Rafael Correa



- The state: weak and ineffective.
- During his presidency: greatly strengthened
- Elected to bring about a “citizens’ revolution”(Lewis, 166)
- New era distinguished by: increased state responsibility in social welfare

The Yasuni-ITT Initiative (2007)

What is it?

A proposal to alleviate Ecuador's international debt by agreeing to protect the biodiversity

In terms of TOP?

A collaboration of state and citizen-worker goals

Economic goals of the corporation and state were priority, in spite of the massive social and environmental losses.

Impact: Benefits for Citizen Workers

Middle and lower classes began seeing the results of economic gains, and new regional institutions emerged:

*working with urban neighborhood associations, peasant and labor unions

International proposals to assist in preserving environmental capital

“When the world failed Ecuador...”



Debt-for-nature swap: failed due to lack of funding, directly caused resource extraction.

“Based on the principle of co-responsibility in the battle against climate change”

Correa certainly felt that responsibility, the rest of the world did not share his vision (Puig, 2013).

Current State Status

President of Ecuador:

Lenín Boltaire Moreno Garcés- 2017

- Vice President from 2007- 2013

Progressive Leader, An Example:

- Popular Consultation
 - “Government for All” Approach
 - Received 450 proposals from Citizens
 - Chose to work on 8
 - Including 2 Environmental Concerns



Current Changes in Corporation

- Increased social responsibility
- Listening to consumer preferences
- “Greenwashing”
- Fair Trade Certification as marketing tools and as indicators of corporate responsibility



Conclusion:



Ecuador

State:

Weak state, easily exploited by corporations

Corporation:

Strong with only economic goals

Citizen Workers: **Unable to protect themselves**

Why is the TOP
important for
Ecuador's future?

Understanding this relationship...

- Helps understand key social players
 - And their motivations
- Reveals the vulnerability of the citizen-worker
 - And the dominance of the state/corporation

The TOP theory reveals the dominance of corporate and economic goals

It reveals the need for studies which combine economic, social, and environmental goals

By understanding the problems and the players involved in creating/facilitating such problems, we take an important step in solving them.

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